

Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

1:00 pm, Thursday, August 30, 2018

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

DRAFT

Members in Attendance:

Name	City	Category	Term	Present
Shane Mann (Chair)	Quinter, KS	Irrigation	2019	Yes
Frank Mercurio (Vice-Chair)	Scott City, KS	Conservation/Environment (cc)	2019	Yes
Maurice Miller	Healy, KS	Agriculture Industry	2019	No
Mike Todd	Scott City, KS	Public Water Supply (cc)	2019	No
Farrin Watt	Leoti, KS	Agriculture (cc)	2021	Yes
Danny Welsh	Wallace County, KS	Groundwater Management	2019	No
Kyle Spencer	Scott City, KS	At Large Public (cc)	2021	Yes
Vacant		At Large Public 2	2021	
Vacant		Industry/Commerce (cc)	2021	

Others in attendance:

Name	Agency
Dale Fjell	Kansas Corn
Greg Graff	GMD1/KWA
Mike Meyer	KDA-DWR
Rob Reschke	KDA-DOC
Gary Boldt	Public
Katie Ingels	KWO
Tracy Streeter	KWO
Alexandra Geisler	KWO
Armando Zarco	KWO

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Shane Mann began the meeting at 1:07pm. A quorum was present; four of the seven committee members were present.

Approval of Agenda

Farrin Watt motioned to approve the agenda with Agency Reports and LEMA Update moved up to number four and five before RAC Operations and Planner Changes. Frank Mercurio seconded. The agenda was approved with the requested changes.

Review and Approval April, November, February, & May Meeting Notes

Farrin Watt motioned to approve all four sets of meeting minutes. Kyle Spencer seconded. The April, November, February and May minutes were all approved.

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Agency Reports

Kyle Spencer GMD1: (LEMA update below) The district hasn't opened up the application period for 2019 cost-share, but will probably open it up sometime after Fall. They have another \$100,000 set aside for that. There is still around \$39,000 left for those who haven't submitted receipts yet; any additional will carry over to 2019.

Mike Meyer KDA-DWR: Right now there are 17 WCA's across the state covering 35,000 acres and about 4,000 acre/ft. of savings. There are 6 pending in the state, 1 is located in GMD4 and the other 5 are in GMD3 covering 6,000 acres and about 800 acre/ft. of savings and they should be completed soon. On the KDA-DWR website there is now an executive summary provided for every plan. There have been later water use reports so fines and suspensions have been sent out. It is a \$1000 per water right and the suspension until the report is received. There are twelve in their area, most of which aren't being used. With changes in over pumping penalties they are trying to get those out for 2017 overuse. Hundreds of penalties are being sent out across the state. The water right holder can call and go through the appeal process. Although they start out at the worst penalty through the appeal process and depending on circumstances it can be worked down. There has also been a change in staff with Armando now working with the Kansas Water Office. His position has been replaced by Austin McColloch. Farrin asked about a spreadsheet that was sent out to someone he knew. He really liked it and thought it would help him better manage his farm but didn't know how to get one. Mike said it could have come from Mitch and that he will contact him and ask him about it. He added that if anyone wants information like that just ask and they will send it because they are already tracking it.

Rob Reschke KDA-DOC: He came out with the Water Office for the water technology farm field days. Their programs consist of cost-share through Conservation Districts. If anyone has any questions let him know.

LEMA Update – Kyle Spencer

The GMD held a public meeting on July 30th to review and receive comments on the draft proposal; the meeting wasn't well attended. Without agency and WCA folks there were only eight other water right holders in attendance. It was advertised for three weeks and postcards were sent out. It was a good meeting and there were questions regarding the appeal process which was set at 135 days. The board decided to stick with that when it was discussed at the next board meeting. They have worked through about half of the document language at the last board meeting, and are looking at forming an advisory committee for five year reviews. The board is ready to finish the plan and take it back out to the public later this fall. The spreadsheet Armando created is now out on the website and postcards have been sent out for them to check their allocations; they are working to get those up online as well for water right holders to be able to look up. Shane asked what district members will be allowed to appeal. There hasn't been much discussion on this but right now probably allocations and not considering priority. Shane responded saying to make sure it is clear and then asked if there would be an advisory committee for each county. They don't know yet, that will need to be discussed but they will have annual reviews at annual meetings and in addition to that five year reviews in year four of every five year term.

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.

Membership Vacancies

There are two vacancies right now on the board; Industry/Commerce (cc) and At Large Public 2. Two applications have been received both from area conservation districts. With attendance issues and membership coming up in 2019 the committee should continue to look out for anyone who may be interested or be a good fit. The committee discussed that it could be good to have members who are in banking or real estate as these issues matter to them and how they serve their customers. Another group of individuals where there may be someone interested is the soil conservation boards. Tracy Streeter said he can call the Kansas Bank Association to see if there is interest and will contact Richard Randel who was thinking about joining but hasn't contacted anyone since he was given an application in February.

KWA Meeting Report

Tracy gave an overview of the major topics that were addressed at the Water Authority meeting in Manhattan. The presentation from Barry, Chairman of the Great Bend Prairie, and the discussion that followed afterwards occupied a lot of time at the KWA meeting. Tracy will look at putting together a Memorandum of Understanding but no other action was taken. Farrin mentioned that the sustainability assessment and model has been a huge help in bringing everyone together in the region and helping pave a path to move forward.

Tracy explained the KWA budget recommendations pointing out items of relevance to the region including Crop & Livestock Research, Irrigation Technology, and Water Technology Farms. Also included were the other two items on the RAC's recommendations from the July budget meeting: Storage Purchase and Water Resource Planner. To clarify the planner position was not included in the overall budget recommendations but included as a request to be funded from the State General Fund. The storage purchase would be the start of an annual buy down of huge debt. The idea is to have Perry & Milford paid for by 2034 while avoiding a major crisis in trying to pay for it. If we don't buy it we're giving a massive amount of water and storage to the Federal Government. The injection dredging project which is supported by the Corps involves stirring up sediment in the reservoir and then making releases to flush the sediment downstream. There is an opportunity at Tuttle Creek to make multiple releases a year which could make it a great site for this project. The questions is what can the river absorb and still maintain allowable water quality standards. It probably depends on the time of year and how much water is released.

Drought was a topic at the KWA meeting and Tracy explained that eastern Kansas is in emergency status and that Rob Reschke with the DOC is working on getting drought initiative funds to get alternative sources. Rob went into more detail saying that the sign up ended August 24th with NRCS. There was over 5 million dollars for 152 applications, and they are looking for the initiative to grow to 6-6.5 million. The east wasn't ready for this type of an event. He also noted that there is a new State Conservationist, her name is Karen Woodrich.

The State of the Resource (SOTR) Reports were officially released at the KWA meeting.

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SOTR, Kansas RAC Presentation & Outreach Efforts

Each member received a hard copy of the final State of the Resource Report, which can also be found on the Water Office website. Each member also received a copy of the infographic that goes along with the report. At the time there were no comments on the infographic, but they were told to look it over and if they had any comments later to let the planners know. 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 which was shown to the chairs at a chair meeting in which Shane was in attendance. 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. Several comments on the content included that there should be tech farm data included and that when showing groundwater decline by region to only include the Ogallala regions. There was concern from the committee that the presentation wouldn't be natural coming from the members. Tracy said that the Kansas region has different drivers, and that out here that the objective is different because you are going out to individuals who can make a difference rather than to the masses. Farrin suggested having members go to different towns or areas because it can be better if it's not coming from your direct neighbor. Frank mentioned that one link in this part of the state is that 80% of the people are in the cities, so if we go to the city council there is a direct link. In addition many of the members of the city council are often farmers. Tracy added that there are a lot of small cities getting together and trying to figure out how long the water supply will last. Kyle Spencer said that Scott City is taking up a water infrastructure project right now. They are raising meter fees and know they need a new tower and new water rights. The city did implement a BMP which they have met or exceeded every year since the first push for a LEMA.

Discussion then turned to ideas for audiences to which such a presentation could be given to. The list the group came up with includes: city councils, school boards, economic development boards, seed companies, appraisers and realtors, soil conservation meetings, farm bureau meetings, GMD annual meetings, and the Ag Bank Association.

Water Technology Farm Field Day Update & Review – Armando Zarco

Armando Zarco from KWO provided an overview of the water technology farms and field days being held this week. There are currently ten water technology farms including two in the Upper Smoky Hill. The Northwest Technical College Precision Agriculture Program in the Upper Republican is focused more on workforce development and has several participating producers and 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. There has been a lot of variability in the attendance so far 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. There is a field day this evening on Long's Farm in Wichita County and Gary Harshberger has the last one tomorrow south of Dodge City. It was brought up that in the Wells County area there is a Phytech dealer with some producers with the potential for a water technology farm. Kyle will get the contact information to Armando. The idea is that it would be a good way to make inroads in Wallace County. The area is isolated but could benefit on saving water in the GMD, as there is almost as much water pumped in Wallace County as in Wichita County but there are less producers.

Master Irrigators

Alexandra Geisler from KWO informed the committee that a group from the state is going down to Texas within the next month to learn about the Master Irrigators program and whether or not something similar could be used in Kansas. She will keep the committee updated and if something is developed for Kansas make sure the committee gets a chance to

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provide comments and input on it. Tracy Streeter added that what is working well right now with NRCS is prioritizing WCA's and LEMA's.

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 the committee members had no comments. Alexandra gave details on some of the work she is doing internally at KWO to assist with tracking progress on projects, the Vision, and RAC Action Plans. Each committee member received a copy of what has been put together for the Upper Smoky Hill on action plan progress.

End of Year Joint Meeting

The idea was brought to the committee to have a joint meeting with the Upper Republican RAC at the beginning of next year. The planners need input on date, timeline, and agenda items from the members. The Buffalo Bill Cultural Center in Oakley is a potential location that is central. The committee discussed having each chair report on the RACs and receiving summaries of everyone's individual efforts.

Other Business

Public Comments –

Dale Fiell (Kansas Corn): The philosophy of Kansas Corn right now is trying to find uses for the corn that we grow. Obviously our interests are out here in the west with the water issues you have and water quality in the east. This is why they give to the technology farms. It is good to be here, he goes to KWA meetings when he can and will be going to the Missouri RAC next week to present. One of the things they do working with K-State extension is put on three full day corn schools in west, east and central Kansas. This year they decided that in western Kansas where there is irrigation and technology farms that if the data from those is available that the corn schools could be a great platform to get that information out. Dates are already set for those. Kansas Corn will be working as much as they can on sustaining the Ogallala Aquifer for more than just the individual farmer. It is so important to get the education out there to non-farmers because they are not far removed from farmers and irrigators. They want to stay involved and help out in any way they can, understanding it's not always corn being grown but that it will be in the rotation. Greg Graff asked what Dale thought about having something about the State of the Resource in the commodity schools this year? There is a big effort in corn to educate k-12 & college aged students. There is free curriculum that teachers can access about corn but also about science. He doesn't know if they have any specific lesson plans on water.

Messages to Kansas Water Authority – None

Future Meetings –

GMD1 Board Meeting – Wednesday September 19th at 8am

Next RAC Meeting – joint meeting with Upper Republican RAC

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

Adjourn

Frank Mercurio motioned to adjourn the meeting. Kyle Spencer seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:48pm.