

# Solomon-Republican Regional Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

**10 am, Thursday, May 27, 2021  
GoTo Meeting and Conference Call**

**Members in Attendance:**

Name	City	Category	Term	Present
Timothy Driggs (Chair)	Phillipsburg, KS	Public Water Supply (cc)	2023	Yes
Keli Habiger (Vice-Chair)	Phillipsburg, KS	Fish, Wildlife & Recreation	2023	Yes
Mike Brzon	Courtland, KS	At Large Public	2021	No
John Cockerham	Osborne, KS	Conservation/Environment (cc)	2021	No
Rhonda Coffman	Agenda, KS	At Large Public	2023	Yes
Raymond Debey	Cawker City, KS	Agriculture (cc)	2023	Yes
Robbin Dibble	Alton, KS	At Large Public (cc)	2021	Yes
Donald Hellwig	Solomon, KS	Agriculture	2021	No
Stanley Kats	Prairie View, KS	At Large Public	2023	No
Terry Nelson	Phillips County, KS	Irrigation West	2021	No
David Pfizenmaier	Clay Center, KS	At Large Public	2023	Yes
Arnold Ross	Webber, KS	Irrigation East	2023	No

**Others in attendance:**

Name	Agency	Name	Agency
Josh Olson	KWO	Steve Frost	KDA-DOC
Amelia Nill	KWO	Chelsea Erickson	KDA-DWR
Pete Gile	KBID		

- I) **Welcome and Introductions:** The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am by Chair, Tim Driggs. Self-introductions were given with RAC roll call completed on the conference call line.
- II) **Review of February 25<sup>th</sup> meeting notes:** The meeting notes were reviewed and approved as written.
- III) **RAC Business:**
  - a. **Republican River Compact Administration (RRCA) Update:** Chelsea Erickson (KDA-DWR) gave an update presentation on the RRCA, website [here](#). Chelsea shared that the RRCA annual meeting and work session will be a one-day event on August 25<sup>th</sup>. Chelsea noted that the work session is generally in the morning with the RRCA Engineering Committee, and the annual meeting is generally in the late morning to early afternoon. McCook, Nebraska, is hosting the 2021 annual meeting, and then, it will be in Colorado for two years. There will likely be an online option as well. Chelsea mentioned there is ongoing discussion about floods, noting that flood years followed by water-short years cause some accounting issues. Chelsea discussed the August 26 Harlan County Lake resolution, which allows Kansas to request water. Chelsea explained Nebraska pumps that water during compliance years, but Kansas feels they should have some minimum amount of access to that storage. David asked where the flooding is in Nebraska and what the issue was related to it. Chelsea responded that it is above Guide Rock, and explained that water-short years trigger a complicated accounting issue related to the model and engineers. David asked if the issue was that Nebraska felt they should be catching up when there is flooding north of Guide Rock. Chelsea responded that flood flow is flow you cannot really use, and Nebraska felt this was counted against them.

- b. **Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District Update (KBID):** Pete Gile (KBID) gave an update on activities of the Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District (KBID), primarily canal to pipeline conversion projects, presentation [here](#). Pete noted that almost all of the projects were upstream of Lovewell, which helps with the Harlan County situation. Pete discussed the Ridge 3.9 Lateral Project, which involved the installation of 2,408' of pipe and saves an estimated 191 acre-feet/year of water. Pete noted the project was part of a WaterSMART grant. Next, Pete discussed the Ridge 1.3 Right Lateral Project, which involved the installation of 11,471' of pipe and saves and estimated 623 acre-feet/year of water. The Ridge Headgate Automation Project has allowed KBID to dip their toes into automation, working with Rubicon. The project involves a canal above Lovewell. The top end of the canal has two 4" orifices. Installation of slip meters allows for control of flow to a desired discharge. Pete noted the price actually came in a bit below the \$73,000 estimate. Estimated water savings from the project is 212 acre-feet/year.

The Courtland Canal Automation Project is an estimated \$1.6 million project that involves 10 radial gates. It is the biggest grant award KBID has ever received. KBID used some of the settlement funds and added an amendment to allow use on automation. The project will save an estimated 4,199 acre-feet/year. Pete said KBID expects to have better canal control and to be able to keep Lovewell at a higher level more consistently. Pete noted the project is good for both KBID and recreationalists. Pete noted that the \$1.6 million quote was with one supplier. However, KBID was approached by another automation company that gave a significantly reduced estimate, at a total cost of \$780,000. KBID was impressed by what they saw from the company. Pete noted that the original cost and contribution numbers for the project are changing significantly. Pete stated that, if the Courtland Canal project is a success, it will be a flagship project. Pete mentioned that Guide Rock is working to automate the diversion dam canal. Pete noted that savings from the Courtland Canal would allow for the burial of an additional 2-3 laterals. David asked if Pete would be willing to share the presentation. Josh stated that it would be posted online and would be sent in the notes to the group. Ray asked if there was a risk of hacking. Pete responded that all the automated controls have manual overrides, so they can be shutoff. KBID also uses its own unique radio frequency and toured a lot of districts that have used automation. Pete mentioned that the control boxes being used as target practice was a concern, so KBID is putting steel plating on both sides. The solar panels are also potentially vulnerable, so KBID has several on hand to switch them out if they are damaged. There is also a battery for backup power. Pete noted the projects will save a lot of water in Harlan County and for downstream users. Pete noted KBID is trying to be prudent and spend funding as wisely as they can.

- c. **Kansas Water Plan Update:** Josh Olson (KWO) gave a brief update on the Kansas Water Plan.
- d. **Additional KWO Updates:** Josh mentioned that the state had essentially gone back to normal operations, so in-person meetings were an option again. Tim asked the RAC what they preferred for meeting format. Rhonda noted that it would be nice to get together. Keli said that she liked the in-person meetings, but that virtual meetings are a lot more convenient. Josh said the group could discuss the possibility of hybrid meetings in the future.

Josh asked the RAC if there were any topics they would be interested in hearing more information about at future RAC meetings. David Pfizenmaier mentioned having questions about riparian water rights. David noted that, related to agri-business, it seems that a lot of the surface water rights are owned by people along the river. David observed that it seems that people will pay whatever it takes to own the land along the river because it gets them access to expanded water rights over significant adjacent land. David pointed out that this creates an inflated land value and limits outside access. David expressed an appreciation for how water

is shared in the Bostwick District. David noted it would be helpful to have a presentation with a summary of water rights and how volumes are allocated. David expressed a desire to see the resource shared for the benefit of many and noted some concern about water rights becoming too concentrated. David suggested having someone well versed in water law with thoughts about potential solutions come to a future RAC meeting. Chelsea Erickson (KDA) said she would run the questions about surface water rights by Kelly Stewart (KDA) to see if he might be able to address them.

- IV) Agency or Public Comments:** The meeting was opened for agency and public comments. Steve Frost (KDA-DOC) noted that DOC has been busy with the legislative session. Steve suggested that maybe the DOC could give a presentation on funding for regional projects. Steve said that he had appreciated the online meeting option, noting that it was particularly helpful for individuals that attend RAC meetings in multiple regions.
- V) Upcoming Meetings:**
- a. Kansas Water Authority meeting (Wednesday, June 9, 9:00 – Conference Call)
  - b. Next Solomon-Republican RAC meeting (July – Doodle Poll)
- VI) Adjourn:** Tim adjourned the meeting with no further business at 10:53 am.