

GROUNDWATER HI - LITES

November 2021

Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5

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UPCOMING DATES

District Board Meeting
November 12

District Office Closed
November 25
December 25-January 1

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
11	HUDSON	(620) 458-3021
12	TROUSDALE	(620) 995-3219

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
Justin Gatz, Reno County
Craig Zwick, Rice County
Marlyn Spare, Stafford County

DISTRICT STAFF

Orrin Feril, Manager
John Hildebrand, Conservation Specialist
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Audubon of KS v US Dept of Interior / KS Dept of Agriculture

In January 2020, Audubon of Kansas (Audubon) filed in federal court alleging that the U.S. Dept of Interior (DOI) and Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) had violated several federal and state statutes in failing to protect the water rights for Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Additionally, Audubon alleged that DOI and KDA had entered into an illegal agreement with the District which permitted junior water right holders to starve Quivira NWR of groundwater. While not named as a party in the lawsuit, the District successfully intervened in the case to protect the interests of the District as well as its constituents that hold junior water rights. All parties filed several briefs stating their cases to U.S. District Court Judge Holly Teeter. The most recent filings were by the defendants to dismiss the case in April 2021.

On October 20, 2021, the Honorable Holly Teeter dismissed all claims made by Audubon against both federal and state agencies. In brief, the court ruled that KDA is “entitled to Eleventh Amendment immunity on all claims against them” and DOI are “entitled to sovereign immunity” and therefore all claims in this case should be dismissed. The full text of the dismissal order can be found here: https://bit.ly/Dismissal_Order.

Rattlesnake Creek Watershed Planning

In October, the District selected and entered into contract with Olsson of Overland Park, KS to conduct a PL 83-566 Watershed Plan Environmental Assessment (Watershed Plan-EA) for Rattlesnake Creek Watershed Improvement. The PL 83-566 NRCS Watershed Program provides eligible local sponsors with cost share assistance to undertake a wide range of watershed-scale improvements, including projects to improve agricultural water supply and fish and wildlife habitat. A Watershed Plan-EA provides National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance for the Proposed Project and will be developed as the first component of the Proposed Project.

The proposed Watershed Improvement area is in Stafford County. Olsson will coordinate with the District and NRCS to finalize the watershed study boundary and the proposed plan measures to be evaluated in the Watershed Plan-EA and a related feasibility analysis of the augmentation wellfield. Tasks for the development of the Watershed Plan-EA and feasibility analysis will include engineering/design to accurately define, formulate, and evaluate alternatives proposed in the Watershed Plan-EA for technical feasibility, socioeconomics, benefits and impacts. Project measures to be proposed and evaluated in the Watershed Plan-EA will be considered with public participation that will occur at specified times during the plan development process.

New Weather Stations

In the last few months, District staff has installed two new weather stations in the region. One station is near Hudson and the other is near Trousdale. These stations are set up identically to the other ten stations throughout the District to provide consistent and reliable weather data for area water users and agencies. These two

**Big Bend Groundwater
Management District No. 5**
125 S. Main St.
Stafford, KS 67578-1429

stations are fully operational and providing quality data. Their phone numbers are listed to the left of the front page for your reference and their data can be found on the District's weather station webpage at: <http://weather.gmd5.org>.

TAPP H2O

Mammoth Water has developed a user-friendly application for your smartphone to assist with the management of water throughout the year. The application is called TAPP H2O and is described as "one-stop shop for water accounting." According to water users in western KS that have been using this application for the past few seasons, "It's simple and easy to use and will make you way more aware of your water use than you ever have been." If this is something that interests you, you can enroll for an account on Mammoth Water's website at: <https://mammothwater.com>.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The Upper Arkansas River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) affords potential benefits for both farmers, land and water resources in 10 counties along the Upper Arkansas River. Landowners who enroll in CREP will receive up to 15 years of rental payments, a state sign-up bonus, as well as state and federal dollars to put irrigated acres into a conservation planting. The water rights associated with the enrolled land will be permanently retired. Enrollment is on a first-come, first served basis - individual county caps apply.

Recently, the Upper Arkansas CREP was revised to allow the following: 1) expand the authorized project area to include portions of the Rattlesnake Creek subbasin; 2) increase the total allowable enrollment to 40,000 acres; 3) authorize the CP-43 'Prairie Strips' practice which can incorporate dryland farming in between approved conservation covers on certain soil types; and 4) further define and increase the State of Kansas funding commitment for 'direct payments to participants'. This is great news for the area and we are looking forward to working with our partners to get the enrollments in this voluntary program to promote water conservation in the Upper Arkansas River and Rattlesnake Creek regions. More information can be found on the KDA-DOC website at: <https://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/division-of-conservation/water-conservation-programs>.

Central Kansas Water Bank Association

Recently, the Kansas Water Office completed a long awaited independent review, per Kansas statute. Following several meetings with the review committee, agencies, and CKWBA staff, the review committee recommended several revisions to not just CKWBA policies but also core water banking principles. These recommendations are under review by CKWBA staff for consideration by the CKWBA board of directors. As more information is made available, updates will be provided on the CKWBA website at: <https://ckwba.org>.

**Do we have your correct mailing address?
Let us know at 125 S. Main St., Stafford, Kansas 67578 or call 620-234-5352.**