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## UPCOMING DATE

District Board Meeting  
May 14 @ 7:00 pm



**Check Current  
Weather Conditions Online**

Temperature   Rainfall   Wind Speed

[Weather.GMD5.org](https://Weather.GMD5.org)

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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

### **DISTRICT STAFF**

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# GROUNDWATER HI-LITES

May 2026

## *Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5*

### **Watershed Plan - Finalized**

The District has received notice that the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has issued the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Rattlesnake Creek Watershed Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. NRCS selected the Augmentation Wellfield and Groundwater Use Reduction Alternative as the preferred alternative.

This alternative includes construction of an augmentation wellfield, retirement of 2,500 acre-feet of water rights, and implementation of an adaptive management strategy. Together, these measures are designed to improve water availability for the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge while supporting sustainable long-term agricultural water management across the watershed.

The ROD outlines NRCS's evaluation of environmental, social, and economic factors under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and details the mitigation measures that will be implemented. NRCS determined that the selected alternative best meets watershed objectives while minimizing adverse impacts.

NRCS reviewed all substantive comments received on the Final Plan-EIS. No changes to the document were required. A Summary of Comments and Responses, along with supporting materials, is available on the District's webpage: (<https://gmd5.org/rattlesnake-creek>).

### **District Action Plan Development**

The Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 is advancing its District Action Plan to proactively address water resource challenges across the region, as guided by Kansas law (K.S.A. 82a-1044). The Board of Directors has identified several Priority Areas of Concern, including the Pawnee Valley IGUCA, Walnut Creek IGUCA, the Rattlesnake Creek region, estimated usable aquifer lifetime concerns, and the Mineral Intrusion zone. These areas reflect long-term issues related to declining water levels, streamflow impacts, and water quality. Supplemental areas under consideration, such as portions of Edwards and Kiowa counties and district-wide nitrate monitoring, are also being evaluated for potential future action.

The District is currently revising its draft Action Plan and is actively seeking stakeholder feedback. Public outreach meetings have concluded, but the draft document is available for review on the District's website (<https://gmd5.org/district-action-plan>). All water users and interested parties are encouraged to submit comments through the online survey to help shape effective, balanced solutions that support both agricultural sustainability and environmental needs in Central Kansas.

### **Weather Stations**

The Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 has operated a network of weather stations across the District for several decades. These stations deliver critical real-time data, including precipitation, wind speed and direction, grass-reference evapotranspiration (ET), and other key weather parameters. This information is widely used by producers for irrigation scheduling, crop spraying decisions, and other farm management activities.

Due to circumstances beyond our control, voice call access to the stations is no longer available. To ensure continued access, the District has upgraded its communications hardware and launched a new online weather portal. The portal automatically updates every 20 minutes and can be accessed at (<https://weather.gmd5.org>).

In addition to current conditions, users can also view complete historical data from all stations. If you need assistance accessing this data, please reach out to our office.

### **Water Quality**

In Central Kansas, water quantity is generally less of a concern than in other areas of the High Plains Aquifer. However, even abundant water is of limited value if its quality is poor. To help water users better understand local groundwater conditions, the District offers free water sampling and analysis for chloride and nitrate concentrations. The District provides sample bottles, detailed collection instructions, and laboratory analysis at no cost to the user. While the District's laboratory is not KDHE-certified, it delivers timely and cost-effective water quality results for the region.

The District is collaborating with other agencies and universities to improve public understanding of the aquifer's health. Data collected through this program is shared with the Kansas Geological Survey (KGS) to support the development of a public online dashboard. All personally identifiable information is removed before sharing. The goal of this effort is not to assign blame, but to build a comprehensive picture of regional water quality.

More data means better decisions. The District regularly samples its own observation wells, but additional data from private wells is critically needed. If you have historical or current water quality records, please consider sharing them with the District to support this important regional effort.

### **Irrigation Technology Initiative**

The District still has funds available through the Irrigation Technology Initiative (ITI), which includes two parts: system evaluation and cost share.

1. System Evaluation – An irrigation engineer will evaluate your complete irrigation system to provide a better understanding of the producer's irrigation system's efficiency. These evaluations identify issues that may be reducing performance. To get started, simply complete the onboarding steps and an irrigation engineer will be in contact to conduct the evaluation. Once a completed application is submitted, eligible water users may receive compensation.

2. Cost Share – Based on the results of the system evaluation, irrigators can apply for cost share to make recommended system improvements. The program provides up to \$3,500 per system and up to \$7,000 per entity, ensuring more producers can benefit.

The ITI is open to any irrigator within District boundaries and is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Funding is made possible in part by the State of Kansas Water Plan Fund and is limited, so don't wait to apply. Additional details can be found at: (<https://gmd5.org/irrigation-technology>).

### **Newsletter Update**

The District is committed to providing open and transparent information to all water users in the region. As water policies and programs continue to evolve, we are actively enhancing our website with additional resources and tools to better serve you.

However, due to rising postage costs, we will soon be transitioning to a new online format. During this transition period, we will continue sending the newsletter in its current paper format to ensure you receive uninterrupted updates and summaries of District activities and current events. We will begin compiling our digital mailing list soon. If you would like to be included in that list, contact our office.

**Do we have your correct mailing address?**

**Let us know at 125 S. Main St., Stafford, Kansas 67578 or call 620-234-5352.**