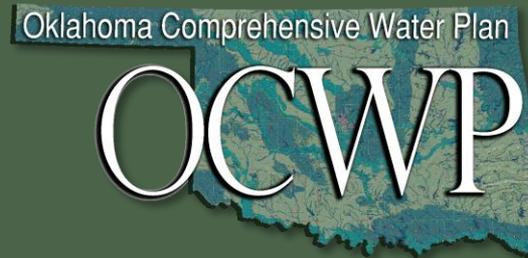


2012 Update of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan



Instream/Environmental Flows

Derek Smithee, WQ Division Chief
Oklahoma Water Resources Board

Governor's Water Conference

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Instream/Environmental Flows

Recognizing Nonconsumptive Water Needs and Supporting Recreational & Local Economic Interests

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION:

An instream flow program should be established to preserve water quality, protect ecological diversity, and sustain and promote economic development, including benefits associated with tourism, recreation, fishing, and spiritual and cultural heritage. The process developed by the OCWP Instream Flow Workgroup should be implemented and followed to ascertain the suitability and structure of such a program for Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Act—as codified in Title 82, Section 1452, of Oklahoma Statutes—already provides for protection of the free-flowing conditions of designated state scenic rivers. The OWRB should seek express authority from the State Legislature prior to promulgating rules to accommodate and protect instream flows elsewhere in the state.

Instream/Environmental Flows

Recognizing Nonconsumptive Water Needs and
Supporting Recreational & Local Economic Interests

FINAL RECOMMENDATION:

The process developed by the OCWP Instream Flow Workgroup should be implemented and followed to ascertain the suitability and structure of an instream flow program for Oklahoma, with such process commencing in 2012 and concluding by 2015, as outlined by the Workgroup.

Instream/Environmental Flows

Why Address

Instream Flows?:

- Significant interest in value of non-consumptive uses of water, especially related to recreation & tourism (Oklahoma's 3rd biggest industry):
 - Tourism industry generates more than \$6.1 billion/year.
 - Fish/wildlife-related recreationists spend \$1.3

billion/year

- Associated factors related to ecological integrity, endangered species, interstate compact compliance, etc.
- Consistent with holistic water planning principles and in calculating excess/surplus water.

Instream/Environmental Flows

“Instream Flow” Definitions:

- OCWP/Workgroup:
 - *The amount of water set aside in a stream or river to ensure downstream environmental, social and economic benefits are met.*
- Senate Bill 2 (Texas):
 - *Flow conditions necessary for supporting a sound ecological environment in the river basin.*

Instream/Environmental Flows

Existing Policy:

- Current OWRB rule seeks to protect domestic uses through a set-aside of 6 acre-feet of water/year per 160 acres of land
- OWRB has established a 50 cfs minimum flow requirement in a portion of Barren Fork Creek (established through OSU study)

Instream/Environmental Flows

OCWP Instream Flow Advisory Group:

- 5 meetings between February-December 2010
- Technical analysis of various instream flow methods
- Analysis of regulation and potential implementation
- Review of successful and unsuccessful programs in other states/countries

Members from variety of interests:

OK Water Resources Board

OK Department of Environmental Quality

OK Conservation Commission

OK Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry

Office of the Secretary of Environment

Bureau of Reclamation

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

OK Department of Wildlife Conservation

U.S. Geological Survey

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association

Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association

Cherokee Nation

Oklahoma Rural Water Association

Oklahoma Municipal League

Environmental Federation of Oklahoma

Oklahoma Farm Bureau

The Nature Conservancy

Chesapeake Energy Corporation

State Chamber of Commerce

Oklahoma State Parks

Instream/Environmental Flows

Supported by OCWP Technical Analyses:

- Generally recognized the importance of nonconsumptive water uses (recreation, tourism, etc.) to state and local economies.
- Instream and environmental flows specifically investigated by OCWP workgroup.
- Developed water use models that can be used on the local level to incorporate nonconsumptive demands and adjust management schemes accordingly.

Instream/Environmental Flows

Implementation Costs = \$ 1.5 million over 4 years

Recommended Timeline

