

METERING PROGRAM UPDATE

The metering program is off to a reasonably good start.

The field verifications will start as soon as the meter completion notices start arriving. **Be advised - for all existing meters, the N&P form(s) MUST be completed and submitted NOW - regardless of which quarter section your well is in.** For wells to be metered (NW Quarter wells) the N&Ps should be filed within 30 days after meter installation. The inspection plan is for DWR to start on the eastern edge of the district and inspect westward, while GMD 4 staff will start on the west edge and work eastward.

Starting in August our staff will begin preparing the list of wells and well owners for the NE quarter of all GMD 4 sections. These will be the next round of wells requiring meters by December 31, 2007 or before the well operates in 2007, whichever date comes first. As always, if you have questions about this program contact us any time.

STAFF SHOWS GROUNDWATER MODEL

District staff Wayne Bossert recently demonstrated the groundwater flow model at the Kansas Day festivities at the Prairie Museum in Colby, which incidentally was (and still is) showing the traveling Playa Lakes Display. Co-demonstrating was Lynette Koon with the Thomas County Conservation District who had the watershed model operating as well.

MANAGEMENT PROGRAM HEARING

The district's Revised Management Program will be publicly heard on March 9, 2006 beginning at 1:00 p.m. CST in the district offices. This document is the roadmap for the district and is reviewed annually by the board. Copies of the full plan are available at:

- ◆ Northwest Kansas GMD 4 district office
- ◆ NW Kansas County and City Libraries
- ◆ GMD 4 Board Members
- ◆ GMD 4 web site

If you are interested in making comments at the hearing, take the time to read through the plan. Officially, you must file a statement of your intent to appear and give testimony with the district office no less than 5 days prior to the hearing. The statement must include at least a summary of your testimony/comments, and must be filed in duplicate. In case this opportunity is missed, the board is expected to unofficially open the hearing for any public comment. All questions should be directed to the GMD 4 staff or board members.

OGALLALA WATER LEVELS DROP AN AVERAGE OF 1/2 FOOT

The Kansas Geological Survey (KGS) reports groundwater levels across central and western Kansas dropped an average of about six inches (.57 feet) last year, according to preliminary numbers compiled from the observation well network. These results are based on about 1300 water wells that were measured in January 2006 by the Survey and the Division of Water Resources of the Kansas Department of Agriculture. This is compared to an average decline the previous year (from 2004 to 2005) of 0.17 feet.

In **northwest Kansas** the wells dropped an average of 0.6 foot - about the same as the previous year. Our area was very similar to the statewide average.

In **southwestern Kansas** the wells dropped an average of 1.15 feet from 2005 to 2006, which compares to a slight rise in water levels in that area the previous year.

In **west-central Kansas** the declines averaged one third foot.

Places experiencing particularly notable declines include the area between Meade and Garden City and the area between Hugoton and Liberal. These areas saw water level declines averaging 5 feet or more. However, water levels rose slightly in parts of Morton and Stanton counties with increases of over 2.5 feet observed in western Grant County.

"Declines from 2005 to 2006 were greater than the previous year," said Brownie Wilson, water-data manager at the Survey. "That may reflect a difference in weather patterns. While water levels declined more this year than last year, the declines are still not as steep as they were from 2000 to 2004, when western Kansas was particularly dry."

The results of the measurements are provisional and are subject to revision based on additional analysis. Water level information is available at the Survey's web site (<http://www.kgs.ku.edu/Magellan/WaterLevels/index.html>).

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

The 31st annual meeting was held February 15, 2006 in Colby. Thirty-six people were in attendance.

The actions taken were:

- ◆ 30th Annual Meeting Minutes were approved;
- ◆ Four board elections (TH, SD, RA/DC & SH/WA positions) were conducted. Incumbents Monty Biggs, Lon Frahm and Bill Nondorf were re-elected along with new-comer Jeff Deeds of Goodland;
- ◆ Proposed 2007 Operating Budget was approved for \$670,858.97. This total included \$77,500.00 to continue building the NW Kansas Groundwater Conservation Foundation;
- ◆ The 2005 Audit was approved showing a total of \$537,077.02 of income and \$312,686.80 of expenses leaving \$224,390.22 carried over into the 2006 budget. \$155,743.00 of this carry over is earmarked for the Conservation Foundation.

Presentation of the Revised Management Program prompted no comment on the proposed plan (due for public hearing March 9, 2006 in Colby), but there was good discussion regarding the possibility of implementing an allocation system of water rights as opposed to having rights reduced through a control area. The allocation proposal is NOT part of the revised management program being considered today, but could become part of a future program if enough members think it's merits outweigh other alternatives. The complete (provisional) minutes of this meeting are now available on the district's web page under Annual Meeting Info.

The board and staff would like to acknowledge the service of Robin Deeds, Goodland, who opted not to run for the board again. His participation was always welcomed and his leadership as President was never dull. Thanks, Robin!

BOARD OFFICERS ELECTED

2006 Board Officers were elected following the annual meeting. The new officers are:

- President** - Scott Maurath, Logan Cty
- Vice President** - Mitch Baalman, Sheridan Cty
- Secretary** - Dave Mann, Gove Cty
- Treasurer** - Dave Rietcheck, Sherman/Wallace Cty

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Northwest Kansas Groundwater
Management District No. 4
PO Box 905
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Assisted by RSVP Printed on recycled paper with soybean ink

RECENT BOARD ACTIONS.....

To re-apply for Grants for our conservation foundation;
 Maintain this newsletter format and frequency;
 Remain a member of the Kansas Water Congress for another year;
 Adopted a revised operating budget for 2006;
 Approved testimony on water rights transition program (HB 2710);
 Retained staff for another year via contract approvals; and
 Approved district participation in a KU Law Seminar.

WATER TRANSITION BILL IN LEGISLATURE

HB 2710 has been introduced creating a state water rights transition program administered by the State Conservation Commission (SCC). It was filed to allow incentives to permanently retire private water rights in recognized high priority areas in western Kansas. The bill was heard in the House Environment Committee on February 7 where all entities testified in support of the bill but for 1. GMD 4 was in support. The bill was worked on the 16th and passed out of committee with 11 amendments related to targeting, funding and scoping. For more amendment detail, contact the office. If eventually passed, the State Water Plan is intending to direct \$1.1 million toward this effort - \$777K from the KS v. CO award and \$450K from the state water plan fund if Governor Sebelius restores \$2.2 million of state general funds used elsewhere several years ago. There are a lot of "IF's" with this program.

KANSAS v. COLORADO DAMAGE AWARD

On April 29, 2005 Colorado transferred \$34.615 million to Kansas as directed by the Supreme Court settlement of this long-standing lawsuit. In 1996 the Kansas Legislature specified the distribution of any award monies to be given by creating 3 funds: 1) Litigation fund; 2) Water Conservation Projects fund; and State Water Plan Water Conservation Projects Reserve Account.

The Litigation fund is to pay back state & local expenses for the lawsuit, pay for current or future interstate water litigation, or to monitor or enforce water agreements, decrees or litigation.

The Water Conservation Projects fund is for specific water conservation projects in the affected, SW Kansas area (basically the Ark River alluvial corridor from the state line to Garden City).

The State Water Plan Water Conservation Projects Reserve Account goes to the state water plan and is for water conservation.

Of the total award, about \$20.08 million was dedicated to the first fund; \$9.68 million to the second; and \$4.82 million to the third.

Of the \$4.82 million State Water Plan Reserve Account that could be used anywhere in the state for conservation projects, the state water plan is proposing to use: a) \$4 million to match federal funds for a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) covering the Ark River alluvial corridor from the state line to just west of Great Bend, KS; b) \$.77 million for irrigation water rights retirements in western Kansas; and c) \$65K for tamarisk (salt cedar) control - most likely in SW Kansas where the problem is considered the worst.

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; Jeff 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

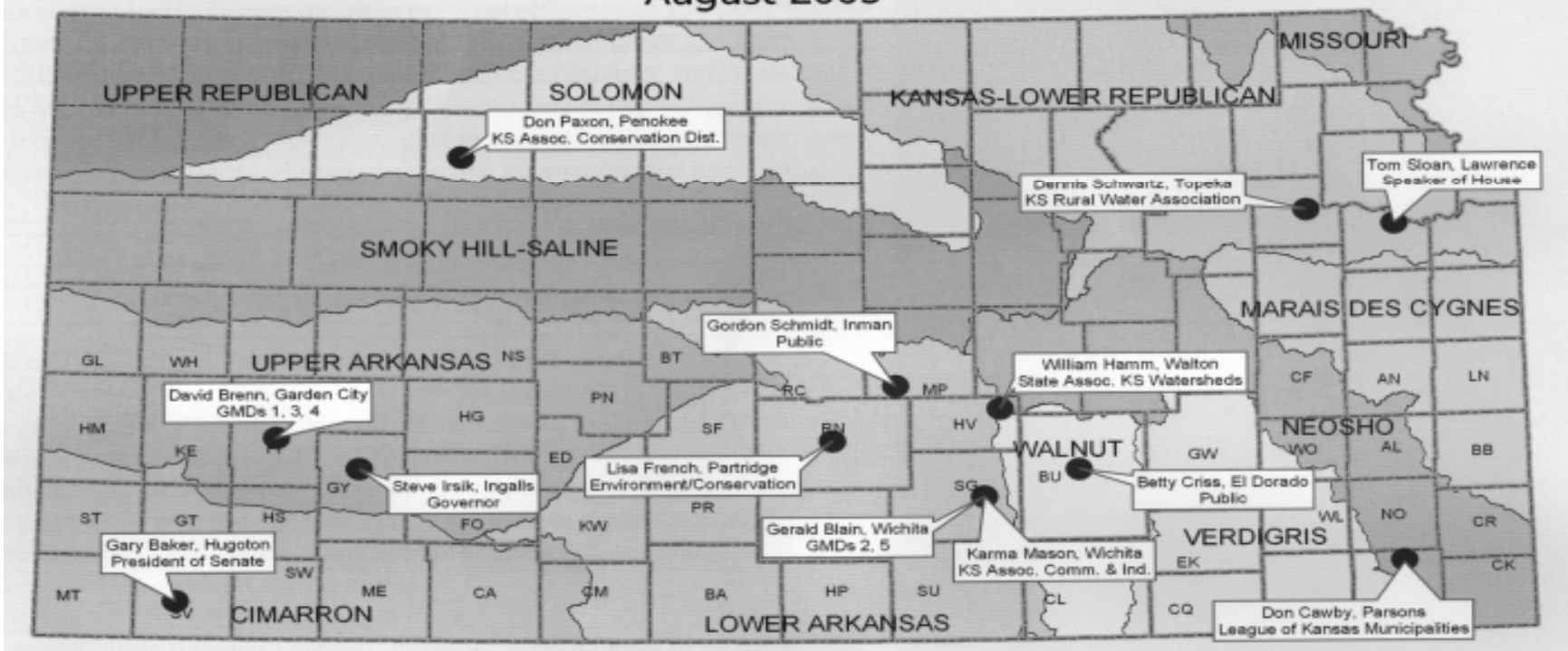
WATER & FUTURE OF KANSAS

The 23rd annual conference will be held March 16 in the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Topeka. The theme is: "Meeting Water Demands: Demographics, Availability and Quality". There are as usual a lot of interesting topics and speakers planned - with both general and more informal break-out sessions. You can register on-line at: www.dce.ksu.edu/conf/waterfuture. The conference is even building an international flair with 3 speakers from France. Finally, the poster sessions are extremely informative and provide much more information on more topics than can be covered by the speakers alone. You should consider this event if you can.

Pumping the Tailwater

Editorial Comment by Wayne Bossert, GMD 4 Manager

Kansas Water Authority Members (Appointed) August 2005



Just thought you'd like to see where the current, appointed Kansas Water Authority members come from. I guess the north half of the state just looks blank because they forgot to put our county designators on the map. Perhaps its time to work toward influencing this appointment system. While our friend Don Paxson (Penokee) does an outstanding job looking out for us, it'd certainly be better if he had some NW Kansas help. It appears that the 5, at-large positions are skewing the distribution the most with 4 of these filled by southern Kansas people. Let's start asking that one of the five at-large positions be an appointment from NW Kansas. Maybe if enough ask it'll happen. Additionally, it's been 11 years since a GMD 4 board member has represented the western Kansas "GMD's 1, 3, 4" position - that being Pat Lehman in 1995. It always helps to be at the water table, but it takes a little work to get there.