

Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3
Minutes of the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 13th, 2024

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

President McCormick called to order the 49th annual Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District Meeting at 9:10 a.m. The meeting was at the Seward County Activity Center, Liberal, KS.

Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation

Directors Present in Person

Chad McCormick, President, Industrial Representative
Randy Hayzlett, Vice-President, Surface Water Representative
Garrett Love, Secretary, Gray County Representative
Mike O'Brate, Treasurer, Finney County Representative
Bret Rooney, Haskell County Representative
Clay Scott, Grant County Representative
Harrison Krey, Morton County Representative
Kyle Maddux, Kearny County Representative
Matt Johnson, Stevens County Representative
Zachary Gale, Hamilton County Representative
Seth Nelson, Stanton County Representative

Directors Absent with Notice

Kent Dunn, Seward County Representative
Fred Jones, Municipal Representative
Jacob Harshberger, Ford County Representative
Carl Clawson, Meade County Representative

District Staff Present

Mark Rude, Executive Director
Jason Norquest, Assistant Manager via Zoom
Patty Stapleton, Office Administrator
Chris Law, Director, Field Services
Brandi Sneath, Office Assistant
Trevor Ahring, Engineer

Others in Attendance

SW KS GMD3 Members
Kristen Sekavec, Lewis, Hooper, and Dick
Mike Meyer, Water Commissioner, Division of Water Resources, Garden City, KS
Keadron Pearson, Kansas Water Office
Brownie Wilson, Kansas Geological Survey

APPROVE AGENDA

President McCormick asked for consideration of the Annual meeting agenda. Mark noted a change that Lane Letourneau was unable to attend; in his place, Trevor Ahring will talk about Special projects of the GMD3. **Randy Hayzlett made a motion to approve the revised agenda. Garret Love seconded. The motion passed.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND GENERAL MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

President McCormick drew the attention of the Board to consider the March 8th, 2023, draft minutes. **As presented, Bret Rooney moved to approve the March 8th, 2023, minutes. Clay Scott seconded the motion. Motion passed.**

Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3

Minutes of the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors

March 13th, 2024

Report of District Activities, Mark Rude, Executive Director

Executive Director Mark Rude introduced the Board and Staff and discussed the district's happenings. A hearing of the Management Program is still to be determined, providing an opportunity for comment at that time. The active areas of the Management Program are Water Rights Policy Assistance, Water Conservation, Models and Research, Water Quality Protection, Ark River Management, and Outreach and Advocacy. Mark highlighted key facts regarding the GMD3:

- ✓ GMD3 Serves 12 Counties
- ✓ Approximately 12,500 non-domestic water rights
- ✓ Authorized Annual Groundwater use is 3.6 million acre-feet.
- ✓ Average Annual Groundwater use is 1.6 million acre-feet.
- ✓ Average annual recharge from precipitation is 210,000 acre-feet.
- ✓ Average annual return flow recharge is 208,000 acre-feet returned.
- ✓ Approximately 622,000 acre-feet gains or returns from non-consumptive activity.

There has been great conservation occurring in our district:

- ✓ Between 1989 and 2022, 175 257 irrigated acres were reduced.
- ✓ Approximately 500,000 acre-feet reduction in annual storage
- ✓ The use reduction in the last 10 years (2013-2023) vs the prior 10-year period decreased by 13.6%, 2 million acre-feet.

HB2279 adds to the GMD Act that each Kansas GMD must follow; if any action deadline is not met, the Chief Engineer can act by himself. Currently, GMD3 is working on identifying all high-priority areas with boundaries. This action item is due by July 1, 2024. By July 1, 2026, there is a deadline that all reasonable action plans must be submitted to the Chief Engineer for approval. Action plans must be added to the Management Program and re-evaluated every five years with a report to the Chief Engineer.

GMD3 Water Rights Assistance consists of:

- ✓ Permit Review: GMD3 conducted 576 technical aquifer studies (point of diversion changes)
- ✓ Drawdown due to proposed use: the proper Theis equation is typically used. Guidelines are posted on the GMD3 website.
- ✓ GMD3 offers many field services.
 - Field Summer Visits
 - Flowmeter
 - Verification tests
 - MOU Contracts
 - Water Quality Sampling
- ✓ Review and provide feedback to KDA/DWR regarding Rules and Regulations.

Our path forward is to Prioritize, Learn, Actuate, and Navigate. GMD3 members will learn and provide input on Ogallala conservation and restoration along with helping shape their local action plan. GMD3 is involved in many organizations. The reorganization of the Kansas Water Congress is underway. This association is a nongovernmental, nonpartisan organization. We are in the process of forming a steering committee to nominate a new board and gather members across Kansas. GMDA (Groundwater Management Districts Association) is composed of several Western, Midwestern and Southern States. Jason Norquest is currently the President of GMDA. NWRA is the National Water Resources Association and currently Clay Scott is the Vice President.

Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3
Minutes of the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 13th, 2024

Financial Reports

2023 Audit Report: Kristen Sekavec, Lewis, Hooper, and Dick, LLC

Kristen Sekavec, with Lewis, Hooper, and Dick, stated that Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management received an unmodified audit report. Kristen explained that the district has some grants that you must spend the money on before being reimbursed, and those funds will come in 2024.

General Fund Highlights:

- Total Treasurer's Cash: \$714,371
- Invested in Interest-bearing accounts as of December 31st, 2023.
 - General Funds- 92.83%
 - Water Conservation Projects funds- 93.16%
- Total receipts under expenditures for 2023: \$29,702
- 2023 General Fund expenditures were less than budget authority by \$48,042.00.

2023 Receipts for the General Fund came from the following:

- Assessments: 85%
- Mou Contracts: 2%
- Miscellaneous: 2% (reimbursement monies for conference)
- Transfers: 9% (w/increased grant activity,)
- Interest: 2%

2023 Expenditures by Source are as follows:

- Salaries & Benefits: 70%
- Office Expense: 10%
- Education and Advocacy: 12%
- Contractual Services: 4%
- Conservation Program: 4%

The staff does a great job of preparing everything for the audit day and provides information in detail before audit day. Kristen welcomes any questions.

2024 Proposed budget increases for July hearing: Mike O'Brate

Treasurer Mike O'Brate spoke on the 2024 budget increase and the proposed 2025 Budget.

The board recognized the unencumbered cash carryover revenue of \$371,836 from FY 2023 and is proposing a revised 2024 budget and a hearing on the revised budget. \$200,000 from the \$371,836 will be requested to fund staff salary adjustments and a new temporary irrigation Conservationist position, all consistent with inflation and market levels. A hearing for the revised 2024 budget will be held in July at the same time and place as the hearing on the 2025 proposed budget. Treasurer Mike O'Brate also mentioned increasing the water assessments to .22 cents per acre-foot. This will also be heard and voted on at the July hearing. Mark Rude added that two cents per acre generates around \$70,000.

Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3 Minutes of the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors March 13th, 2024

Election of Directors

President Chad McCormick turned the gavel over to Vice President Randy Hayzlett. Vice President Hayzlett opened the election process by stating that everyone up for elections is running unopposed.

Morton County: Reid Shrauner is from Elkhart, Kansas, and is excited to represent Morton County on the Board. He is a fourth-generation farmer.

Stevens County: Andy Moser for Stevens County; Andy has been farming for over seven years and wants to continue growing and getting involved.

Seward County: Kent Dunn was absent.

Meade County: Carl Clawson was absent.

Industrial (at-large): Chad McCormick is from Grant County and is the Industrial Representative. Chad has lived here since 2017 and is the Feedyard Manager for Five Rivers Feeders. Chad is here to represent Grant County and the Industrial industry.

Clay Scott moved to accept all the positions as stated. Harrison Krey seconded. Motion passed.

Oath of Office-Patty Stapleton, Notary Public

Notary Public Patty Stapleton provided the Oath of Office to the elected Board of Directors.

Recognition of outgoing board members Matt Johnson & Harrison Krey was held. They were each presented with a plaque.

Vote to Revise Board By-law

Next on the agenda was a vote to revise the board by-law for Elections and voting Terms of Office for the Board of Directors. This new by-law would place a limit of four consecutive terms that any director shall serve. The total period of service of a director shall not exceed fifteen years. The proposed by-law stated that those directors currently on the board who have exceeded this limit can finish their term. David Walker read a letter that explained the reason for this bylaw-proposed change. Clay Scott would like to speak against this; he stated a lot of knowledge would be lost, and we are starting to make strides with leadership, which comes from your active and knowledgeable board. Garret Love added he is not opposed to term limits; however, the way this was written, we would lose three or four of our most knowledgeable representatives. He believes there are ways to do staggered fulfillment if this does pass. He understands not wanting to run against someone already serving, but if you are interested in sitting on the board, go ahead and run.

The members were given time to vote, and ballots were collected for the count. Jason Norquest, Garret Love, and Zachary Gale counted the ballots.

Vendor Moment

Jace Larson with VandWater

Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3
Minutes of the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 13th, 2024

Groundwater Supply and Climate, Brownie Wilson, Kansas Geological Survey

Brownie Wilson, with the Kansas Geological Survey, spoke to the members regarding the groundwater supply and climate. He started by talking about the precipitation throughout Kansas, which impacts the Kansas water levels. Most of SW Kansas falls in the map's green area, indicating 18 to 22 inches of rainfall. Most of the rainfall occurred in May, June, and July, then dried out again in August. Brownie shared a graph demonstrating the average change (by well) for GMD3. The drought years were clearly visible with the longest drop in the graph (2011,2012,2021 and 2022), but in 2023, we only had a drop of two inches by averaging up all the wells.

What is the Long-term aquifer viability: what can we do about it? The answers are simple: 1) Put more water in the aquifer. 2) Stop taking so much water out. Utilize drought probes and moisture probes. The current response for more bang for your buck is number two: stop taking so much water out.

The index wells recovery curves in Scott County are similar each year. Several sources of inflows to the aquifer are tied to pumping: irrigation return flows, gradient flows, and lagged drainage. Eventually, the system will adjust, and further management efforts will be needed to achieve water-level reduction goals.

President Chad McCormick

President Chad McCormick stated that a vote like this brings effective communication to the table. He announced the votes: 37 in favor and 51 opposed.

The proposed By-Law change did not pass.

Vendor Moment - Servi-Tech

Special Projects in SW KS GMD3.

Trevor Ahring spoke about the special projects in the works for GMD3.

- 1) **I-CARE:** funded by the Bureau of Reclamation a couple of years ago. The first year, just Finney County received the report; last year, everyone who irrigates should have received a report in the mail. The green box indicates that you use less water than similar wells in your area. If you have a red box, you use more water than similar wells in your area. On the back of the report, you can see your water use over time compared to similar wells.
- 2) **Upper Ark Watershed Group:** A grant was received from the Bureau of Reclamation to review the water quality and water declines along the Arkansas River. An advisory committee was formed in June of 2022. This group wrote the mission state, by-laws, and articles of incorporation. The initial board of directors was put into place in July 2023 and was officially incorporated as a 501(C) (3) Profit Organization in December 2023. The Watershed Restoration Plan is to be completed in June 2024. Upper Ark Watershed Group will hold its first annual meeting on April 17th, 2024, at the Clarion in Garden City. If you want to attend, the QR code on the screen will get you to the registration page.
- 3) **National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)** KDHE successfully applied for an NWQI Grant in 2023 and passed the grant on to GMD3. GMD3 should expect this grant in April. The GMD3 model will be used to run scenarios for various changes to pumping and land practices, emphasizing the impact on water quality in the Arkansas River Basin. A complete draft basin plan will be available by the end of 2024. GMD3 will hold four meetings with locals and stakeholders to get feedback and finalize the plan. In 2025 or 2026, an implementation grant will be sought after. This will provide targeted NRCS funds for implementing practices and technologies for water users to mitigate or improve water quality in the basin.

Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3
Minutes of the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 13th, 2024

- 4) **Smart PLAN:** This is a way of GMD3 stating we are implementing HB 2279. PLAN is an acronym that stands for **P**rioritize, **L**earn, **A**ctuate, and **N**avigate. GMD3 will Prioritize priority areas, which must be submitted to the Chief Engineer by July 2024. We will Learn from existing efforts like the GMD3 Hydrologic Model and I-Care to develop decision support tools to predict the effect of various action plan scenarios on local regions, such as the Statistical Analysis of Lost Irrigated Acreage and Forage Production Model. Actuate: GMD3 will hold at least twelve meetings throughout GMD3 to create action plans to address resource concerns within priority areas. K-State University will provide facilitation. We will form reasonable goals to address water level declines and degraded water quality within each priority area. The action plans must be submitted to the Chief Engineer by July 2026. Navigate: all action plans will be set to run for a five-year period.
- 5) **Master Irrigator:** A collaboration with Kansas GMDs and K-State is occurring to develop a statewide Master Irrigator Program. This program will offer 5-7 courses per year, with one course in each GMD, with the ability to expand based on demand. The program will be overseen by two advisory committees, one coordinator for Western GMDs and one for the Eastern GMDs. A Master Irrigator Lite Even was held in Ulysses in February 2024.
- 6) **South Side Ditch Conversion to Pipe:** This project will replace about 59,000 feet of open canal lateral with PVC pipe. Doing this project will save an estimated 543.4 acre-feet of water.
- 7) **City of Deerfield:** The City of Deerfield has deteriorating water quality and will soon need to treat water or identify an alternate source. This project will evaluate four options: 1) Find and purchase a new well with better water quality. 2) Install a new water line from the City of Lakin to Deerfield to bring treated water in. 3) Install a central reverse osmosis water treatment plant to treat the water from the City's existing wells. 4) Conduct testing to determine how uranium concentrations vary with depth and seal more shallow layers on the existing wells.

Vendor Moment: GLB Meters.

Your Groundwater Management Path Forward, Mark Rude

Mark Rude talked about the High Priority Area Boundary map and advised the members to let us know if they think we missed the area boundary. He displayed a map that demonstrated the years until the average threshold reaches the minimum threshold, explaining the redder is the less time of water supply left. May consider making the whole district a priority area; that way, no one misses the benefits.

Mark showed a video explaining PRODUCER CONNECT, which will be coming soon. This program would allow each producer the ability to manage different fields, zoom in on fields, and provide the platform for paperless management along with water allocations and online source of accounting,

Member Forum, Chad McCormick

Management Program: Rules & Regulations, Water Conservation Programs and Other.

A district member mentioned the Rural Energy for America Program, which assists in saving electricity. His regular electricity would be around twelve cents during the months of July and August; however, with the program, he got it for seven cents. When we save electricity, we are saving water.

Another member stated with all the bills being presented, cutbacks will happen. Make sure you are aware that GMD3 is a representation of all water rights users. Irrigators are 90% of the users, but everyone should be considered when cutbacks happen.

Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3
Minutes of the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 13th, 2024

President McCormick mentioned that he has been a board member for three years and currently serves as the president for the last year. He believes that the community can make a difference, but there is a need to improve communication. He expressed his concern that the feed yards, dairies, and towns would not exist if the water did not exist. Although it is not his area of expertise, he wants to ensure things work out. He emphasized that having non-constructive conversations will not work and that tough conversations will be ahead. He is not convinced there is a hard date when we will run out of water. Therefore, ensuring your family has what it takes to live in this area in the future is essential. He advised everyone to learn from others and the other GMDs and to embrace change. President McCormick concluded by saying that he would use his power to ensure that the process moves forward, even if it is different from what he wants to happen. He urged everyone to start discussing the issues now.

Titas Jaeger stressed his belief in the district, and in Kansas, hearing reports from other GMDs and the Eastern part of the state have been negative about this district. However, we all want the same and limit the decrease of the most valuable resource. The solutions are in front of us; we must move forward with a positive message.

President McCormick asked for any closing comments. He welcomed everyone to enjoy the meal that had been prepared.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Garrett Love
GMD3 Board Secretary