MINUTES – JUNE 12, 2025
BIG BEND GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT #5
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The monthly board meeting of the Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5 was held at the District office in Stafford, Kansas on Thursday June 12, 2025. The board members present were Tom Taylor, Darrell Wood, Craig Zwick, Joe Schlessiger, Kerry Froetschner, Gary Hornbaker, John Janssen, and Fred Grunder. The District staff present was Orrin Feril. The guests present were Brian Klager, Jeff Crispin (Zoom), Chris Smith (Zoom), Dave Romero (Zoom), and Jason Norquest (Zoom).

MARLYN SPARE

The June regular board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Tom Taylor.

A brief discussion regarding USGS monitoring at Zenith gage and KDA–DWR's draft framework for K.S.A. 82a-1044 were added to the agenda as items 4a and 4b respectively.

Kerry Froetschner moved, and Gary Hornbaker seconded to approve the May minutes as presented. Motion carried 9-0.

Orrin Feril provided the board and public with the June treasurer's report and highlighted the unique items for further board review. Darrell Wood moved, and John Janssen seconded to accept the June treasurer's report as presented. Motion carried 9-0.

In recent months, the District has been accepting applications for the Irrigation Technology Initiative (ITI) system evaluations. These evaluations are being conducted in anticipation of a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to provide cost share for irrigation system improvements. Unfortunately, this RCPP funding is currently not available. KDA–DOC has offered additional funding from the State Water Plan Fund for cost shares for system improvements while awaiting RCPP funding. The draft ITI cost share agreement was presented to the board for consideration. Following discussion regarding cost share amounts and limitations, Marlyn Spare moved, and Craig Zwick seconded to approve the agreement and designate the manager to sign the agreement. Motion carried 9-0. Marlyn Spare moved, and John Janssen seconded to limit the cost share to $3500 per system and $7000 per entity. Motion carried 9-0.

Over the past few weeks, the region has seen increased rainfall as well as corresponding streamflow recovery. There have been concerns with how the USGS streamflow gage stations are monitored and maintained, specifically regarding calibration and corrections to gaged flows vs gage height correlations. Brian Klager, USGS, was in attendance to discuss their internal procedure for maintaining the gage stations and to present a scope of work to improve the monitoring for the Zenith gage station. The board had a thorough discussion regarding the utility of improved instrumentation at the stations due to the higher level of scrutiny they receive from the public and agencies. It was consensus of the board to pursue camera installation soon and potentially specific conductance instrumentation if the Watershed Plan progresses to an augmentation project. No action was taken by the board.

A few weeks ago, KDA–DWR provided draft framework to the GMDs for implementing the newly established K.S.A. 82a-1044. This draft framework was provided to the board for consideration and feedback to the Chief Engineer. The board discussed several aspects of the framework in relation to the District's areas of concern. Dave Romero, Balleau GW, provided a current update on work being undertaken to assist with concerns KDA–DWR had regarding areas in Edwards and Kiowa counties. No action was taken by the board.

Orrin Feril discussed staff activities for the past few weeks and upcoming months. The District has seen increased rainfalls which has impacted field activities. As many are aware, there is a water right up for auction soon that could potentially be used as offset for new water rights. This has generated significant workload in the office, answering questions and running preliminary evaluations for those prospective locations. The Watershed Plan-EIS public comment period wrapped up with well over 100 comments received. Currently, the comments are being reviewed and evaluated by Olsson and other consultants in preparation for the final Watershed Plan-EIS document. The ITI evaluations are starting to come in as water users hear about the program. Further public outreach will continue to spread the word about this program. The board is invited to David Stroberg's farm for an evening social and picnic on Monday June 16 at 5:00 pm.

John Janssen made the following motion at 8:08 p.m.: "I move that the board go into executive session for the preliminary discussion regarding acquisition of real property exception under KOMA, and the open meeting will resume here in the meeting room at 8:20 p.m." Kerry Froetschner seconded. Motion carried 9-0. The board came out of executive session at 8:20 p.m.

The next District board meeting is tentatively set for July 10, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

With no further items to discuss, the board adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Attest by: Fred Gruenich Dated: 7.10.2025