



Upper Republican Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Notes

Upper Republican Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

1:00 pm, Wednesday, September 26, 2018
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	Yes
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	Yes
Kenneth Sanderson	Goodland, KS	Conservation/Environment 2	2019	Yes
Vacant		Agriculture 2	2021	

Others in attendance:

Name	Agency
Ray Luhman	GMD4
Kevin Klag	KDWPT
Sloane Southerland	Colby Free Press
Dan Wells	KDHE
Chelsea Erickson	KDA-DWR
Alexandra Geisler	KWO
Armando Zarco	KWO

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Sid Metcalf began the meeting at 1:03pm, welcoming and introducing the two new committee members Scott Ross & Kenny Sanderson. He had everyone go around and introduce themselves. A quorum was present; seven of the eleven committee members were present.

Approval of Agenda

Sue Evans motioned to approve the agenda. Gary Fisher seconded. The agenda was approved as presented.

Review and Approval of March & June Meeting Notes

Mike Schultz motioned to approve both sets of meeting minutes. Sue Evans seconded. The March and June minutes were both approved.

Membership Changes

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

Alexandra explained that the KWA Operations Committee thought that both Scott and Kenny fit into the Conservation Environment category. So what they did was add a second Conservation and Environment position in order to put them both in that category and left the Agriculture 2 position open.

RAC Operations & Planner Changes

Alexandra Geisler from the Kansas Water Office announced that the planner changes within the office discussed at previous meetings have officially taken effect. Richard Rockel has transitioned to a different position and will no longer be a planner for the region. Armando Zarco was hired on as the new KWO position stationed out in Garden City. Armando and Alexandra moving forward will be co-planners for all four of the western Regional Advisory Committees.

Armando Zarco then took time to introduce himself and give an overview of his new role within KWO.

Alexandra Geisler then reviewed the IPM document with committee members, pointing out specifically the attendance policy. Moving forward attendance will be tracked and IPM enforced. If a member cannot attend a meeting, even last minute, they need to inform either of the planners or the chairman ahead of time. If there is a meeting or agenda item and a member wants to participate in the conversation but can't be in attendance, it is possible to set up a conference call but this must be done in advance of the meeting. When it comes to communicating and setting meeting dates, the members agreed that doodle polls are the best option. To ensure KWO has the most up to date contact information Alexandra will be passing around a sheet later in the meeting for members to mark their preferred method of contact and fix any mistakes in their personal contact information.

KWA Meeting Report

Chairman Sid Metcalf was in attendance at the Water Authority meeting in Manhattan. He had Alexandra give an overview of them major topics addressed at the meeting. The chairman of the Great Bend Prairie (GBP) gave a report from the RAC requesting a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the agencies and standard operation procedures (SOP) on how to implement Vision goals. The GBP had tried to work on identifying/mapping salt water disposal lines as stated in their goals. They had trouble coordinating and getting help from the state agencies. This is what led to their request. Tracy has agreed to work on an MOU and right now at least until more funding is received they are not looking at using or developing any SOP.

The discussion then moved to the KWA Budget recommendations. There were not any committee members in attendance at the RACs budget webinar back at the end of July, so there were no recommendations to pass on the Water Authority. Items of relevance to the region that are included in the budget recommendations are Crop & Livestock Research, Irrigation Technology, and Water Technology Farms. The Water Authority also requested that the agency positions be funded but separately from the full request and through the State General Fund.

The State of the Resource (SOTR) Reports were officially released at the KWA meeting and will be discussed in further detail later. Drought documents from the KWA meeting are in the meeting materials, and if anyone has questions on it they can direct those to either of the planners.

Water Technology Farm Field Days Review – Armando Zarco

Armando Zarco from KWO provided an overview of the Water Technology Farms and recently held field days. There are currently ten Water Technology Farms and each is different. The Northwest Technical College Precision Agriculture Program in the Upper Republican is focused more on workforce development and has several participating producers and covers ten fields. The two new farms in the Equus-Walnut Region are more water quality focused and are looking at reducing water usage to aid in slowing the destruction of their soil from chloride in the water. Field days just finished up

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and there was a lot of variability in the attendance at different field days some having less than 20 and others with over 100 attendees. Some of the farms are just on year one while other are on year three. The cost for each is variable depending on what each producer wants to do. Funding comes from KWO and a large number of other various sponsors.

Mike Schultz asked if mobile drip is being adopted outside of use on the technology farms. Armando answered yes that we are seeing an increase in the number of producers using mobile drip. Shannon said that the adoption here is low, there is not as much interest here compared to SW Kansas, many producers are still planting in rows. Ray explained that some local producers tried something similar a while back but they didn't like it at all and had lots of issues with rodents. As far as Northwest Tech they may have a field with mobile drip or may be looking at testing it on their own farm, but their focus for the technology farms has been on soil moisture probes.

Update on GMD 4 LEMA

Shannon said much hasn't changed, it is up and running but it's been quiet. We've been lucky to have had rain in some places, and we've had some hail as well. Producers are happy they can bank for future years, and are thinking more and using their water more wisely. However there are still some producers that pumped even after the hail damage. There is still a lawsuit out there but it is in the hands of the courts, so we're letting it ride out. We can't do anything until that is done, and it will provide an answer that will be beneficial. Mike Schultz said the newsletter the GMD sent out was good. Sid asked how many lawsuits there are and Shannon explained that there are two and that both are similar but different in nature. The biggest question is whether or not the LEMA statue is constitutional. The other is that priority wasn't given consideration, but there are several avenues that can be worked around for that.

RAC Water Quality Goals Review

Chemical use in the region was discussed at the previous meeting and the question was posed as to who would be the responsible party for contamination problems in the future. This bothers Mike Shultz, and he thinks we need to be the first to address water quality in the region. The committee has discussed this topic several times and considered the tracking of usage and education on proper use to be important to the region. Dan Wells from KDHE explained that KDA tracks pesticides, and that part of the licensing is that they have to be certified and know how to properly handle it, clean up spills, etc. However pesticide use is hard to track, and as far as what KDHE has been seeing there have been a lot more pesticide and fertilizer spills. Once they find this out they ensure it gets cleaned up, but it's not always reported. There is the Community Right to Know Act and KDHE tracks all chemical within a community in case of an emergency. Mike and other committee members brought up the issue of smoking when applying the pesticides in too high of wind, and Dan said that there have been more instances of that happening recently.

Moving forward public meetings could be held to raise awareness but Ray brought up the fact that you will get most of the public there but won't reach the individual who is actually doing it. Dan suggested promoting alternative weed control measures other than pesticides. KDHE taken an active role in promoting soil health but the big questions is who to promote these practices and get the information out to the right audiences.

At this point the question became how to move forward on this concern as a committee. Alexandra brought up some of the work she is doing internally at KWO to assist with tracking progress on projects, the Vision, and RAC Action Plans. When looking specifically at progress on the Upper Republican Action Plan every action item is either complete, ongoing or in progress. Alexandra explained to the committee that it is an option if they would like to add a goal to address this concern in the region. If a goal was created the committee would have more leverage to track usage, have education programs, apply for grants, and form partnerships to promote BMPs related to chemical use and water quality. Ideas floated around such as working with the technology farms and possibly K-State Extension. Kenny cautioned to be careful how the issue is approached because you could destroy the Ag Aviation Industry itself. This subject has been beat to

death at the national and state level, pilots have to sit through a bunch of programs and there is a highly negative response from the public towards their profession. A new goal needs to be carefully worded and well thought out.

Mike Shultz motioned to draft a new water quality goal. Sue Evans seconded. The motion carried and Alexandra and Armando will work with Dan from KDHE and other KWO staff on drafting an appropriate but carefully worded goal and corresponding action plan for the region.

The committee did not think that they needed to add any other goals at this point in time. They feel as far as education goes that each goal already has an education piece to it. Shannon Kenyon did point out that she thinks RCPP is dead in this region, and the committee agreed. After some brief discussion Shannon motioned to take the 3rd action item under goal 2 related to RCPP out of the Action Plan. Sue Evans seconded. The motion passed.

There were two other changes Shannon pointed out in the Action Plan progress tracking information. On the 2nd action item under goal 2 and the only action item under goal 4 it references GMD4. She explained that it should be referencing the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Conservation Foundation instead. Those changes were noted and will be made.

Republican River Compact Agreement

There is a stakeholder meeting being held at 9:30am in St. Francis at the 4H building next Tuesday October 2nd. The meeting will address Bonnie Reservoir and what area stakeholders want done with the money received from Colorado. Shannon will be there and thinks there will be some great discussion, and encourages everyone who can go to attend. In regards to Bonnie Reservoir Kenny explained that the reservoir has been taken out of fisheries management and the funds have been reallocated. It is now a wildlife area and there will never be a fishery budget there again. It can't be renovated to be a lake again, it is grown up with cottonwoods and other things and would cost well over \$2 million. Shannon asked Chelsea if Colorado has decided what they are going to do with their portion of the money. She responded that they have talked about retiring groundwater rights in the South Fork. There will also be a 3-states meeting afterwards, and those individuals will be there at the stakeholder meeting to hear what the public wants before deciding what to do.

Shannon had an idea; now that we have a document out for State of the Resource we could have a plug at the end of the meeting to share a couple facts, the infographic and/or document, and let those present know the RAC can come and give presentations. The committee agreed that it should be more like an announcement. Hopefully a lot of people show up, many of them probably don't know or understand a lot of the issues going on in the region. Shannon is going as a representative of the GMD, so Kenny volunteered to be there and do it. Alexandra will provide copies of the infographic and several copies of the report itself.

SOTR RAC Presentation & Outreach Efforts

Referencing the earlier conversation Alexandra from KWO added that the released reports can be found on the Water Office website, and a hard copy has been provided for each member. There are two additional items to discuss in relation to the reports; the first is the infographic that goes along with the report, and the second is the presentation put together by the Kansas RAC. The committee likes the infographic but Shannon said that the LEMA section should be worded differently. Instead of saying "approved but portions are subject to pending litigation" it should say "is approved and in affect, but subject to pending litigation."

The Committee has seen an older version of the presentation where Richard Rockel had adapted the content for the region. Since then the Kansas RAC has put together a new version of the presentation. The idea is to have a similar message coming from all of the RACs; the Kansas RAC in particular is focused on the lack of funding. It is up to each committee whether or not they want to use the presentation and what information should be included. Alexandra

presented a rough version of the presentation modified for this region using the new template. This group has previously requested that three versions be made; a technical version, a simplified version for the general public, and a version for kids. Chairman Sid and the planners discussed before the meeting that it would be best if several members agreed to work with Alexandra on these presentations to determine content and develop a script. The committee agreed to this approach and Sue, Mike, and Scott all volunteered to work on putting them together. Shannon added that once they were complete she could edit & review them. When putting them together, the committee wants to ensure that the presentations are kept short and simple, somewhere between 15 & 20 minutes in length.

RAC Focus & Open Discussion

Alexandra from KWO passed the contact sheet around for members to look over, make any changes to their personal information, and if they want choose a preferred method of contact. When asked if there were any changes they would like to see in communication from KWO or meeting location it was brought up that it may be helpful to schedule meetings out in advance for the year. (Note: Action Plan Progress was already discussed earlier in the meeting.)

Joint Meeting

The idea was brought to the committee to have a joint meeting with the Upper Smoky Hill RAC at the beginning of next year. The planners need input on date, timeline, and agenda items from the members. To answer the question what is the benefit of such a meeting; the benefit is that both groups can share ideas, discuss common topics, and address similar issues and concerns. Scott Ross added that joint meetings he attended while he was on the Solomon-Republican with other RACs were beneficial. The committee would like to have the meeting before the start of the legislative session and before the January KWA meeting if possible. The group would also like to make time to have individual meetings afterwards. The only agenda item brought up would be to have a student from the NW Tech come and talk about their experience. Potential location right now is Buffalo Bill Cultural Center in Oakley.

The question was posed to the committee as to whether or not they wanted to have another meeting before the end of the year. They did not think they would need one unless something needed to be done in regards to the creation of the new goal, in which case they would prefer to have a conference call.

Agency Reports

Chelsea Erickson KDA-DWR: The annual Republican River Compact meeting was recently held in Manhattan, and this coming year it will be held in Colby in the basement of the library on August 21st & 22nd. She encourages all committee members to attend. She also urges the committee to attend the October 2nd meeting in St. Francis where the recent settlement with Colorado will be discussed. The purpose is to get stakeholder input on how to use the settlement money. There will be a 3-states meeting afterwards to discuss plans moving forward taking into consideration the input received. For their office most irrigation is wrapped up by now and they will be out and about reading meters this fall. They will be looking for meters that may not have moved because they will be cracking down on non-compliance and water use reporting. Armando added that the MYFA deadline is now extended to December 31st.

Kevin Klag KDWPT: Kevin gave a presentation on the work that has been conducted in the region on the removal of invasive species in the South Fork along the Republican River. Work has been going on since 2015 and they received a grant in 2016. The goal in removing the invasive species is to improve wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities, improve the health of the river restoring surface and groundwater flows, and to control the encroachment of these invasive species on the native species and habitat. A cost-share of 75% was provided to private landowners in the region for the removal. Some problems they came across included individuals liking the trees, Turkeys eating the seed, the trees acting as windbreaks, and most of all issues with contractors. Maps of where removal has occurred and before and after pictures were shown to the committee, one property alone having an estimated 4,000 trees removed. The common practice was to

use a machine to shred the tree into mulch and then treat the stump so it won't come back. Moving forward they will be following up on completed properties and looking to secure additional funds to continue the project. Kevin also passed out an informational flyer on the benefits of cover crops to producers and wildlife habitat. There is statewide funding that is targeted towards 80 acres worth of spring cover crops that comes from the hunting tag purchases. Sid asked if there is any specification on planting; if it could be done by air and if 80 acres would be worth it. 80 acres may be worth it but Kenny pointed out that the later in the year the higher the seed rate would have to be.

Dan Wells KDHE: For the first time there was a confirmed bloom in Atwood Lake this year. The lake reached warning status but the levels have dropped and the warning has been lifted. Atwood was one of many lakes throughout the state to experience a HAB this year. The worst in the state this year was Webster Lake which had to be completely closed because concentrations were so high. He is continuing to work with Brewster on the nitrate contamination issues there. He handed out a list of all the TMDL's that are within the region.

Other Business

Public Comments – None

Messages to Kansas Water Authority – None

Future Meetings

Next RAC Meeting – potential conference call before the KWA meeting in December

Joint meeting with Upper Smoky Hill RAC – beginning of next year

Upper Republican River Stakeholders Meeting – October 2nd in St., Francis, KS @ 9:30am

Governor's Conference for the Future of Water in Kansas – November 13th & 14th in Manhattan

Adjourn

Mike Schultz motioned to adjourn the meeting. Shannon Kenyon seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:56pm.