



Upper Republican Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Notes

Upper Republican Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

1:30 pm, Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Northwest Kansas GMD #4, 1290 W. 4th, Colby, KS

Members in Attendance:

Name	City	Category	Term	Present
Sid Metcalf (Chair)	Oberlin, KS	At Large Public (cc)	2019	No
Mike Schultz (Vice-Chair)	Brewster, KS	Public Water Supply (cc)	2019	Yes
Brian Baalman	Menlo, KS	Industry/Commerce (cc)	2021	No
Shannon Kenyon	Colby, KS	Groundwater Management	2019	Yes
Gary Fisher	Atwood, KS	Local Government	2021	Yes
Ken McCarty	Rexford, KS	Agriculture Industry	2019	No
Tyson McGreer	Colby, KS	Public Water Supply 2	2021	No
Ian de Waal	Saint Francis, KS	Agriculture (cc)	2019	No
Sue Evans	Colby, KS	At Large Public 2	2021	Yes
Scott Ross	Atwood, KS	Conservation/Environment (cc)	2021	No
Kenneth Sanderson	Goodland, KS	Conservation/Environment 2	2019	Yes
VACANT		Agriculture 2	2021	

Others in attendance:

Name	Agency
Brownie Wilson	KGS
Dan Wells	KDHE
Chelsea Erickson	KDA-DWR
Abby Athen	KDWPT
Kevin Klag	KDWPT
Ray Luhman	GMD4
Alexandra Geisler	KWO
Armando Zarco	KWO

Welcome and Introductions

Vice-Chairman Mike Shultz began the meeting at 1:36pm. Board members introduced themselves for all present. A quorum was present; five of the eleven committee members were present.

Approval of Agenda

Gary Fisher motioned to approve the agenda. Kenny Sanderson seconded. The agenda was approved as presented.

Review and Approval of September & January Meeting Notes

Shannon Kenyon motioned to approve both sets of meeting minutes. Gary Fisher seconded. The September and January minutes were both approved.

Membership: Sid Metcalf (Chair), Oberlin, KS; Mike Schultz (Vice-Chair), Brewster, KS; Brian Baalman, Menlo, KS; Shannon Kenyon, Colby, KS; Gary Fisher, Atwood, KS; Ken McCarty, Rexford, KS; Tyson McGreer, Colby, KS; Adriaan De Waal, St. Francis, KS; Sue Evans, Colby, KS; Scott Ross, Atwood, KS; Kenneth Sanderson, Goodland, KS
KWO Planner: Alexandra Geisler, 785-296-0865; alexandra.geisler@kwo.ks.gov
Armando Zarco, 620-276-2901; armando.zarco@kwo.ks.gov

KGS Aquifer Update – Brownie Wilson

Brownie Wilson gave an overview of how the cooperative water level program well measurements went this year, including the provisional water level change data for 2018 – 2019. Overall the changes for the year weren't too bad, but this was driven in part by larger than average precipitation. It is not so much that recharge is increased, but rather that increased precipitation decreases pumping demands. On average the water-level change for the Upper Republican Region was up by 0.25 ft. based on preliminary data. Kansas is unique in the availability of data from historic water use reports. This data allows for regional characterization looking at what the aquifer is doing over time, providing the ability to see patterns such as the connection between water level change and groundwater use over time.

In addition to annual well measurements there is the Kansas Index Well Program. Index wells provide the ability to characterize what is happening at the local level and how the aquifer responds to pumping with continuous, real-time measurements. Looking at the data from these wells, such as the index well in Thomas County, has shown that water levels are not in a constant state of decline. The end-of-season recovery is similar no matter the variation in climactic and pumping conditions. With this insight the aquifer water balance was rewritten to account for net inflow and pumping. When looking at a regional level, a percent reduction needed for stable water levels could be reached by plotting average annual water level change vs. annual water use. Using this methodology, a 16% reduction on average across the entire Upper Republican Region would be needed to stabilize water levels. Remember to look at these numbers with caution, these are averages and there are many extremes that may skew the numbers.

Mike Schultz requested for the planners to email the RAC a copy of the presentation, and asked about the effects of what is happening in Nebraska on Kansas. Brownie answered explaining that there are no effects. Similar to how what happens in Northwest Kansas doesn't affect Southwest Kansas. The same thing applies to snowmelt, it can only increase streamflow because the Ogallala does not extend into the mountains.

Water Technology Farm & Field Days Update – Armando Zarco

Armando Zarco showed the committee where to access information about the Water Technology Farm Program on the Kansas Water Office website. In addition to an overview of the program and an updated map, the webpage includes information on each of the individual farms and access to the first annual Technology Farm Report covering 2018 harvest data. The report uses KWO data, which is not the same as what Jonathan from K-State hand collects and uses to look at the agronomy.

There are 10 technology farms still in place and KWO is pursuing 5 additional farms. Feedback indicates that 3 years is not enough time to evaluate, so those even the farms through that first 3-year period will be continuing with the program. Everything ultimately depends on funding availability. Homeland Farm, one of the additional 5 added this year, is located within the Upper Smoky Hill Region. Geiger in the East will be the first dryland technology farm, and the other three additional are located in central Kansas. The next step is to have field days in the July/August timeframe, with dates selected by the end of May or early June. If anyone knows individuals in the area who may be interested in joining the program, put them in touch with Armando.

Republican River Compact Agreement Stakeholder Group

A group is being formed that will work on how to use the money received from Colorado. Earl, the Acting Director of the Water Office is working on organizing the group at this point. There is no other information or timeline at this point. Kenny Sanderson asked about the survey results from the public meeting. No one present had seen the results, but Chelsea Erickson explained that the use of an online system led to many out of state replies, which may be why that information is not available.

Water Quality Goal Discussion

Alexandra explained to the group that it might be best to wait before working on a new water quality goal. It is unsure yet what the new governor will want, and what is going to happen with Vision and RAC goals statewide. The committee agreed that it would be best to wait until we have a better idea of what is going to happen. Kenny Sanderson added that what the compact stakeholder group decides will directly affect water quality, and in turn may change how we want to address it.

SOTR RAC Presentations & Outreach Efforts

Alexandra apologized for not having more work done on these by now. She plans to work with those volunteers in hopes of having a draft ready for the committee to review at the next meeting.

2019 Membership Drive

Alexandra Geisler asked everyone to look at the sheet included in the meeting materials that shows the membership drive timeline, and a table that highlights all members with a 2019 membership expiration. Those committee members, their official expiration date being 6/30/2019, should have received an email notification from her in March. The open call for applications will be during the month of May, and anyone interested in a position, including current members, will need to submit an application by May 31st. The KWA RAC Operations Committee will review candidates in June, and make recommendations for the full KWA to take action on at the July meeting in Goodland. Alexandra added that she can collect any completed applications at the end of the meeting, and has extra blank applications for anyone that needs one.

Agency Reports

Shannon Kenyon GMD4: The region received a lot of rain and hail last year. Water level data and pumping data looks favorable. The GMD is still in the middle of a lawsuit, and oral arguments will take place in Ellis County at the end of May. The Sheridan 6 advisory meeting held last week went well. The 1st District Wide LEMA advisory committee meeting is coming up next week and it is open to the public (April 10th – Wednesday) There is an issue, especially in the LEMA, that people are not checking their meters every two weeks. Some only check it once a year and realize it was not working all year. In the past, they just got a notice of non-compliance, but this year there is a fine and no warning. If they catch it within two weeks & can figure out those numbers that is ok. GMD4 had 90% of individuals report using the online system this year.

Chelsea Erickson KDA-DWR: Online water use reporting was a huge success this year. There are plans to make some tweaks due to issues that came up. Right now, we are reaching out to those with late reports. On the compact side of things, not a lot is moving right now. She went to a meeting of the South Fork Republican Coalition in Colorado about Bonnie Reservoir. Several groups have banded together in agreement that there is economic value and a need to put water back into the system. They had a group of scientists come together and do a study; they came up with three options. They are going to select the top two and take it back to the people to decide what to do with Bonnie Reservoir. If you google “South Fork Republican River Coalition” or “Republican River Water Conservation” website you can find out more about it. Shannon Kenyon asked who is paying for it. Chelsea cannot remember exactly but it is a Colorado State Agency and they have put in 4 million. The Colorado Water Conservation Board is involved as well. Cost estimates will be shared at the next meeting. Armando added that the Division of Conservation just had a press release that they have \$100,000 available for cost-share on irrigation technology for conservation areas. The limit per farmers is \$10,000 he thinks and it is first come first serve.

Kevin Klag KDWPT: He is here mostly to keep informed on the compact. He has handouts about it in the back about the Tree-clearing project along the Upper Republican. That project is postponed until September and funding will run out soon.



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Dan Wells KDHE: April 1 is the start of Harmful Algae Bloom season, which coincides with the recreation use season. They monitor all year long if someone calls in, but this is when they see most of it. It could be a busy year with all of the rain & runoff. The only lake last year with a confirmed bloom in the region was Atwood. With the wet weather over winter and spring, they have been monitoring wastewater and livestock lagoons. There is one lagoon in Southwest Kansas that overtopped, and some emergency dewatering permits issued in order to avoid overtopping.

Mike Schultz explained that Brewster has been running borderline on nitrates. The city has been working with KDHE to come to an agreement on a project to address this issue. Terms include the amount of money received at the completion of the project, which they have two years to complete. Between April 15th and 25th the paperwork will be signed and the money available in order to start the project. Mike asked Dan Wells what it would take to get a temporary permit to irrigation grasslands with the water, the answer being that he just needs to call Dan to get approval for that.

Alexandra Geisler KWO: The Water Office has a new CFO, and several other positions will be changing internally. Armando asked the members their thoughts on January's joint meeting, and the feedback received was positive. The committee agreed that they would like to do a joint meeting annually.

Other Business

Public Comments – None

Messages to Kansas Water Authority – None

Future Meetings

GMD4 Board Meeting – April 4th @ 9am – Colby

Kansas Water Authority – April 18th @ 8am – Abilene Civic Center

Next RAC Meeting – Budget Review in June

Adjourn

Sue Evans motioned to adjourn the meeting. Shannon Kenyon seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:09pm.