

GROUNDWATER HI - LITES

July 2020

Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5

Quivira NWR Resolution

Throughout the past several decades, the District has been working with area stakeholders, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (“Service”), and the Kansas Department of Agriculture—Division of Water Resources (“KDA–DWR”) to provide a reasonable and sustainable solution to the hydrologic needs for the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (“Refuge”). In recent years, the District has pursued several options for a resolution to this complex issue.

In late 2019, KDA–DWR outlined an intent to administer water rights in the Rattlesnake Creek region. It is the District’s belief that the proposed administration would have significant and detrimental impact to the region’s economy. Around this same time, Senator Jerry Moran met with Aurelia Skipwith, Director of the Service. The result of this meeting was a statement from the Service that indicated a desire to “work to find local, voluntary, collaborative and non-regulatory solutions, including augmentation, to address the water needs of the community and the wildlife conservation purposes of the refuge before determining if more formal measures are necessary to ensure the refuge’s water rights are secured.”

The Service and District have continued to meet regularly since 2019 to find a local, voluntary, collaborative solution. Starting in April 2020, at the onset of COVID-19, the group’s ability to have face to face meetings was stalled. Despite these difficult circumstances, the group has continued to discuss water conservation planning actions on regularly scheduled weekly conference calls.

In a special board meeting on July 24, 2020, the District approved a memorandum of agreement (“Agreement”) that outlines the pathway forward for the resolution between the District and the Service for years to come. The following day, Director Skipwith, Senator Moran, and other state and local leaders were present to hear an overview of the Agreement and witness its signing by both parties in a special stakeholder meeting in St John.

There are several pieces to this Agreement that have bearing on the local region. In the first five years, the District will design and construct a streamflow augmentation wellfield to supplement Rattlesnake Creek with pumped groundwater. In the years following this development, the District will use reasonable efforts to develop a water right purchase program and water right movement program to achieve the retirement of 2,500 acre-feet from areas close to the Rattlesnake Creek stream channel. The Service will utilize enhanced water management at the Little Salt Marsh to store an additional quantity of water to provide habitat as outlined in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Refuge. Furthermore, the Service agrees to not submit a request to secure water per K.S.A. 82a-706b and K.A.R. 5-4-1 in 2020 and 2021. The work is not yet complete, but this is a significant milestone in the process. This Agreement can be found on the District’s website: <https://gmd5.org/quivira-nwr>.

Additionally, the District is currently pursuing PL-566 watershed plan funding to advance the augmentation project through the design and implementation phases. This plan is being evaluated by USDA-NRCS staff for compliance with the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Quivira NWR Resolution

Annual Meeting Recap

2021 Budget Hearing

UPCOMING DATES

Kansas Water
Authority Meeting
July 30

Great Bend Prairie
Regional Advisory
Committee
August 6

District Board Meeting
August 13

GMD # 5 WEATHER STATIONS

1	GREENSBURG	(620) 723-2193
2	LEWIS	(620) 324-5866
3	ROZEL	(620) 527-4531
4	CULLISON	(620) 895-6505
5	MACKSVILLE	(620) 348-2238
6	RADIUM	(620) 285-2796
7	GREAT BEND	(620) 793-5798
8	STERLING	(620) 278-2632
9	CAIRO	(620) 672-3359
10	STAFFORD	(620) 234-5667

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Phillip Martin, Barton County
Tom Taylor, Director at Large
Darrell Wood, Edwards County
John Janssen, Kiowa County
Kerry Froetschner, Pawnee County
Fred Grunder, Pratt County
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Craig Zwick, Rice County
Marlyn Spare, Stafford County

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Annual Meeting Recap

The District's annual meeting was held on February 16th in St John. There were approximately 70 in attendance for discussion on the activities of the District and for the election of three board member positions for three-year terms: Darrell Wood - Edwards County, Phillip Martin - Barton County. There were no nominations for the Rice County position. Following the elections, the proposed budget for 2021 was presented to the public for review and discussion. Regional leadership for the Service was present as well to address questions from the public regarding the ongoing discussions with the District related to the Quivira NWR resolution. The annual meeting is an excellent opportunity to get an overview of the various activities of the District and to provide feedback to the board on those management strategies.

At the March board meeting, the vacant position for Rice County was filled by the appointment of Craig Zwick to serve on the board of directors representing Rice County. In this same meeting, the District board officers were appointed. Darrell Wood was elected as President. Fred Grunder was elected to Vice-President. John Janssen was elected to Treasurer. Justin Gatz was elected as Secretary. The Board of Directors for Big Bend GMD5 serve to represent the interests of each county of the District.

Budget Hearing

The public hearing to consider the 2021 budget for the District was held on July 09, 2020 at the District office in Stafford. The Board proposed a \$1,889,500 budget that includes funding for groundwater modeling and other hydrologic studies. There are several ongoing projects throughout the District that require extensive study using the District's groundwater model. Following the hearing, the board set the final budget and the assessment rates by formal resolution 2020-3. The adopted budget and assessment rates are shown to the right.

Adopted Budget for 2021	
PERSONNEL SERVICES	
SALARIES	\$ 225,000
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	45,000
PAYROLL TAXES	22,500
ADMINISTRATION	
TRAVEL & CONFERENCES	\$ 20,000
UTILITIES	12,000
PRINTING & PUBLICATIONS	8,000
OFFICE SUPPLIES	5,000
OFFICE EQUIPMENT	5,000
BUILDING EXPENSES	3,000
FIELD EQUIPMENT	10,000
OTHER EXPENSES	
WATER MANAGEMENT	\$ 1,000,000
PROFESSIONAL FEES	500,000
WEATHER STATIONS	15,000
INSURANCE	13,000
POSTAGE	2,000
OTHER	2,000
BUSINESS DINNERS	1,500
DUES & MEMBERSHIPS	500
TOTAL BUDGET	\$ 1,889,500
ASSESSMENT RATES (FY2021)	
PER ACRE	\$ 0.05
PER ACRE-FOOT	2.00