



# Solomon-Republican Regional Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

10 am, Tuesday, October 20, 2020  
GoTo Meeting and Conference Call

### Members in Attendance:

Name	City	Category	Term	Present
Timothy Driggs (Chair)	Phillipsburg, KS	Public Water Supply (cc)	2023	Yes
Keli Habiger (Vice-Chair)	Phillipsburg, KS	Fish, Wildlife & Recreation	2023	Yes
Donald Hellwig	Solomon, KS	Agriculture	2021	Yes
Mike Brzon	Courtland, KS	At Large Public	2021	No
John Cockerham	Osborne, KS	Conservation/Environment (cc)	2021	No
Raymond Debey	Cawker City, KS	Agriculture (cc)	2023	No
Rhonda Coffman	Agenda, KS	At Large Public	2023	Yes
Robbin Dibble	Alton, KS	At Large Public (cc)	2021	Yes
Stanley Kats	Prairie View, KS	At Large Public	2023	Yes
Terry Nelson	Phillips County, KS	Irrigation West	2021	No
David Pfizenmaier	Clay Center, KS	At Large Public	2023	No
Arnold Ross	Webber, KS	Irrigation East	2023	No

### Others in attendance:

Name	Agency	Name	Agency
Josh Olson	KWO	Laura Totten	USACE
Matt Unruh	KWO	Chelsea Erickson	KDA-DWR

- I) **Welcome and Introductions:** The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am by Chair, Tim Driggs. Self-introductions were given with RAC roll call completed on the conference call line.
- II) **Review of July 14<sup>th</sup> meeting notes:** The meeting notes were reviewed and approved as written.
- III) **RAC Business:**
  - a. **Milford Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):** Matt Unruh (KWO) gave a presentation and update on Milford RCPP efforts, available [here](#). Matt noted Rhonda’s involvement in the project and explained that the Lower Republican Watershed was an emphasis of the program, though the Republican River watershed technically extends into neighboring states. Matt went through the types of practices supported by the program, specifically those that are suited to meeting water quality goals, and noted that Milford Reservoir, the largest lake in Kansas by surface area, is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) reservoir with a variety of authorized purposes that include flood control, water quality, water supply, navigation, and recreation. Matt noted a primary goal of the program is to reduce phosphorus loading that contributes to harmful algal blooms (HABs) in Milford, with a target goal of 31,000 lb/yr reduction in phosphorus. The program utilizes NRCS EQIP funding for eligible practices, which have a cropland and livestock focus. Matt noted that nutrient management, such as no-till and cover crops, is a core practice with a 90% payment rate. The program divides priority areas into three tiers. The highest tier (Tier 1) is the targeted buffer area (1/2 mile on each side of KDHE classified streams). Projects within those zones are considered to have significant benefit to water quality. Tier 2 is comprised of targeted upland regions, HUC12s with a higher potential for loading. The final tier, Tier 3, includes uplands and basically represents

the remainder of the watershed. Landowners within the watershed are eligible for financial assistance through the Milford RCPP. Matt explained that the NRCS leverages federal Farm Bill funding with non-federal entities, such as state agencies, research groups, municipalities, non-profits, and the energy sector, noting that there are a variety of partners working to provide financial and technical assistance to landowners. Matt detailed the NRCS obligation for financial assistance to the program with 57% of the \$2.16 million in financial assistance already obligated and three years remaining for landowners to apply to participate in the program. Matt also outlined the state's payments into the program. The top funded practice with the greatest acreage is cover crops. Nutrient management is a close second. Over \$800,000 of the \$1.2 million paid out has gone to cover crops and nutrient management practices. Matt mentioned that, if the RAC was interested in the location of funded practices by county, that information could be provided. Matt also noted that [www.milfordwatershed.org](http://www.milfordwatershed.org) is a website that highlights RCPP projects and information. Matt asked if there were any questions. Don asked if cover crops and nutrient management payments are parceled out, so there is a payment each of the five years of the program. Matt explained that payments are generally parceled out over three-year or five-year periods, noting that state stack payments, however, are generally a single payment to producers. Matt transitioned the discussion to the KWA's comments on the RAC's Goals and Action Plans and the suggestion to include a Goal or Action Step related to BMPs above Milford.

- b. Goals and Action Plans revisions:** Tim summarized the comments he received regarding the RAC's Goals and Action Plans when he presented them to the KWA. Tim noted a generally positive response with a recommendation from Mike Armstrong to add a Goal or Action Step about BMPs in the Lower Republican River Basin to reduce sediment and nutrient inflow to Milford. Josh shared a draft Action Step based on Mike's comment for the RAC to consider adding to the Goals. Don moved to include the Action Step and approve the Goals with the suggested revision. Rhonda seconded. The revised Goals were unanimously approved by the RAC.
- c. Kansas River Reservoir Flood and Sediment Study (KRRFSS):** Laura Totten (USACE) gave an update presentation on the KRRFSS watershed study, available [here](#). Laura mentioned recent accomplishments, including extensive public outreach and workshops. Laura noted that there had been a workshop prior to the Governor's Conference in 2019, and there will be another workshop soon that the RAC will be invited to participate in. Laura noted the ongoing communications with the KRRFSS Advisory Committee, as well as stakeholders and public interest groups. Laura explained that a framework had been developed to assess existing and future conditions, which serve as a roadmap to inform future investments. Additionally, data was collected on hydrologic conditions, and a spin-off study had been identified for a Tuttle Creek Lake long-term sediment management plan. The scope of the watershed study is a comprehensive and strategic evaluation of the Kansas River Basin, including considerations for flood risk, sediment, system operation plans, water supply, recreation, and other topics. The three primary focus areas are flood risk management, sediment management, and reservoir operations. Laura outlined opportunities that had been identified by the study related to flood risk, water supply, sedimentation, and safety. Laura provided the Shared Vision Statement for the study and discussed goals and objectives, noting that actions may fall under federal, state, and/or local authority. Laura further discussed public outreach efforts, such as KWA presentations, RAC briefings, and public/stakeholder outreach opportunities, and noted that there are upcoming feedback opportunities related to the measures and strategies portion of the study. There will be more opportunities in a year during the recommendations phase of the study as well. Laura outlined the strategies and alternatives portion of the study, emphasizing a sedimentation assessment by John Shelley (USACE) that focused on

USACE reservoirs, as well as BoR reservoirs. Laura mentioned a head cut study performed using LiDAR and suggested the technique could be used more broadly in the basin. Laura noted that there are a variety of sediment management measures being considered, focusing on the Tuttle Creek Lake long-term management plan. Laura discussed the loss of multipurpose and flood pool storage. Josh said the KWO was in the process of confirming remaining storage with bathymetric surveys, but that estimated storage lost is approximately 48% and 8% in the multipurpose and flood pools. Laura noted that Harlan County Reservoir is estimated to have 82% of multipurpose storage remaining in 100 years, so the sedimentation rate is much slower than Tuttle. Laura also mentioned that water supply and water quality measures were being considered, such as reallocating storage in Milford and Perry Reservoirs for water quality. Laura explained that KRRFSS will not directly initiate a project or implementation effort. Laura detailed the upcoming KRRFSS schedule, explaining that the study is currently in the Shared Vision milestone. The recommendations milestone is anticipated to occur from May 2021 – May 2023, and the final report is expected in fall 2023. Laura further detailed the upcoming small group workshop/brainstorming session being planned for late fall/early winter 2020. The focus will be getting stakeholder feedback and input on the draft measures and strategies. In preparation for the meeting, Laura asked the RAC to think about what might have been missed in the study so far, specifically focusing on measures and actions related to water supply and drought and sediment management. Laura noted it would be an opportunity to make sure the RAC goals were represented. Josh commented that the goal in having the Milford RCPP presentation, KWA comments, and KRRFSS update together for this meeting was to encourage the RAC to think about the region's role and impact on the broader system. Josh encouraged the RAC to participate in the upcoming KRRFSS workshop and make sure their goals for the watershed were represented.

- IV) Agency or Public Comments:** Chelsea Erickson (KDA-DWR) shared that DWR offices are fully functional and staffed, but they are closed to the public. Chelsea explained that DWR is still meeting with the public and doing well measurements, which are down from the current drought, similar to 2018. Chelsea noted DWR wants to get people into multi-year flex accounts to accommodate over-pumping this year with reduced use in future years. Chelsea also noted there was a Lower Republican River Compact meeting August 21. Chelsea mentioned that the three states support a website ([republicanriver.org](http://republicanriver.org)), which provides information and updates about the compact. Chelsea noted that 2020-2021 are not projected by Nebraska to be water short years, so they won't be doing pumping. Kansas can call for that water in Harlan County.
- V) Upcoming Meetings:**
- Kansas Water Authority meeting (10:00 AM, October 26th – Conference Call)
  - Governor's Water Conference (November 9th-10th – Virtual)
  - Next Solomon-Republican RAC meeting (February – Doodle Poll)
- VI) Adjourn:** Tim adjourned the meeting with no further business at 11:16 am.