

## METERING PROGRAM UPDATE

If you are a well owner in GMD 4 by now you should be in possession of your DWR meter order. If not, you may want to inquire. The order outlines the installation timetable, provides a listing of all state-approved meters, and contains all other information you will need to comply - except for specific manufacturer meter installation specifications. You will need to work closely with your meter supplier to make sure this gets done correctly.

Remember, if your well location on your water right is not described in a specific quarter section, you will be required to meter before you operate the well in 2006 - unless you can clarify with DWR the actual quarter section location. If you need help with this, contact the district.

**For wells metered prior to receipt of order:** If your well was already metered when the order arrived, either by an earlier order or voluntarily, it must meet the meter and installation specs in effect at the time it was installed. Be advised that the current specs took effect September 22, 2000. If it does not meet the appropriate specs, it will need to be replaced or repaired to the current specs unless the following 3 conditions are met: 1) it tests accurate via a state approved, one-time only, calibration test; 2) it has a measuring chamber and straightening vanes; and 3) there is no other location to install it properly without requiring re-construction work on the well, pump or pipe. In these test cases GMD 4 will be providing confirmation accuracy tests.

**For wells metered after receipt of order:** If your meter for whatever reason does not meet current installation specs, it can also be accepted under the same 3 conditions stated above.

If you're not going to pump in the year your meter is required, a metering extension may be granted by DWR, but you'll need to request one. A new order will be generated for these cases. If you're not going to pump for 5 years or more, it's suggested you consider enrolling the water right into the state's water rights conservation program (WRCP). The EQIP program within NRCS may also be an alternative.

Both GMD 4 and DWR will be doing the field verification work, subsequent monitoring and meter calibration tests. Questions? Give us a call.

## EQIP NOW AVAILABLE

NRCS has announced the opening of sign-ups for the ground and surface water portion of the 2006 FY EQIP program. The bulk of this program will focus on reducing irrigation pumpage in the High Plains Aquifer. The sign up ends January 20, 2006, so don't delay. For program details, talk to your County DC. You will need your water use report history and basic water right info in order to assess your program qualifications.

## NEW STATE CONSERVATION SECTION PROPOSED

A draft policy section for the next State Water Plan is being worked on and is expected to be released for formal public comment soon. As a **preview**, the new draft section makes recommendations that reduce overall use in areas with increasing demands and limited water resources, and promotes the responsible use of water (water use efficiency) throughout the state.

The proposal makes 7 recommendations (abbreviated versions):

- 1) Statutorily change current "conservation plans" to "water management plans"
- 2) Change KWO's current funding job to technical & educational support for participants
- 3) Change KWO's current conservation plan mandates to a voluntary program
- 4) Remove the SWP objective requiring conservation plans under the criteria of 82a-733
- 5) Develop & conduct an educational program on what conservation is in KS
- 6) Provide funding to train users on developing good water management plans
- 7) Conduct demonstration projects promoting proven and progressive water saving efforts

The key to this draft is the definition of "conservation" which includes not wasting water, water use efficiency and reductions in consumptive use. Defining conservation with potentially inconsistent concepts would ordinarily seem like a problem, but the rest of this draft section allows this floating definition work over the entire range of water resource situations and conditions statewide. In other words it provides the flexibility to define conservation differently (but appropriately) for decline areas and non-decline areas of the state - also factoring in resource demand trends for both types of areas as appropriate.

This draft (or presumably something very similar) will soon go to the Kansas Water Authority for approval to be presented for later public comment. If you see something you like or don't like, the public comment version should be released soon.

## ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULED

The 31st annual meeting of the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 4 has been scheduled for February 15, 2006 in the City Limits Convention Center, 2227 S. Range Ave., Colby, KS, beginning at 1:30 p.m. CST.

The preliminary agenda is:

- ◆ 30th Annual Meeting Minutes;
- ◆ Board elections (TH, SD, RA/DC & SH/WA positions);
- ◆ Proposed 2007 Operating Budget;
- ◆ 2005 Audit Report; and
- ◆ Revised Management Program Presentation \*

\* The management program will only be presented at the annual meeting. The public hearing will be held during the March board meeting. The board is providing this additional review time to facilitate better public discussion.

Incumbents Monty Biggs (RA/DC), Robin Deeds (SH/WA), Lon Frahm (TH) and Bill Nondorf (SD) are up for election. Anyone interested in running for one of these positions should contact the district office for a nominating petition, or one can be downloaded from the district website at: [www.gmd4.org/form1.html](http://www.gmd4.org/form1.html). You must reside in the County represented by the position and be an eligible voter to run. Nominating petitions should be received by the office no later than February 13. There are provisions to be nominated from the floor as well.

In addition to all routine items, the proposed 2007 budget must also consider: continued funding of the Conservation Foundation at \$70,000.00 and possible staffing and equipment support for the meter program.

There will be no shortage of decisions to make come February 15. The board may also discuss various longer-term management issues as well (see related article on allocations, this edition). The annual meeting remains an important event for regional groundwater policy development, and a great chance to get involved. See you there.

## GMD 1 MANAGER RETIRES

The first Kansas GMD manager, Keith Lebbin retired December 23, 2005 from GMD 1. He has managed the West Central Kansas district since it was first formed in 1975. A ton of institutional memory is being transferred in Scott City these days. The new manager is David Brenn of Garden City who will begin his duties on January 2, 2006. GMD 4 wishes Keith a happy retirement, and David congratulations on his new responsibilities.

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## BOARD DISCUSSES ISSUES OF CONCERN

The top issue of concern discussed recently by the board involved ways to increase public involvement in our GMD. The premise of the discussion was that area groundwater resources are far more important to the region than is reflected by the level of public involvement. The question is why? Possible answers offered were:

- 1) the general public considers resource management the elected board's job and sees little public monitoring needed;
- 2) Public intimidation with the complexity of water policy;
- 3) Public difficulty in knowing who to contact with their ideas;
- 4) GMD4 needs to do more public education to spur the meaningful discussion of public ideas;
- 5) People are generally too busy to get involved in depth.

The board discussion began over how to handle the management program which was just approved by the chief engineer for public hearing. This document, while detailed and boring to most, it is the heart of the district, and needs to be understood by the district memberships and more openly discussed.

Originally scheduled to be publicly heard at the annual meeting in February, the board decided to conduct the management plan public hearing 1 month later after presenting it at the annual meeting. The management program is also going to be made available to each county library and every board member. There will be more emphasis on the ideas included with the hope that more public discussion will occur.

## MANAGER TALKS TO NEBRASKANS

GMD 4 manager Wayne Bossert was invited to Imperial, Nebraska in December to talk about NW Kansas groundwater management programs. The event was sponsored by the Republican River Water Conservation and Education Coalition in order to provide basin stakeholders with information and resources to make decisions and adopt strategies to conserve water and maintain the region's economic viability. GMD 4 programs presented were: protocol efforts; metering; WTAP; funding efforts; and proposed regulation 5-5-10 (change in handling of new, small use water right applications). There were an estimated 100 in attendance.

## IS IT TIME TO CONSIDER ALLOCATIONS?

Based on some public comments the board has been discussion how a system of standard allocations might be received as an alternative to the current system. By allocation we'd be talking about an across-the-board conversion of all water rights to a standard appropriation of so many inches per acre irrigated. The allocation amount would need to be set at a level resulting in some amount of reduced consumptive water use, and such that it does not penalize any group of water rights or allow any rights to increase use.

Such a system spreads the solution (less water use) among all the more heavily used water rights as a group while still achieving some level of water use reduction. To make a standard allocation quantity more acceptable operationally, issues such as: aggregating the amount over a 3-5 year period; and the ability to carryover a portion of the unused water (annually and/or from period to period); and transferring allocations between farms may need consideration.

An allocation proposal could be implemented in smaller areas or district-wide. Both have pros and cons. Based on the above, short description, the board would be interested in district member opinions. Is this idea worthy of further discussion and investigation on their part? Let district staff or your board member know.

### The Water Table

Sponsored by the NW Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 4, 1175 S. Range, Colby, KS 67701-0905. Office hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (except the noon hour) - closed during State holidays.

**DIRECTORS:** Roger Zwegardt - St Francis, CN Cty; Monty Biggs - Atwood, RA/DC Cty; Robin Deeds - President, Goodland, SH/WA Cty; Dave Rietcheck - Goodland, SH/WA Cty; Jon Friesen - Vice President, Colby, TH Cty; Lon Frahm - Colby, TH Cty; Mitch Baalman - Secretary, Menlo, SD Cty; Bill Nondorf - Hoxie, SD Cty; Doug David - Hill City, GH Cty; Scott Maurath - Oakley, LG Cty; Dave Mann - Treasurer, Quinter, GO Cty.

**STAFF:** Wayne Bossert - Manager; Ray Luhman - Assistant Manager; Dan Simmering - Field Technician; Rita Wade - Secretary/Receptionist; Ron Vignery - Attorney.

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS ARE APPRECIATED

## CONGRESSMAN MORAN'S OFFICE CALLS

Trevor McKeeman from Representative Moran's office called to tell us that the comments we made regarding the 2007 federal farm bill are still being retained for consideration. This was a nice update since just last week I considered calling them and asking. Our one wish for the 2007 farm bill was that it contain an alternative subsidy schedule providing equal supports for less water intensive irrigation/cropping in areas where reduced consumptive water use has been required either by the courts or by state action. This approach needs to be revenue neutral to the farm bill's budget, but designed and targeted better to support new water management needs in these special areas. We hope they keep talking.

## AG SPREADSHEET AVAILABLE

A free, downloadable ag spreadsheet to assist producers with cropping decisions based on water supplies is available from Agri Affiliates at [www.agwaterbudget.com](http://www.agwaterbudget.com). It is heavily oriented to the Nebraska situation, but should be applicable to other areas if all the inputs are known. It's an Excel spreadsheet format with plenty of references and help with the inputs. Its power is in its reiterative design, allowing the producer to look at many cropping scenarios over several years to decide which is likely to net the most dollars, and its profit and loss worksheets. If you are an accountant or farmer, this item may be for you, even though presently it only includes corn, soybeans and wheat as cropping choices. More crops may be added as the program develops.

## E-FILING WATER USE REPORTS

The 2005 water use report cards went out January 4 and DWR will be running their first pilot e-filing program for these reports. **If you file electronically, be advised that the paper report cards are required to be returned as well** - at least for this trial year. You'll find a pin number, user ID and the website location on your report card for entering the system via the internet from any computer. The site is fairly user friendly if you read the instructions along the way. GMD 4 will be able to log in for you if you drop by with your card and your annual water use information.

## Pumping the Tailwater

*Editorial Comment by Wayne Bossert, GMD 4 Manager*

### MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SET FOR HEARING

The editorial column is an unusual place to cover such a straight forward news item as a public hearing. But, there are some points behind the point that I'd like to weigh in on here.

In the Kansas water arena local landowners and groundwater users were provided a unique position by the Legislature back in 1972 when they passed the Kansas Groundwater Management District Act - provided they organize and form a local GMD. But with that position was to come a significant responsibility to stay informed and engaged enough on the water issues to be conversant participants.

Staying in tune is not that easy with water issues. For one, the delicate relationship the local GMDs have with the state - particularly the Division of Water Resources, Kansas Department of Agriculture - adds subtle complications. But just because it's not easy doesn't mean it's not important.

This brings me to the hearing for the management program. The entire basis of the GMD is contained within this document. We can do no groundwater management that is not included. Period. And the plan cannot be finally approved and implemented without the comments of the district membership being heard within a public hearing. The membership has to be involved here if the district is to work its best.

As such, the board this year has decided to place added emphasis on the management plan - hoping to get more district members better prepared to become better engaged. For this reason the management program will be **presented** during the annual meeting in February, but will not have its formal **public hearing** until the March meeting.

In the days following presentation, everyone should have ample time to read up on and consider the individual programs and efforts proposed, and discuss them - in support of, or opposition to. Copies will be sent to each County Library and to each board member and will be available in the office and on our website.