

To: House Committee on Water

From: Orrin Feril, Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5 (GMD#5)

March 17, 2021

Chairman Highland and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide background and highlights regarding Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 (the "District"). My name is Orrin Feril, and I am the district manager for the District.

Encompassing approximately 2.5 million acres in South Central Kansas, the District was formed in March 1976 by local citizens and incorporated by the Secretary of State. The District includes portions of eight counties: Barton, Edwards, Kiowa, Pawnee, Pratt, Reno, Rice, and Stafford. There are nine surface drainage basins within the boundaries of the District. There are also two notable wetlands within the District's boundaries: Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Refuge and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Overlying the Great Bend Prairie portion of the High Plains Aquifer, the District's water resources are unique to the state and region.

The District is overseen by a nine-member Board of Directors. Board members are elected by the public and represent each of the eight counties and one District at-large position. Each board member serves a three-year term with no term limits. The board members manage the regional aquifer through the District's management program and applicable rules and regulations. The District is funded through local assessments and program-related charges. The board has set the current budget at nearly \$1.9M to implement a variety of aquifer management programs and conservation objectives.

Over the past 45 years, the District has implemented several water conservation and aquifer management programs to provide this region with long-term supplies of water for future generations. Through the 1980's, the District implemented well spacing, sustainable yield and water quality requirements for new applications for water. In the early 1990's, water flowmeters were required for all diversions of water within the District as well as a District-wide closure for new water permits. In the 2000s, the District authorized small use exemptions under 15 acre-feet and the ability to move water long distances within the Rattlesnake Creek drainage basin. The first and only water bank in Kansas overlaps the District's boundaries and is operated out of the District office. The water bank provides additional flexibility to water users in the region while significantly conserving water for future generations. A key management objective was realized in 2010 with the completion of a high-resolution hydrologic model of the District and upland regions. This model is utilized to direct management decisions for the region and is completely funded by the District. Through the implementation of these programs and several more that would take too long to describe today, the District has managed the Great Bend Prairie aquifer to provide a long-term resource for the local economy and water users of all types in South Central Kansas.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.