

GROUNDWATER HI - LITES

April 2025

Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5

Watershed Plan—EIS (Public Meeting Scheduled!!)

The District has been working with its consultant, Olsson, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to complete a Rattlesnake Creek Watershed Plan Environmental Impact Statement (Plan-EIS). The Plan-EIS is evaluating a variety of alternatives for dual purposes; to provide long-term agricultural water management and to meaningfully address the impairment of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) senior water right for Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The draft Plan-EIS has undergone a thorough technical review by the National Water Management Center of the USDA-NRCS as well as an administrative review by NRCS staff in Washington D.C. Following these evaluations and pertinent revisions, the draft Plan-EIS will be made available for thorough public and interagency review and comment. The District and coordinating agencies, including but not limited to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, KDA–DWR, and KDHE, have provided meaningful reviews and input into this process.

Olsson, with assistance from the District, will hold a public meeting on **May 8, 2025 from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm in St John at the Stafford County Annex** to present the details of the Plan-EIS and will accept direct comments back from stakeholders. The public notice for this stage in the process can be found on NRCS' website: <https://bit.ly/NRCS-Notice>. For details, updates, and to provide comments scan the QR code.



Irrigation Technology Initiative

The District has been in coordination with Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Conservation (KDA–DOC) and other groundwater management districts to bring a new initiative to this region. The objective of the Irrigation Technology Initiative (ITI) is to provide system assessments to help producers gain a better understanding of their water system's efficiency. The approach will utilize techniques and lessons learned from similar technology projects previously focused on the Rattlesnake Creek region.

The first step in the process is the completion of a system assessment. Prior to the system assessment, the water user is asked to complete onboarding steps that are broken down into nine categories. Upon completion and submission of the onboarding material, the water user may be eligible for compensation.

The ITI is available for any irrigator within the District boundaries and will be on a first-come-first-served basis. The ITI is funded by KDA–DOC and limited, so if you are interested, check: <https://gmd5.org/irrigation-technology>.

Annual Meeting Recap

This year's annual meeting was held on February 20, 2025 in St. John. There were approximately 50 in attendance in person and online for discussion on the activities of the District and for the election of three board member positions for three-year terms: Marlyn Spare—Stafford County, Gary Hornbaker—Reno

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UPCOMING DATES

TNC Workshop:
Flyways & Farmland
April 15

Watershed Plan-EIS
Public Meeting
May 8

District Board Meeting
May 9

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 |

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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
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County, Fred Grunder—Pratt County. Following the elections, the 2024 financial statement and 2026 proposed budget were presented to the public for consideration and discussion. Vijay Ramasamy, Special Advisor for Water to Governor Kelly, joined virtually to address 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, specifically the Compensated Allocation Management Program (CAMP). Those in attendance participated in a thorough discussion of the District’s activities and priorities for the past year and years to come.

Kansans Live WELL

Attention Teachers! The Kansas Geological Survey is inviting area teachers to attend “Kansans Live WELL,” a three-day short course designed for Kansas high school science and agriculture teachers. This course will explore water and hydrogeology in Western Kansas, address key water issues facing our communities, and provide you with practical strategies to bring these topics back to your students. It will be held in Great Bend, Kansas from June 2-4 with all hotel, mileage, and food expenses paid. If you're interested please sign up by May 1 using QR Code to the right. **Spots are limited to 20 teachers.**



Water Quality Testing

The District has been collecting water quality data throughout the region for decades. Historically, this water quality monitoring has been focused on monitoring the chloride concentrations in the eastern half of the District. Within the past year, the District has taken action to broaden the scope of the monitoring. The District has upgraded its water quality lab to be able to analyze water samples for chloride and nitrate concentrations with high accuracy despite not being a KDHE-certified laboratory. Throughout 2024, the District staff have been streamlining the process for collecting, analyzing samples and compiling results. With this groundwork laid, we encourage any person interested to have their water well sampled and analyzed. The District is providing the water bottles, sampling instructions, and analysis at no cost. If you are interested, contact the office and we will provide you with additional details for this effort.

The analysis results will be sent to you for your information and a copy will be retained at the office for our reference. Over time, the District is compiling this water quality data together into a regional database to determine areas with water quality concerns. If you have water quality analyses in your records, please provide them to the District. This would help speed up this process and minimize data gaps in the region. Once compiled, the District will continue to maintain the database and develop pertinent programs to address the issue for future generations.

“If we move forward and don’t clean up the messes of the past, they’ll just get swept under the rug.”

Erin Brokovich

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