

Atchison Consolidated RWD 5 Becomes Major Water Supplier



In the mid-70's, several portions of Atchison County were in need of a better water supply. The Cummings area had concerned residents Claude Eads, Rodney Kooser, Gale Robins and the late Ralph Sanders working together to form a new rural water district. In the northern part of the county, Clement Lawless, Justin Schletzbaum, Ronnie Bell, Dan Brox and John Fuhrman were trying to form a district in the Good Intent area. The two groups were both working with Bartlett & West Engineers in Topeka. Eventually, the two groups joined and a new water district began development. A feasibility study cost \$25 for any applicant. There were initially 334 benefit users and the city of Lancaster covering approximately 135 square miles. With funding through the Farmers Home Administration (presently USDA Rural Development), a 150,000-gallon water storage tank was constructed west of the city of Lancaster. The cost of a benefit unit was set at \$300. Water was purchased from the city of Atchison. As the district went into construction, the number of users quickly increased to 650. The area people were excited; water was coming their way! Officially in November of 1977, Atchison County Rural Water District 5 was finalized and began to provide water service.

From 1984 to 1996 the district added new customers in the Doniphan County area, namely the existing Doniphan

This new 60-foot x 80-foot office building and maintenance shop was recently completed for Atchison RWD 5 near Lancaster. The district has met in Atchison City Hall and City Library since the district began developing in the 1970's.

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Rural Water District No. 3 (Denton/Severance areas). It expanded west to Purcell, west from Paradise Lake area to the Muscotah city limits, then north to the Brown/Atchison county line, and south to the city limits of Valley Falls and

Nortonville. Atchison RWD 5 expanded by nearly 250 square miles serving 250 additional benefit units. Benefit units were available for \$1,200. USDA Rural Development again provided funding.

Atchison RWD 5 consolidated with Atchison Rural Water District 4 in 2004. Atchison RWD 4 consisted of 142 customers and covered 51 square miles. The district is now known as Atchison Consolidated Rural Water District 5; it serves 1,025 customers.

Southwest of Atchison, the Atchison County Rural Water District 2 with approximately 4.6 square miles merged with the consolidated district in 2005. "It was a cost savings for the smaller district. The customers of RWD 2 were able to have a cheaper water rate through the consolidation," states district Manager Dwight Scholz.

Atchison Consolidated Rural Water District 5 has held a contract to purchase water with the city of Atchison since the district began. In 2007, the relationship between the two entities became strained due to conflicts over providing water to a proposed ethanol plant.

“The city of Atchison wanted the district to give up several customers – Cargill, Inc., a residence and the site for a proposed ethanol plant for a fraction of an amount that the district was asking” Scholz comments. “The federal statute 1926B prohibited the city from serving the land that was in the water district territory. And because of federal debt that the rural water District No. 5 held, the city couldn’t take the land,” he concluded. The city then announced in 2008 that the city would be increasing water rates by 140 percent to support a city water improvement plan. The district decided it was time to seek another reliable source of water.

Robert Vincent, Ground Water Associates, Wichita, KS, was called upon to help locate a source of water. He recommended that the district conduct ground water exploration in an area located to the southwest between Effingham and Muscotah. A very reliable source of water was located three miles north of Highway 116, on Chautauqua Road along County Road 254. Plans for developing the new source were finalized.

In early 2009, USDA Rural Development announced the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The district’s engineer, Bryan Ford, with Bartlett & West, Inc., stated, “The plans for this project were “shovel ready”. Some fine-tuning needed to be done meaning easements and leases obtained for the well sites. The cost of the project was estimated at \$3.2 million. The project would also include improvements in areas where the district was nearing capacity.

The proposed project consisted of constructing three wells, 14 miles of 12-inch water line to Lancaster from the new wells going south three miles to tie into the



GROUNDWATER SUPPLY PROJECT
 CONTRACT NO. 2010-1 - Waterline and Well Buildings
 CONTRACT NO. 2010-2 - Water Supply Wells
 CRWD NO. 5 Atchison County, Kansas
 201 N. Broadway, Lancaster, KS 66041

Bartlett & West Engineers, Inc.
 1200 SW Executive Drive, Topeka, Kansas 66615

M CON, LLC - Contract 2010-1
 2335 165th Road, Wathena Kansas 66090

LAYNE CHRISTENSEN COMPANY - Contract 2010-2
 620 S. 38th Street, Kansas City, Kansas 66106

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This project sign announces the USDA funding for the Atchison Cons. RWD 5 project. The project was funded as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The new waterline project included drilling three new wells, pipeline improvements, main waterline from the new wells to tie into the previous RWD 4 lines, two 8-foot x 14-foot pre-fab well enclosure buildings and an 11-foot x 29-foot pre-fab treatment plant.



The board, staff and engineer have operated as a team for Atchison Cons. RWD 5. Pictured here, left to right are: Back, Engineer Bryan Ford, Operator in Training John Brown, President Joe Elias, Maintenance Operator Dan Potts, Treasurer Ron Estes, Directors Richard Malm, Ronald Bell and Jim Zwonitzer. Front. Vice President Gary Handke, Director Sarah Noll, Secretary Jay Strieby, Manager Dwight Scholz.

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Renewed efforts at negotiating a long-term water supply contract with the district were made. Atchison Cons. RWD 5 accounts for ten percent of the city of Atchison's total water sales, with the district being the city's second highest use customer. A new contract was negotiated; it provides that the RWD will purchase a minimum of nine million gallons per month with a maximum of 22 million per month. The contract, which runs until 2018, has a flat rate of \$1.39 per thousand. That rate is less than the district's cost to produce water from the new well field.

After the contract negotiations with city of Atchison went so well, the district faced a dilemma of how to efficiently use the three new 400 gallon-per-minute producing wells. The rural water district contacted representatives of Doniphan RWD 2 to learn if they might be interested. They were. Today, Atchison Cons. RWD 5 provides approximately 125,000 gallons per month to that area. Also, 4-inch water lines were constructed to the cities of Nortonville and Valley Falls for emergency water supplies. A community meeting was held at the Community Center in Lancaster last summer with area systems attending.

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Jackson RWD 3, City of Horton, Brown RWD 2, Valley Falls and newly forming Doniphan RWD 6 were among those in attendance. Bartlett & West engineers Louis Funk and Bryan Ford presented the possibilities of providing service to those attending. Engineer Louis Funk commented that the district's board of directors has historically been progressive in accommodating growth and pursuing new opportunities. As such, they were excited about the prospect of developing their own water supply, which would eliminate their dependency on the city of Atchison. However, when the city gave them a contract offer that they could not refuse, from a fiscal responsibility standpoint the district had to accept that offer. Faced with a decision of whether or not to walk away from the ground water source they spent so much time and money identifying, the district ultimately decided to serve the southwest part of the system from the new wells and use the excess ground water capacity for further potential expansion, possibly as a wholesale water supplier.

With the successful negotiations with the city of Atchison, the USDA Rural Development ARRA project was reduced to \$1.2 million. The 14 miles of 12-inch pipeline were dropped from the project because they were no longer needed. Construction took place this last summer. M CON, LLC, of Wathena, KS installed the waterlines; Layne-Christensen is currently installing the wells.

One of the major concerns for area landowners near the new wells has been the possible decrease in their domestic wells. Atchison Cons. RWD 5 took drastic measures to reassure the landowners that the water table would be monitored. "Two observation wells with transducers are being installed at a cost of \$5,000 each; one is a half mile north and the other is south of the three new wells," states Scholz. Katie Tietsort, Division of Water Resources, has informed the district that the monitoring equipment will send a signal to a satellite which will be received by Division of Water Resources should there be a change in the water table.

The district also recently constructed a 60-foot x 80-foot office building and maintenance shop at the southwest corner of Highway 73 and 286th Road just southwest of Lancaster. The new building is very much anticipated, because the district has met in Atchison City Hall and City Library since the district began. Paperwork for the district had been kept in various homes. Now all paperwork is kept in a 40-foot van and also,

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at Lancaster Insurance where Dwight Scholz, District Manager, works as an agent. Finally, the district has its own home.

Presently, benefit units are priced at \$3,000. The district's rates are slightly less than the average water rates for other RWDs in Kansas. Atchison Cons. RWD 5 has two rates. Users in the original district pay a \$14 minimum, and then, \$4.25 per thousand up to 6000, \$2.80 per thousand on use above 6000 gallons. Customers added after 1996 pay a \$27 minimum and the same rate for water use. The district serves more than 1,400 users.

Chairman Joe Elias says that the district's board members' commitment and longevity have been a plus for this district. "Anyone who needs water should have it; the district welcomes new customers anytime," he says.

I encourage you to contact KRWA for any help concerning improving or developing new projects.

Rita has extensive municipal experience with the city of Troy, KS for 11 years. She was a certified EMT and served as the Ambulance Director for two years and supervised the volunteer staff. Rita also worked on or completed most water and wastewater utility reporting requirements. Her focus at KRWA is to provide assistance with applications for funding for community facilities.



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