



# Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

## Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

2:00 pm, Wednesday, April 19, 2017

KLA Environmental Services, 1303 Yucca Street (KS Highway 96 East), Scott City, KS

### Members in Attendance:

Name	City	Category	Term	Present
Shane Mann (Chair)	Quinter, KS	Irrigation	2019	Yes
Lonnie Busch	Leoti, KS	Industry/Commerce (cc)	2017	Yes
Kurt Maurath	Logan County, KS	At Large Public (cc)	2017	No
Frank Mercurio	Scott City, KS	Conservation/Environment (cc)	2019	Yes
Maurice Miller	Healy, KS	Agriculture Industry	2019	Yes
Mike Todd	Scott City, KS	Public Water Supply (cc)	2019	No
Farrin Watt	Leoti, KS	Agriculture (cc)	2017	Yes
Danny Welsh	Wallace County, KS	Groundwater Management	2019	No
Scott Noll	Scott City, KS	At Large Public	2017	No

### Others in attendance:

Name	Agency
Mike Meyer	KDA/DWR
Richard Rockel	KWO
Greg Graff	KWA/GMD1
Kyle Spencer	GMD 1
Gary Boldt	Public
Sen. Rick Billinger	KS Legislator
Sharla Schwien	USDA_NRCS
Tracy Streeter	KWO

- Welcome and Introductions:** The meeting was called to order at 2:15 p.m. by Chairman, Shane Mann. All present provided self-introductions.
- Review and Approval of January Meeting Notes:** Notes from the January meeting were approved, Maurice Miller motioned and Frank Mercurio seconded.
- Wichita County Water Conservation Area Update (WCWCA):** An update was given to the Committee on the progress of the WCWCA. Farrin Watt, Frank Mercurio, and Lonnie Busch provided some details on the public meetings held, participation so far, and progress being made. Generally it was stated that participation has been good in the meetings and folks have a lot of interest in the plan. That there are quite a few folks reaching out to the WCWCA steering committee. It was emphasized the need for one on one talks with producers for them to understand how the plan will work with their operation and how the flexibilities can be utilized to maintain production, while saving water for the area.

**Membership:** Shane Mann (Chair), Quinter, KS; Lonnie Busch, Leoti, KS; Kurt Maurath, Logan County, KS; Frank Mercurio, Scott City, KS; Maurice Miller, Healy, KS; Mike Todd, Scott City, KS; Farrin Watt, Leoti, KS; Danny Welsh, Wallace County, KS; Scott Noll, Scott City, KS  
**KWO Planner:** Richard Rockel, 785-296-3185; [richard.rockel@kwo.ks.gov](mailto:richard.rockel@kwo.ks.gov)

It was stated that people are interested in how management units work on their farms and the added flexibilities that can be gained by them. The Committee mentioned multiple times the need for communication and education of the plan for folks to commit to it.

It was mentioned that there are still some misconceptions among some folks in regards to the water supplies for the area, that some folks don't believe the aquifer is being depleted and that water will come from Colorado for them. That personal meetings are useful to explain specific scenarios and the complexities of the issue.

4. **Groundwater Management District No. 1 Annual Meeting and Water Talk Series:** Kyle Spencer gave the Committee an update on the Annual Meeting and Water Talk Series. That the meeting was well attended with over 60 attendees and the presentations were well received. Some items noted were the potential to have more irrigation technology vendors, a more specific talk on the GMD1 cost share program.
5. **Groundwater Management District No. 1 Cost Share Program:** Gregg Graff and Kyle Spencer explained the GMD1 Cost Share Program to the Committee. The application deadline was moved back to August 31, 2017 to allow more folks to utilize the program as they hear about it. The program is aimed to support the adoption and implementation of irrigation technology within the district, with a preference going to areas that are within an area with water conservation activities ongoing, or within a Water Conservation Area (WCA) or Local Enhanced Management Area.

For soil moisture probes, applicants within a WCA can receive up to \$1500 towards their first moisture probe and \$1000 for additional probes with up to 2 probes per quarter section of land allowed. Applicants not in a WCA are eligible for 1 moisture probe per quarter section of land and up to \$1000 for that probe. Of the 33 probes applied for so far, 32 have been approved for funding.

Kyle and Gregg announced that at the recent GMD1 board meeting, the GMD board voted to expand the program to be used to cost share on irrigation efficiency technologies as well. With priority given to applications that are within a WCA, \$1000 will be given per irrigation efficiency technology. Will be a limit of \$2000 per applicant, with 1 technology be utilized in 2 locations or 2 technologies being utilized in one location. Currently listed technologies are mobile drip irrigation, sub-surface drip irrigation, bubbler nozzles, sprinkler monitoring systems, and EC soil mapping. More information and application forms are on the GMD 1 website at: [www.gmd1.org](http://www.gmd1.org)

6. **Legislative and Water Funding Update:** Ginger Harper of the Kansas Water Office gave an update on legislative actions and a funding update. Some main points were the Legislative education day where around 100 legislators were given updates on the water issues of the state and funding needs, the establishment of the Water and Environment Committee and their work so far this session on water related bills, and the need for a more secure funding stream for the state's water projects since the current method of funding water projects through the weather dependent water marketing program is not a secure source.

Ginger stated that there is an increased focus on restoring the \$8,000,000 per year in State Water Plan funding that the Kansas Legislature has failed to contribute the last few years, in their effort to address state budget issues. There has been around \$75,000,000 in statutorily required funding withheld by the Kansas Legislature to address budget concerns under the last four Kansas Governors. It was stated that no funding plans made it out of the Water and Environment Committee or were being discussed further by the Kansas Legislature to address the state's water issues. Senator Billinger stated that there is no money.

7. **Update for May 17-18 Kansas Water Authority Meeting:** The Committee was asked what they would like to highlight at the May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Kansas Water Authority (KWA) meeting in Garden City, with the Committee expected to give an update on progress on Action Plan implementation. Some items that came up to highlight were the WCWCA, the GMD1 Cost Share program, and a fee update. Gregg Graff stated the Committee could use the opportunity to talk about irrigation fees to the KWA. Tracy Streeter stated that the Blue Ribbon Funding Task Force heard the concerns over an irrigation fee, and that the lack of consensus on fees is one of the reasons they decided to propose a sales tax increase to this year's Legislature.

The Committee was informed that some positions will expire in 2017 and that the meeting would be an opportunity for them to renew their membership, an email will be sent to all Committee members with terms ending in 2017 asking if they would like to serve another term on the Committee.

8. **Public Input:** Gary Boldt stated that he found the Water Talk Series meeting in Ulysses informative, but believe there were too many presentations squeezed into the time.

Gregg Graff stated he was looking to do a soil moisture probe field day on his land and is working with Jonathan Aguilar from Kansas State University to coordinate.

Kyle Spencer stated that GMD 1 had established a Water Conservation fund and will accept donations from companies and groups into the fund to support water conservation initiatives in the area.

Tracy Streeter stated there may be some potential changes to the EQIP program through the USDA-NRCS. That they are looking to adjust NRCS programs to support Local Enhanced Management Areas and Water Conservation Areas by moving applications that are within those areas to the top of priority lists, but that Ogallala Initiative Funds would still be targeted to Quick Response Areas. That the next meeting with the State Conservationist is May 4<sup>th</sup>. Sharla Schwien of the USDA-NRCS added some information about application deadlines and potential program modifications.

A discussion was had about the possibility of expanding the GMD1 to include areas around the Smoky Hill River. Gregg Graff stated that the GMD1 board had previously talked about expanding the GMD1 boundaries to include the Upper Smoky River, parts of Greeley, Gove, Lane, and Wichita Counties.

Mike Meyer provided an update on regulations and statutes being modified by the Division of Water Resources, specifically the changes to the consumptive use calculation, water use reporting penalty changes, the signing of a Water Conservation Area statute that allows greater flexibilities, and the signing of changes to the water right impairment statute.

9. **Future Meetings:**
- Kansas Water Authority: May 17-18, Garden City, KS
  - Upper Smoky Hill RAC: TBD most likely July 2017.