



# *Update of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan*

*1995*

## *Introduction*

**T**hroughout the past six decades, Oklahoma has experienced tremendous water resource development, primarily through the efforts of the Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Soil Conservation Service, Grand River Dam Authority and numerous other state agencies and municipalities. While only three major reservoirs existed in Oklahoma in the 1920's, the 30's and 40's saw completion of 12 additional projects. Twenty-nine major projects have been constructed since, including the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, the nation's largest civil works project, in 1971.

In addition to surface supplies, Oklahoma's 23 major groundwater basins store an estimated 320 million acre-feet of water, with smaller amounts available in at least 150 minor basins. Of all the water reportedly used in Oklahoma, more than one-half comes from groundwater sources which provide the vast majority of the state's irrigation needs and supply hundreds of municipalities with drinking water.

Oklahoma is truly blessed with abundant water resources which, perhaps above all other factors, propel the wheels of economic development and growth in the state. However, although generous supplies are available for drinking and domestic use, industry, agriculture, power generation and countless other purposes, state waters are unevenly distributed, sometimes wasted or polluted, and often taken for granted. As a result, planning, management and protection of Oklahoma's water resources is extremely important and complex.

As part of its broad responsibility to enhance the quality of life and general welfare, the state has the specific obligation to plan for and encourage the use of water and natural resources in a manner that will best serve the many needs of the people of Oklahoma. Recognizing that water planning, like the resource itself, is a discipline that must provide for continuous change and periodic revision if it is to accurately reflect dynamic social, political, economic and environmental issues, the Oklahoma Legislature passed House Bill 2036 in 1992. The legislation directs the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) to prepare decennial updates of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan (OCWP), the state's long-range water use and management strategy which was initially completed in 1980. The first update, originally scheduled for completion in September 1995, and each successive revision will employ the most current and dependable socioeconomic data available to meet the constantly evolving water resources needs of Oklahomans. Planning committees consisting of Oklahoma citizens -- as well as representatives of local, state and federal entities -- will guide the update process to ensure that prevailing opinions and policies are properly reflected.

This document, the first update of the OCWP, is submitted to Governor Frank Keating and the 46th Oklahoma State Legislature for their consideration. The authors wish to thank the Governor and legislative members for their patience and indulgence in allowing late submittal of this plan due to complications resulting from the Oklahoma City bombing.