

IN THIS ISSUE:

Priority Areas of Concern

Rattlesnake Creek Working
Group Progress

Annual Meeting Recap

District Staff Changes

UPCOMING DATES

Kinsley Public Meeting
ED County Fairgrounds
April 3 @ 9:00 am

Greensburg Public Meeting
Twilight Theater
April 3 @ 1:00 pm

District Board Meeting
April 9

FY2025 Budget Hearing
July 11

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

Joe Schlessiger, Barton County
Tom Taylor, Director at Large
Darrell Wood, Edwards County
John Janssen, Kiowa County
Kerry Froetschner, Pawnee County
Fred Grunder, Pratt County
Gary Hornbaker, Reno County
Craig Zwick, Rice County
Marlyn Spare, Stafford County

DISTRICT STAFF

Orrin Feril, District Manager
John Hildebrand, Conservation Specialist
Vanessa Marks, Conservation Specialist
Fay Reed, Administrative Assistant

Phone: 620-234-5352

Fax: 620-234-5718

<https://gmd5.org>

Twitter: @bigbendgmd5

Facebook: @bigbendgmd5

GROUNDWATER HI - LITES

March 2024

Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5

Priority Areas of Concern

The newly enacted K.S.A. 82a-1044 requires the five groundwater management districts to identify priority areas of concern within their respective boundaries. These areas are identified as:

- The estimated usable lifetime of groundwater is 50 years or less or a similar measure of future water availability can be determined based on local water use and water level data; or
- an unreasonable deterioration of the quality of groundwater is occurring.

For the majority of the District, the above items do not apply. However, if you are aware or have information indicating that these criteria apply in your area, please contact the District office so concerns can be identified and addressed. In addition to the above items, priority areas may also include:

- Groundwater levels are declining or have declined excessively;
- the rate of withdrawal of groundwater equals or exceeds the rate of recharge;
- preventable waste of water is occurring or may occur;
- an unreasonable deterioration of the quality of groundwater may occur;
- other areas identified by the board of a district and approved by the Chief Engineer.

These items elicit further consideration within this region. The District staff and board are considering several areas currently, but we need your input!

Water Quantity

In the January board meeting, District staff presented a series of water level change maps for the entire District to the board for review. In this review, the board identified a few areas in Edwards and Kiowa counties that have historically shown water level declines. However, in recent years these declines have not been as pronounced. The District has requested information from Kansas Geological Survey on an approach that has been used in other areas of the state for evaluating water table trends. This concept is called "Q-Stable" and relates the correlation between water pumping and water table changes on an annual basis. The District hopes this approach would provide a starting point for discussion for a path forward to address the water table fluctuations in the regions identified.

Public meetings will be held in Kinsley (9:00 am) and Greensburg (1:00 pm) to discuss the water level data and potential paths forward. Make plans to join in the discussion on April 3. We want your input!

Water Quality

The District is in the process of collecting additional water quality data from across the region to better understand the condition of the local aquifer. This is where you can help. We encourage all water users, public and private, to collect samples. Stop by the District office for sample bottles to collect your own water samples. Additionally, the District is offering free chloride and/or nitrate analysis in our District laboratory. If you are interested in a more comprehensive water analysis, you can contact our office for a list of KDHE-certified labs in the area. If you choose to have your water samples tested at a certified lab, or have done so in the past, we request that the sample results be made available to our office. The District will collect and use the sample data to help determine a path forward to address water quality concerns in this region.

Rattlesnake Creek Working Group Progress

As water users in this region are aware, the District and its consultant, Olsson, have been working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to complete a Rattlesnake Creek Watershed Plan Environmental Impact Statement (Plan-EIS). This Plan-EIS takes time to properly complete and is in the final stages prior to completion. The District remains committed to bringing this fully-evaluated, sustainable, and fully-funded plan to address the issues in the region.

In January, KDA–DWR convened several stakeholder groups to put together short term projects to provide “measurable progress” toward addressing the impairment at Quivira NWR. This group has met twice over the past 3 months with two more meetings scheduled soon. In these meetings, the various groups have rehashed the same issues and concerns the region has been wrestling with for the past decades. Currently, there are 2-3 pilot projects being drafted by the group, including pilot augmentation of streamflow and water right leasing. Details for these projects are not yet available for open discussion but the group is working together to make good progress in this calendar year.

Annual Meeting Recap

This year’s annual meeting was held on February 15, 2024 in St. John. There were approximately 90 in attendance for discussion on the activities of the District and for the election of three board member positions for three-year terms: Tom Taylor—At-Large, John Janssen—Kiowa County, Kerry Froetschner—Pawnee County. Following the elections, the 2023 financial statement and 2025 proposed budget were presented to the public for consideration and discussion. Vijay Ramasamy, Special Advisor for Water to Governor Kelly, addressed the audience with the priority items for the Governor in this term of office. Updates on the Rattlesnake Creek Watershed Plan–EIS and District activities were provided to all in attendance. Vanessa Marks, CKWBA Manager, provided an update on the water bank’s activities and plans moving forward. Those in attendance participated in a thorough discussion of the District’s activities and priorities for the past year and years to come.

District Staff Changes

Vanessa Marks has accepted the District’s second Conservation Specialist position and has been appointed as the CKWBA manager. Vanessa is looking forward to getting into the field to address water users’ concerns and questions. She is getting up to speed on available conservation programs while gathering water data throughout the District. She will be an asset to be utilized by all water users of this region. Come get to know Vanessa so she can better assist you in achieving your conservation goals.

Fay Reed has joined the District as Administrative Assistant. Fay grew up on her family farm near Sterling. She returned to her family’s homestead a few years ago. She has a degree in history and government from Sterling College and has been teaching Social Studies in central Kansas prior to joining us here at the District. When you get an opportunity, stop by the office to meet Fay.



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