

OKLAHOMA WATER NEWS

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board



*from
the desk
of the
Director...*

Solutions to Water, Environmental Problems Rely on State, Cities

State, local people can do a better job of targeting real problems and implementing reasonable solutions

Solution of water and environmental problems must move away from Washington, D.C., keynote speaker Craig Bell told 300 participants of the Governor's Water Conference in Oklahoma City on November 15. "That model of decision-making failed in the dynamic, adaptive, long-term view," said Bell, a Utah attorney and executive director of Western States Water Council.

Bell's message of change in the federal

budget deadlock between Congress and the President.

The theme of the Sixteenth Water Conference was "The Shifting Federal Role: Oklahoma's Opportunity to Redefine Water Policies."

Bell said, "Our states have assumed almost all the costs of regulating those programs which have been delegated to them. In fiscal 1991 (the most recent year for which data are available) the states spent \$9.3 billion. The federal share was 14 percent -- down significantly from the traditional 35 to 40 percent."

He noted that state and local governments and other interest groups, working together, can target resources that can be used efficiently and effectively to deal with real problems in managing our water resources and protecting the environment. In the past, the feds have led us to believe that more regulation equals more environmental protection. Not true, he said. Nothing is accomplished until the program is implemented at the state and local level, he pointed out.

"States are confronted with both opportunity and responsibility," Bell said. "If states fail to deal with the complex problems confronting us in water resource management, we can't complain about lack of federal control when it's invited by our own inaction."

He said he believes the states will respond to a new model -- one locally driven, state-facilitated and federally supported. It will involve all the

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State and local governments can target resources, solve problems better, said Craig Bell, executive director of Western States Water Council.

regulatory role was driven home by nearly every speaker. It was further emphasized by the absence of the invited Environmental Protection Agency speaker, grounded by the



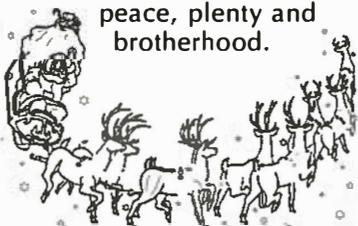
As we end the year, all of us at the Water Resources Board feel blessed that we survived the tragedy of April 19. We continue to mourn our two fine employees who were killed, and progress in our healing process, but we are filled with hope and expectation this holiday season.

Very early in the New Year, the Water Resources Board will move from crowded temporary quarters into new beautiful new offices at 3800 North Classen. We will meet 1996 with new excitement, greater dedication, and more energy than ever before. At last, the folks at the Water Board will be at home and more eager than ever to serve the citizens of Oklahoma.

Among the blessings we count this special time of year are all our friends who held out helping hands... the close ties in the Water Board family... our health and healing... the prospect of a happier, more productive year.

In this season of expectation and joy, all of us at the Water Resources Board wish all of you a holiday season abundant with blessings.

We wish our world a New Year of peace, plenty and brotherhood.



Conference, continued from page 1

relevant stake-holders in arriving at solutions which carry the legitimacy of support of those people most affected.

Panelists describe feds' new missions

A discussion entitled "The Downsizing Dilemma" brought together panelists describing the federal perspective on agency realignments and their changing relationships to the states. Moderator Christopher J. Brescia, executive director of the Midwest Area River Coalition, pointed out that it's not a coincidence that so many major cities are located on rivers.

"There are 800,000 jobs connected to the river systems in this country, but the river transportation system works so well that most people have forgotten it's there," he said.

He pointed out that one river barge can carry as much freight as 15 rail cars or 50 trucks.

Second up on the panel was Col. Timothy L. Sanford, commander of the Tulsa District Corps of Engineers. Sanford said under the new structure, the Corps will continue performing its core missions -- overseeing inland waterways, ports, multistate flood control and water supply.

"On the national level, one-half of the Corps' budget is spent on operation and maintenance expenses," he pointed out. "By 2003, the entire \$3.3 billion annual appropriation could be taken up in O&M. There aren't going to be new projects if we are caught up in O&M," he said.

Charles Rainbolt, state director, Rural Economic and Community Development told conferees his agency is undergoing budget and personnel reductions, as well. "Last year, RECD had \$21 million available for loans and grants for water and wastewater facilities," Rainbolt said. This year, we will have \$8.5 million for loans and \$5 million available for grants. He noted that this is more than a 30 percent reduction from last year.

Elizabeth Harrison, Bureau of Reclamation area manager, said the bureau has downsized 20 percent in the last two years and has reexamined its mission.

"As we move away from project construction, we will be aligning our resources to provide technical skills and assistance to the states," she said.

Mark Coleman, executive director

of the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality and Jon Craig, DEQ's Water Quality Division chief, filled the panel slot slated for EPA's representative. Craig pointed out that EPA is facing a budget cut of 34 percent, resulting in the loss of 4,000- 7,000 jobs in its corps of 19,000 employees nationwide.

Coleman noted that EPA is redirecting its programs to place emphasis on areas where there are problems. He said he expects EPA to move out of the enforcement role, but to continue to set standards based on scientific data. Coleman said the EPA had committed to a 25 percent reduction in rules.

"Much of the control in environmental programs is being transferred to us," Coleman said. "When there's a problem, we'll be responsible for fixing it."

"Oklahoma is on the verge of great



Gov. Frank Keating

things," Gov. Frank Keating said. We've been able to attract business and industry to the state.

"Some of this is due to my salesmanship -- more than 30 trips overseas since last December," he noted. "Much of it also is due to the tremendous image Oklahomans received as a result of the tragedy of April 19, but nothing will happen unless there is fundamental change."

We need the legislative change that will make the reality permanent, he said. He emphasized that he expects to come back to the legislature with substantial bodies of change -- right to work, workers compensation reform, tax cuts to stimulate savings and investments and tax credits to en-

courage the hiring of Oklahoma college graduates. All were defeated in the last session, but we're coming back with that agenda and more.

"Our first responsibility is to keep our resources alive, renewable and available for our children."

We are in an intense, global, interdependent and very competitive environment. We need to support growth in Oklahoma, Keating said.

"Never forget the fact that our first responsibility is to keep our resources alive, renewable and available for our children," This is their state too."

We are going to work together; to continue the road to excellence; to continue the road to progress. With your help, I am confident that Oklahoma will achieve it, he said.

A second panel, entitled "New Directions, New Destinies," presented the state perspective on federal cuts. Moderator Dick Seybolt, a member of the Water Resources Board and resident of Grand Lake, told conferees that on three weekends a year Grand Lake is the third-largest city in Oklahoma, emphasizing the importance of clean water for recreation in Oklahoma. Clean water is important to tourism and economically important to the state. Water-based recreation is a multi-million dollar industry, Seybolt pointed out.

Bill Moyer, executive director of the Oklahoma Municipal League, looks at federal budget cuts as an opportunity for local and state officials to regain control of their own programs.

"For years we've pleaded with the federal government to get out of our hair, leave us alone and cut the strings.

Now it's happening. The real question is, will they give us the money when they give us the programs," Moyer said.

Rob Johnson, chief executive officer of the National Rural Water Association, said the association is concerned over the proposal to return water and wastewater loan and grant funds as block grants to the states. He pointed to the existing loan program as the most successful in the federal government, with a repayment rate of 99 percent. However, the backlog of applications in this program amounts to \$2.5 billion, and

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Sen. Robert Kerr, Altus, said large projects still require the partnership of the federal government.



Ray Tomasko, a board member of Rogers County RWD #5, examines map showing OWRB members' home counties.



Water Board Chairman Ross Kirtley visits with former chairman Gerald E. Borelli, Kingfisher rancher/oil producer.



Governor Keating visits with Ron Elliott of the OSU Environmental Institute and Ken Crawford of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey.



Gary Sherrer, OWRB executive director, visits with Elizabeth Harrison, area manager of the Bureau of Reclamation and Ervin Mitchell, OWRB member.



Executive Director Gary Sherrer congratulates Oscar Hughes of Freedom for a lifetime of work in bringing water to rural areas.



Speaker Glen Johnson pointed out the Board's Financial Assistance Program as an example of a successful state initiative.



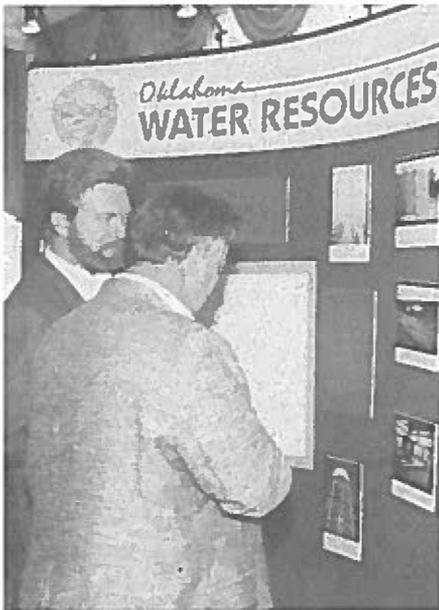
"The river transportation system works so well that most people forget it's there," said Chris Brescia of MARC 2000.



Connie Ziegelgruber, Kim Brown and Donnie Blanlot work at the conference registration desk. Right is Cecil Wildman, an engineer with Spear & McCaleb Co.



Visitor to the Water Conference studies details of financial assistance program



Conferees study photo display of sewer/water projects completed with assistance of OWRB loan and grant program.



Diane Miller, daughter of Dr. Norman Durham of Stillwater, accepts the Oklahoma Water Pioneer award on behalf of her father, who was out of state at meeting time.



Derek Smithee, OWRB Water Quality Programs chief, visits with Kathy Peter, executive director of the U.S. Geological Survey.



The Corps of Engineers has downsized and redefined its mission, said Col. Timothy Sanford of the Tulsa District.



More than 300 people attended the Governor's Water Conference at the Marriott Hotel in Oklahoma City November 15.

Conference, continued from page 2

EPA estimates the need for small water systems in this country exceeds \$8 billion.

"Moving this to a block grant seems penny-wise and pound-foolish; money could be diverted to other less critical programs," Johnson warned.

Ronn Cupp, vice-president of the Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said if Oklahoma and other states are going to have to pick up a bigger part of the water resources tab, Washington will have to back off on unfunded mandates.

Cupp asked for balance in federal programs. "We need reasonable rules and regulations and a change in the attitude of regulators that allows



Duane Smith, OWRB assistant director, presents Oklahoma Water Pioneer award to Paul Thornbrugh of Tulsa. Thornbrugh is one of 70 honored on the plaque in the background since inception of the award in 1985.

compliance while allowing enough flexibility for economic development."

Jarold Callahan, executive director of the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association, pointed out that agriculture is the state's biggest industry, but unique in that it cannot pass through regulatory costs. He said he is wary of the federal government's unfunded mandates. "As they shift the burden to the states, someone is going to have to pay. It's going to be industry," said Callahan.

Scott Robinson, president of the Arkansas Basin Development Association, pointed out that the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System is preparing to celebrate its 25th anniversary. "The destiny of the waterway lies in our resolve to tackle the tough decisions ahead," he said. "We need to build Montgomery Point Lock and Dam, get operation and maintenance funding for the Corps, and

resist crippling user fees on the waterway that would take away its competitive edge."

At the conference luncheon, House Speaker Glen Johnson and Sen. Robert M. Kerr presented their perspective of the shifting federal role.

Johnson said Oklahoma is fortunate to have ample supplies of good water to attract new industry. In the last 25 years, the legislature has made the commitment to good water.

"The \$25 million appropriation we made to the water resources board's Financial Assistance Program is some of the best money we've spent."

He reminded conferees that December is the time to set legislative priorities.

Sen. Kerr, a resident of Altus, said the country is sailing into uncharted waters concerning the shifting responsibilities of local, state and federal governments. He agreed that there are some local problems best solved at the local level, but he pointed out that large projects require the partnership of the federal government.

"For example, the Tom Steed and Altus-Lugert Reservoirs in my district could not have been built with-

out federal involvement. I am not going to admit that all big government has been bad," Kerr said.

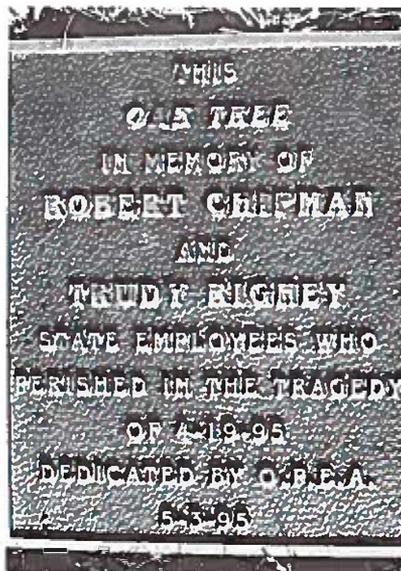
He pointed to federal desalination projects underway in the Red River Basin as examples of projects requiring more resources than state or local sources can muster.

The Sixteenth Annual Governor's Water Conference closed with presentation of Water Pioneer Awards to four Oklahomans who have made outstanding contributions to the development, protection and conservation of the state's water supplies.

Those honored were Bill Wilson, upstream flood control advocate and soil/water conservationist from Kinta; Oscar Hughes, rural water proponent and ORWA board member from Freedom; Paul Thornbrugh, former federal commissioner on the Oklahoma-Kansas Arkansas River Compact Commission from Tulsa; and Dr. Norman Durham, retired director of the OSU Center for Water Resources Research from Stillwater. OWRB Executive Director Gary Sherrer and Assistant Director Duane Smith presented honorees the framed certificates.

Ceremony Honors Employees Who Died

A memorial marker was set in place November 8 to remember Trudy Rigney and Robert Chipman, the two Water Resources Board employees who perished in the April 19 bombing. The marker was placed on the south Capitol grounds, near the oak tree planted in May. OWRB Executive Director Gary Sherrer spoke at the brief noontime ceremony that honored the two victims.



Board Schedules Rules Hearings

Executive Director Gary Sherrer announced a series of public meetings will be held throughout the state in January to give citizens an opportunity to comment on proposed Water Resources Board rules and the draft revision of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan.

Significant proposed amendments to OWRB Rules and Regulations include stricter eligibility requirements for entities applying for emergency grants for sewer and water improvements. The loan and grant program is administered by the Board's Financial Assistance Division.

According to Sherrer, the proposed rules amendments assume the life of an "emergency" to be no longer than 180 days; require applicants to contribute at least 15 percent of project cost; give priority to applicants in proportion to project contributions; deny grants to entities with priority points below a certain threshold; award lower priority points to emergencies caused by negligence or improper maintenance; and require certain Board-prescribed conditions be met upon approval of the application.

All hearings will begin at 7 p.m. at these locations:

- **Guymon** - January 23, Texas County Activity Center, Banquet Room, 5th and Sunset
- **Woodward** - January 24, Northwest Electric Coop, 2925 Williams Avenue
- **Oklahoma City** - January 25, MetroTech, Rose Room, 1900 Springlake Drive
- **McAlester** - January 29, First National Bank Center, Conference Center, 3rd and Choctaw
- **Tulsa** - January 30, 7 p.m., University Center, North Hall Room 155, 700 N. Greenwood
- **Lawton** - January 31, 7 p.m., Great Plains Vo-Tech, Room 301A, 4500 S.W. Lee Boulevard

Copies of the proposed rules and information are available by calling the OWRB at (405) 525-4700.

Sherrer also invited citizens to attend the slide show and discussion on the revised Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan which will immediately follow the rules hearings.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE

Approved at November and December 1995 Board Meetings

FAP Loans (4.472%; 28.5 year maximum term)

Rush Springs MIA, Increased by \$ 320,000.00

FAP Grants

Bridge Creek School, Grady County \$ 100,000.00

City of Norman \$ 100,000.00

Lincoln County RWD #3, Increased by \$ 35,000.00

Marlow MA \$ 60,000.00

Hughes County RWD #6, Increased by \$ 30,368.00

SRF Loans

Glenpool USA \$ 3,751,300.00

Skiatook PWA \$ 600,000.00

Norman UA \$ 2,720,000.00

TOTALS AS OF 12/12/95

	FAP Loans	FAP Grants	SRF Loans
APPROVED	162	378	36
Amount	\$201,805,000.00	\$21,046,077.00	\$146,354,834.23
FUNDED	153	343	29
Amount	\$190,065,000.00	\$18,679,834.41	\$129,359,534.23

Mary E. Whitlow, Editor

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P.O. Box 150
Oklahoma City, OK 73101-0150

J. Ross Kirtley, Chairman
Bill Secrest
Ervin Mitchell
Robert S. Kerr, Jr.
Mike Henson
Richard McDonald
Dick Seybolt
Lonnie L. Farmer
Jack M. Givens

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