

OKLAHOMA Water News

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board

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From the Director



*Duane A. Smith
OWRB Executive Director*

As just about everyone knows by now, Oklahoma is in the midst of a very serious budget crisis and state government continues to wrestle with this very desperate situation. The Water Resources Board and all other state agencies have been forced to closely reevaluate their individual practices and activities, necessitating some very difficult decisions regarding expenditures, and in some cases, personnel.

At the OWRB, our management team has closely scrutinized division budgets and developed several outstanding cost-saving initiatives that are now being implemented throughout our agency programs. It is encouraging to witness how Water Board staff have seized this opportunity not only

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New Rule Protects Flow of Scenic Barren Fork

In response to recent concerns about the environmental impacts of withdrawals during low-flow conditions, the nine-member Water Board unanimously approved a new rule in March that seeks to protect eastern Oklahoma's Barren Fork Creek while meeting increasing demands for public water supply in the area.

The proposed rule, establishing a minimum flow of 50 cubic feet per second (cfs), originates from a need to satisfy water requirements of area residents, especially customers of Adair County Rural Water District #5, while complying with the state Scenic Rivers Act. The Act serves to protect the natural scenic, environmental, and recreational values of Oklahoma's free-flowing rivers and streams. Barren Fork Creek has been designated as a Scenic River in Adair and Cherokee Counties from Highway 59 west to the Illinois River.

The 50 cfs target flow was arrived at through results from a recent study, conducted by the OWRB and Oklahoma State University to quantify instream flow requirements, and input from the public and state environmental agencies. The new rule awaits approval by the State Legislature.



Barren Fork Creek, west of Westville, Oklahoma, just downstream of the intake for Adair County Rural Water District #5. The District's system serves some 1,000 customers through an allocation of 182 acre-feet of water from the OWRB.

resolve the agency's budget shortfall, but create a more efficient, stronger, and innovative organization.

One innovation, debuting this month, is our new and much-improved Web site (www.owrb.state.ok.us) housed on the Board's very own, new Web server. (I want to specifically thank officials at the Office of State Finance, who have graciously hosted our site since 1996.) The site has been a "high priority issue" for a couple years now and staff have worked long and hard to construct what I believe is one of the very best Web sites in Oklahoma state government. The site contains a wealth of information and is organized for ease of navigability. I urge you to log on and check it out.

In conclusion, I want to mention an Oklahoma milestone. Last month, the Corps of Engineers celebrated the 60th anniversary of Lake Texoma (Denison Dam) on the Oklahoma-Texas border. The Lake Texoma project, constructed at an approximate cost of \$60 million, has prevented \$174 million in flood losses, about three times its initial price tag. The hydropower benefit of the project is about \$16 million/year, but the lake provides numerous other opportunities related to recreation, water supply, and other uses. Texoma is Oklahoma's largest lake in conservation storage (more than 2.4 million acre-feet) and second largest in surface area (about 88,000 acres). Happy Birthday Lake Texoma!

OWRB Launches New Web Site

On May 1, the OWRB officially launched its new Web site with the same URL--www.owrb.state.ok.us. Formerly hosted by the Office of State Finance, the new site is now hosted at the OWRB main office on the agency's own Web server. The site has been redesigned and restructured based on content rather than by agency divisions.

The site has been divided into to six featured areas: 1)

Water Quality, including Standards and monitoring, 2) Water Supply & Availability, with information related to water use permits, well drilling, water supply monitoring, and water availability, 3) Water/Wastewater Financing, 4) Technical Studies, including information on the agency's numerous water-related investigations as well as various reports, 5) Hazard Mitigation, featuring the OWRB's dam safety, floodplain management, and weather modification programs, and 6) News & Events, with links to agency news, meetings, and publications. Various other useful pages include Rules & Hearings, About Us, and Frequently Asked Questions.

The site was redefined over the past year using visitor/customer information collected since the launch of the original site in 1998 and staff recommendations. In creating the site, staff relied on the latest information concerning Web development and focused on techniques to maximize user navigability and visual appeal. Pages were designed to download relatively quickly, even on older model computers. Another important consid-

eration was accessibility for agency customers with disabilities.

During the final stages of development, the site was tested by agency staff, colleagues, and other individuals. Feedback since the launch of the site has also led to several modifications, and staff will continue to modify and further develop the site, adding the most current information as soon as it becomes available. Several interactive programs--including a searchable water well log database and a GIS mapping program--are in development.

OWRB
the water agency
Managing and protecting
Oklahoma's water resources...

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thewateragency

rules | forms | logs | board meetings | publications | tech reports | site map | help

news

- West Regional Conference, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, May 7-9
- Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer Permit Hearing Continued to June 11
- May Flood Awareness Month; Flood Workshops Scheduled
- Water Quality Standards Revisions
- Oklahoma Water News & Other Agency Newsletters

agency calendar

May	Floodplain Workshops
May 7-9	Dam Safety Conf.
May 13	Board Meeting
Nov 5	Water Conference

featured links

- Arbuckle-Simpson Permit Proceedings
- Beneficial Use Monitoring Program 2002 Draft Report
- Oklahoma Water Atlas Online
- Drought & Water Resource Monitoring
- Monthly Board Meetings/Agendas
- OWRB Divisions
- Interstate Stream Compacts
- Rural Water Systems of Oklahoma

reports/publications

- Impact of CAFDs on Oklahoma City's Water Supplies
- Water Quality Evaluation of the Eucha/Spavinaw Lake System
- Tilman Terrace Groundwater Basin Study Update
- Lake Tenkiller Wholesale Water Treatment/Conveyance System Study

publications | newsletters | presentations

Board Welcomes New Member

Jack W. Keeley, of Ada, has been appointed by Governor Brad Henry to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. He replaces Wendell E. Thomasson, who served on the Board for one seven-year term.

Keeley, who is a registered professional engineer, served as the Director of Research for the Environmental Protection Agency's Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Laboratory from 1984 to 1988. He previously served as Chief of the Groundwater Research Branch and Engineering and Systems Analysis Section for the facility, which he joined in 1965.



*Jack Keeley, Ada,
newest appointee to the
Water Board*

The Kerr lab is part of the National Risk Management Research Laboratory (NRMRL), headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio. Sister facilities are located in North Carolina and New Jersey. Research at NRMRL is focused in seven key areas: drinking water protection, air pollution control, sustainability and pollution prevention, contaminated media remediation, watershed management and restoration, technology transfer and technical support, and environmental technology verification.

Keeley currently provides private consulting services following eight years with the Dynamac Corporation. Among numerous professional affiliations, honors, and appointments, Keeley is a member of the Harvard Engineering Society and National Water Well Association.

Keeley's appointment is subject to confirmation by the Oklahoma State Legislature. His term will expire May 14, 2010.

Dick Seybolt Appointed To Arkansas River Compact Commission

On March 13, former OWRB Member Richard (Dick) Seybolt of Grand Lake, Oklahoma, was appointed by President George W. Bush as Federal Commissioner to the Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission. Seybolt, who owns a bus manufacturing company in southeastern Kansas, recently served on the Water Board for more than 14 years under Governors Henry Bellmon, David Walters, and Frank Keating.

The Arkansas River Compact Commission is an official administrative body charged with overseeing water resources of the Arkansas River basin in both Arkansas and Oklahoma. Congress ratified the Compact between the two states in 1971. The Commission administers the agreement, which serves to protect the Arkansas River and its tributaries in eastern Oklahoma and western Arkansas. Each state has three members who meet regularly to address interstate water problems. Arkansas and Oklahoma have a separate but similar agreement, also involving Texas and Louisiana, involving the waters of the Red River.

Foremost among his immediate duties, Seybolt will assist in the resolution of the ongoing controversy involving excess nutrients in the Illinois River, a state-protected Scenic River in Oklahoma. State officials in Oklahoma claim that excess levels of phosphorus and other nutrients, which promote excess algae growth and limit oxygen in the water, is primarily a consequence of waste from poultry operations in Arkansas. In response to this growing pollution problem, Oklahoma adopted the state's first-ever water quality standard for phosphorus in Scenic Rivers and their tributaries. The Compact Commission has served as a constructive bipartisan body through which officials from both states have convened to consider potential phosphorus

reduction measures that do not unnecessarily impact the extremely valuable poultry industry in northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma.

As a member of the OWRB, Seybolt worked to resolve numerous water-related problems in Oklahoma. He served on the Tar Creek Task Force, charged with identifying remedial measures to clean up one of the nation's largest and most deleterious Superfund sites. As a local civic leader, Seybolt helped organize and establish a centralized sanitary sewer system for many Grand Lake residents in response to recent widespread growth in the area.



Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact area

OGWA Holds First Annual Drilling Conference

The Oklahoma Ground Water Association's 1st Annual Drilling Conference and Exhibition was deemed a success by members, exhibitors, and attendees alike. The event was held in Oklahoma City at the Coca Cola Bricktown Event's Center on March 13 and 14.

The exhibit hall hosted 40 exhibitor booths, which displayed the latest in pump and well drilling technology and provided the attendees with very informative groundwater industry information. Workshop topics included water well pump systems, grouting techniques, rig and equipment maintenance, geophysical logging, Oklahoma geology, and basic hydrogeology.

Keynote speakers for the evening banquet included Earnest Pender, President of the Contractors Division of the National Ground Water Association (NGWA), and Mike Mathis, OWRB Planning and Management Division Chief. Pender addressed groundwater issues at the national level and the effects of these issues on every groundwater professional in the state. Praising the OGWA for their dedication to protecting groundwater in

the state, Mathis commended the Association for forming alliances with other groundwater professionals to improve integrity and knowledge within the industry.

State Representative Thad Balkman (Norman) was presented with a certificate of appreciation for his contributions toward the establishment of the OGWA. Rep. Balkman provided assistance with creation of bylaws and other legal considerations for the association.

Gary Glover, who worked at the OWRB for 27 years, was the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award for his initial coordination of the Water Well Drillers and Pump Installers Program. As organizer of the state Drillers' Advisory Committee, he spearheaded efforts to effect legislation that both validated the importance of the program and its effectiveness in protecting Oklahoma's groundwater quality.

The OGWA would like to thank all the attendees, exhibitors, volunteers, donors, and the board of directors for working together to make the conference a success. Special thanks goes to Nadine Gaines for her exceptional work in organizing the conference.

Workshops Highlight Flood Awareness Month

Severe flooding episodes occur in Oklahoma virtually every year, most frequently in the spring and fall. Implementation of sound floodplain management and building strategies, particularly through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), is the most effective way for communities to avert potential flood damages. Oklahoma currently boasts 371 NFIP member communities, which consist of municipalities, counties, and tribes. However, only about 12 percent of homes in Oklahoma's designated floodplains are covered by flood insurance.

To make citizens aware of flooding problems and solutions, Governor Henry has designated May as "Flood Awareness Month" in Oklahoma. Throughout the month, the OWRB, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Oklahoma Department of Civil Emergency Management are sponsoring one-day workshops around the state to update city and county floodplain administrators on NFIP compliance requirements and provide assistance in the development, administration, and enforcement of local flood damage prevention ordinances that guide floodplain development. The free workshops will be held May 6 (Midwest City), May 8 (Bartlesville), May 20 (Woodward), May 22 (Lawton), and May 28 (McAlester). The certified floodplain manager exam will be offered to pre-approved candidates at the close of each session. The workshops are accredited by the State Insurance Department; agents and adjusters can earn up to six continuing education credits for attending at least one workshop every two years.

Don't Take a Chance!

Almost one-half of all flood-related fatalities in Oklahoma occur in vehicles, primarily when people drive into flooded highway dips or low drainage areas at night. As little as six inches of water can cause drivers to lose control of their vehicles. Two feet of water will sweep most cars off the road.

According to the National Weather Service, flash floods and floods are the number one weather-related killer in the United States with approximately 140 deaths recorded each year.



Judge Hunter Ponders Arbuckle-Simpson Permit

A retired district court and Court of Appeals judge has been retained by the OWRB to consider proposed uses of water from southeast Oklahoma's Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer. Judge Stewart Hunter replaces retired Supreme Court Judge Don Barnes, who continues his recovery from a September automobile accident.

In his first major action on the matter, Judge Hunter has issued a preliminary ruling that the impact of authorized water use on area springs is not relevant, under Oklahoma's current groundwater law, to pending permit applications. Hunter issued the determination at a prehearing conference held April 10 in Tishomingo to clarify issues surrounding consideration of a pending permit application. The application, filed by William and Betty Clark, requests the use of 805 acre-feet of Arbuckle-Simpson groundwater for municipal and rural water purposes. Many of the approximately 100 protestants are concerned that the water may be sold outside the region for use in Canadian County as part of a recent water transfer proposal.

The prehearing conference was limited to legal procedural issues only. Parties to the disputed water use were allowed to submit documents and other items intended as evidence for the formal hearing on June 11 (recently continued from May 21). The Clark permit is one of several recent applications that are purportedly part of a proposal to transfer as much as 60,000 acre-feet of water from the Arbuckle-Simpson to the central Oklahoma area.

Many protestants of the groundwater use application had cited the presumed hydrologic connection between the aquifer and local springs, such as Byrd's Mill Spring.



With recorded flows in excess of 20 million gallons of water per day, Byrd's Mill Spring has served as the primary water supply for the City of Ada for more than 90 years.

They are concerned that the Clark and other recently filed permit applications could significantly reduce discharges from the springs, which sustain surface waters used for water supply and recreation in the region. Protestants also want the OWRB to contemplate future water needs in the area. However, Judge Hunter emphasized at the prehearing that, according to Oklahoma groundwater law, he is authorized to consider only four issues: 1) the applicant must own or lease the overlying land; 2) the land must overlie the groundwater basin; 3) the proposed purpose must be for a beneficial use; and 4) the water must not be wasted.

The June 11 hearing will be held at the Fletcher Auditorium, at Murray State College, in Tishomingo. It will begin at 9 a.m.

Feng and Bacon Named Employees of the Quarter

The 2002 fourth quarter and 2003 first quarter OWRB employees of the quarter, Tiger Feng and Shelly Bacon, are both members of the Financial Assistance Division (FAD).

Tiger, a native of Taiwan, has a Masters Degree in Bioenvironmental Engineering from Oklahoma State University. He currently serves as supervisor of the FAD's Engineering Section. Since coming to the OWRB in 1993, Tiger has consistently demonstrated competency, professionalism, and commitment to customer service.

Shelly has been with the OWRB since 1982, first with the agency's Legal Department, and then with the FAD starting in 1988. She currently coordinates the agency's REAP and Emergency Grants programs. Shelly has an outstanding record of building rapport with local officials approaching the Board for financial assistance and explaining complicated instructions and eligibility requirements.

Oklahoman Tabbed For New Federal Post

Michael D. Brown, Deputy Director of FEMA, has been nominated to serve as Under Secretary of Emergency Preparedness and Response, a component of the new Department of Homeland Security. The Department encompasses federal disaster relief, the National Flood Insurance Program, the U.S. Fire Administration, mitigation initiatives, and other activities designed to reduce loss of life and property from all types of hazards. Joe Allbaugh, former Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), resigned from his position on March 1.

Brown became FEMA's General Counsel early in 2001 and was nominated to serve as Deputy Director shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Before joining FEMA, Brown practiced law in Colorado and Oklahoma. A native of Oklahoma, he holds a B.A. in Public Administration and Political Science from Central State University, Oklahoma, and received his J.D. from the Oklahoma City University School of Law.

Water Watch Staff Demonstrate Sampling

On May 22, OWRB staff members Juli Ridgway and Jeff Everett demonstrated Oklahoma Water Watch techniques as part of Science Fest Oklahoma, an annual Earth Day event designed to foster scientific literacy while educating children about their role in a cleaner environment. Held at the Oklahoma City Zoo, the OWRB was one of several agencies and organizations at Science Fest who presented environmental information to fourth and fifth graders from across the state.



Left: a fourth-grader from Harris Elementary shows his school's flag to Samplin' Sam, Water Watch mascot. Above: Water Watch staff Juli Ridgway (Coordinator) and Jeff Everett demonstrate several testing techniques used by Water Watch volunteers.

Staff Clean Up Local Park

On April 24, 18 OWRB employees participated in LitterBlitz, a spring litter collection event sponsored by Oklahoma City Beautiful and the City of Oklahoma City. The volunteers picked up trash from the grounds of Memorial Park at 36th and Classen, just south of the OWRB's main office. The agency's participation in the effort was organized by Jann Hook, Information Systems Administrator.



Crystal McLaren of the Water Quality Division

Rural Water Recognizes Sparks

Terri Sparks, OWRB Planning Section Head, received the 2003 Agency "Friends of Rural Water" Award at the Oklahoma Rural Water Association's annual meeting and technical conference, held April 14-16 in Tulsa. Sparks, who has worked for the OWRB since 1975, coordinated the Leak Detection Program in cooperation with the ORWA. The Program sought to identify leaks in water systems, then recommend needed repairs and management options to improve system efficiency.

The ORWA is a non-profit organization that assists rural communities in developing, maintaining and operating their water and wastewater facilities.

Study Looks to Increase Yield

In response to explosive growth in the Norman area that is anticipated to stress the city's future water supply, the OWRB, Bureau of Reclamation, and local entities will cooperate in a study aimed at increasing the yield of Lake Thunderbird.

On May 1, OWRB staff met with officials from the City of Norman, Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District (COMCD), and Bureau of Reclamation to discuss aspects of the new federal investigation of strategies to augment Thunderbird's water storage capacity. Norman, through the COMCD, currently utilizes the lake as its chief water source, but has developed a long-range plan to use a combination of wells and Thunderbird water. The COMCD holds a permit for the entire yield of the reservoir; the City of Norman is the District's largest water-using member.

Oklahoma Drought Monitor

Reservoir Storage

Reservoir storage levels in Oklahoma remain in generally good condition, except in some areas of the southwest. As of May 5, the combined normal conservation pools of 31 selected major federal reservoirs across Oklahoma (see below) are approximately 97.6 percent full, identical to that recorded on April 7, according to information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Tulsa District). Seventeen reservoirs have experienced lake level decreases since that time. Thirteen reservoirs are currently operating at less than full capacity (compared to 12 one month ago). Two reservoirs (including **Lugert-Altus, only 46.7 percent**; and Tom Steed, 54.1 percent) remain below 80 percent capacity.

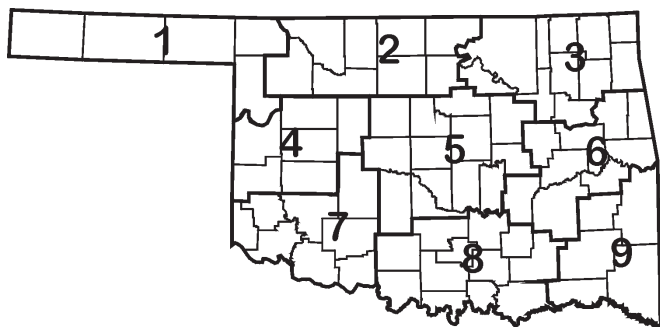
Storage in Selected Oklahoma Lakes & Reservoirs

As of May 5, 2003

Climate Division	Conservation Storage (acre-feet)	Present Storage (acre-feet)	Percent of Conservation Storage
North Central	451,860	451,860	100.0
Northeast	3,710,194	3,620,879	97.6
West Central	276,790	275,053	99.4
Central	154,225	152,294	98.7
East Central	2,968,683	2,968,683	100.0
Southwest	301,810	190,211	63.0
South Central	2,835,596	2,772,082	97.8
Southeast	1,544,504	1,520,626	98.5
State Totals	12,243,662	11,951,688	97.6

Drought Indices

According to the latest Palmer Drought Severity Index (May 3, below), two regions in Oklahoma (Southeast and South Central, both in "mild drought") are currently classified in a drought category. Eight of Oklahoma's nine climate divisions have undergone PDSI moisture decreases since April 5. The greatest decrease occurred in the South Central climate division.



The latest monthly Standardized Precipitation Index (through April, below) indicates both short- and long-term dryness in southern and eastern Oklahoma. Among the *selected* time periods (3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month SPIs), "very dry" conditions are indicated in the South Central climate division throughout the last 3- and 6-month periods and in East Central Oklahoma over the past 9- and 12-month periods. Also, the Southeast indicates dryness throughout the past year, including a "very dry" spell over the past 6 months. Considering longer periods (through six years), the Northeast and East Central climate divisions indicate moderately dry conditions at various times over the past 30 months.

Palmer Drought Severity Index

Standardized Precipitation Index

Through April 2003

Climate Division (#)	Current Status 5/3/2003	Value		Change In Value	Through April 2003			
		5/3	4/5		3-Month	6-Month	9-Month	12-Month
NORTHWEST (1)	NEAR NORMAL	0.35	0.97	-0.62	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY WET	NEAR NORMAL
NORTH CENTRAL (2)	UNUSUAL MOIST SPELL	2.15	2.36	-0.21	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY WET	MODERATELY WET
NORTHEAST (3)	NEAR NORMAL	-0.49	0.72	-1.21	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
WEST CENTRAL (4)	INCIPIENT MOIST SPELL	0.91	0.59	0.32	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
CENTRAL (5)	NEAR NORMAL	-0.17	1.24	-1.41	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
EAST CENTRAL (6)	INCIPIENT DROUGHT	-0.99	-0.33	-0.66	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	VERY DRY	VERY DRY
SOUTHWEST (7)	NEAR NORMAL	-0.17	0.37	-0.54	MODERATELY DRY	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
SOUTH CENTRAL (8)	MILD DROUGHT	-1.29	0.43	-1.72	VERY DRY	VERY DRY	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
SOUTHEAST (9)	MILD DROUGHT	-1.43	-0.70	-0.73	MODERATELY DRY	VERY DRY	MODERATELY DRY	MODERATELY DRY

Financial Assistance Program Update

Loans/Grants Approved as of April 9, 2003

FAP Loans—277 totaling \$450,230,000

The OWRB's Financial Assistance Program (FAP), created by the State Legislature in 1979, provides loans for water and wastewater system improvements in Oklahoma. The tremendous popularity of the bond loan program is due, in part, to extended payoff periods of up to 30 years at extremely competitive low-interest rates, averaging approximately 4.762 percent since 1986.

CWSRF Loans—142 totaling \$468,839,456

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loan program was created in 1988 to provide a renewable financing source for communities to draw upon for their wastewater infrastructure needs. The CWSRF program is Oklahoma's largest self-supporting wastewater financing effort, providing low-interest loans to communities in need.

DWSRF Loans—29 totaling \$84,001,424

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan program is an initiative of the OWRB and Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to assist municipalities and rural water districts in the construction and improvement of drinking water systems. These projects are often mandated for communities to obtain compliance with increasingly stringent federal standards related to the treatment of drinking water.

REAP Grants—362 totaling \$31,076,481

The Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) Program was created by the State Legislature in 1996. REAP grants, used for water/wastewater system improvements, target primarily rural communities with populations of 7,000 or less, but priority is afforded to those with fewer than 1,750 inhabitants.

Emergency Grants—497 totaling \$29,094,211

OWRB emergency grants, limited to \$100,000, are awarded to correct situations constituting a threat to life, health, and/or property and are an indispensable component of the agency's financial assistance strategy.

Total Loans/Grants—1,307 totaling \$1,063,241,571

Applicants eligible for water/wastewater project financial assistance vary according to the specific program's purpose and requirements, but include towns and other municipalities with proper legal authority, various districts established under Title 82 of Oklahoma Statutes (rural water, master/water conservancy, rural sewage, and irrigation districts), counties, public works authorities, and/or school districts. Applications for agency financial assistance programs are evaluated individually by agency staff. Those meeting specific program requirements are recommended by staff for approval at monthly meetings of the nine-member Water Board.

More information about the OWRB's Financial Assistance Program can be obtained by calling the OWRB at (405) 530-8800.

Grady Grandstaff, *Chairman*; Richard C. Sevenoaks, *Vice Chairman*; Ervin Mitchell, *Secretary*
Lonnie L. Farmer, Richard McDonald, Bill Secrest, Wendell Thomasson, Harry Currie, Glenn A. Sharp

Brian Vance, *Writer/Editor* • Darla Whitley, *Writer/Layout* • Barry Fogerty, *Photography*

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