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First Annual Groundwater Conference a Success

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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 on March 13th and 14th, 2003.

The exhibit hall hosted 40 exhibitor booths, displaying the latest in pump and well drilling technology, and provided the attendees with important 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 were Earnest Pender of the National Ground Water Association (NGWA) and Mike Mathis of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB). Pender, current President of the Contractors Division of the NGWA, spoke about groundwater issues on the national level and how these issues affect every groundwater professional in the state. Mathis, Chief of the OWRB Planning and Management Division, praised the OGWA for their dedication to protecting groundwater in the

state and 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 the creation of bylaws and other legal considerations for the association.

Gary Glover received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his 27 years at the OWRB and for being the initial coordinator of the Water Well Drillers and Pump Installers Program. As organizer of the state Drillers' Advisory Committee, Glover 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. A special thanks goes out to Nadine Gaines for her exceptional work in organizing the conference.

Variance Requests

The OWRB issues variances from minimum construction standards set forth in Chapter 35 rules and regulations when technical justification demonstrates that both the quantity and quality of the groundwater will be protected from contamination and waste. Variances should be applied for prior to construction or plugging of a well and/or prior to a pump installation.

The most common variance request occurs when landowners attempt to locate a domestic water well on a relatively small lot and can't meet existing distance requirements from pollution sources. The Board will grant these variances when no other options are available and the licensed

driller completes the well with a minimum of 20 feet of cement grout surface seal or double the normal requirement. Other common variance requests are granted when construction of remediation systems and plugging of contaminated monitoring and water wells cannot be completed to meet minimum standards. In all situations, the landowner must agree in writing to accept liability if contamination occurs because of the issuance of a variance and also demonstrate that the proposed construction will protect the groundwater.

Applications are available on the OWRB Web site at www.owrb.state.ok.us/forms and documents. A \$50 fee is required to process all requests.

Amnesty Period Proposed for Submittal of Past Due Well Logs

In conjunction with the Well Drillers and Pump Installers Advisory Council, the OWRB has been working diligently to update and improve the Well Drillers and Pump Installers Program. An online search and online well log filing program are currently under development for access by citizens and licensed operators via the Internet. Information from the multi-purpose completion reports or well logs is requested almost daily by citizens, drilling firms, consultants, and OWRB staff. In addition, every groundwater study conducted by the Board begins with a search for available well log data.

Recently, the Board conducted a survey of firms regarding well log submittal. A database search of the firms and the well logs filed by each firm revealed that 50 firms currently submit 90 percent of the well logs each year. The remaining firms generally submitted only 10 well logs or less per year. More than 90 active firms failed to submit a single well log for the entire year of 2002. These statistics brought to light the number of well logs and the extremely important data that are not received.

As a result, the Board and the Advisory Council have agreed that a 6-month amnesty period shall be designated for firms to file well logs that might not have been previously submitted for the period ranging from January 1, 2000, to present. The amnesty period will begin July 1 and will end December 31. After the 6-month amnesty period ends, a licensed firm identified as drilling and completing a water well and/or monitoring well without properly submitting a well log can be fined \$50 per well and be required to file an acceptable report within 30 days. For the second and additional times that the penalties are assessed against a licensee, \$250 per well can be assessed.

The Board and Council both regret that these steps must be taken, but no other method or incentive has been identified that will result in drillers filing required well logs. This new penalty will not impact the licensed firms that comply with the current requirement of submitting well logs within 60 days following the completion, plugging, and/or reconditioning of a well.

OWRB inspectors often rely on licensed drillers and concerned citizens to notify state agencies of the following:

- *wells or pump installations that do not appear to meet standards,*
- *wells that appear to be a potential risk of possible contamination of groundwater,*
- *wells that may pose a physical hazard, or*
- *unlicensed drilling activities.*

Please contact the OWRB at (405) 530-8800. Callers may remain anonymous.

WEB SITES

Oklahoma Water Resources Board
www.owrb.state.ok.us

Oklahoma Ground Water Association
www.ogwa.biz

National Ground Water Association
www.ngwa.org

