



OKLAHOMA

news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OKLAHOMA
WATER RESOURCES BOARD

Gerald E. Borelli, Chairman

Earl Walker • L.L. Males • John B. Jarboe • James H. Norick • R.C. Johnson • Ralph G. McPherson • Boyd Steveson • Ernest R. Tucker

Summer's Drought Fires Feuds Between Stream Water Users

Although the summer is one of the driest in recent memory, the OWRB Stream Water Division has been flooded with complaints from downstream water users in central and western Oklahoma that upstream users are depriving them of necessary water.

Harold Springer, division chief, said over 30 complaints have been registered since July 1 — a ten-fold increase over normal summers. He estimates that at least that many more are unreported by water rights holders who aren't familiar with the Board's complaint procedures. Springer reminded that they should be directed to the Stream Water Division at OWRB offices in Oklahoma City.

"Many of the complaints are repeats," he pointed out, "and most are lodged against oil and gas drillers and nonpermitted irrigators. Many oil well drillers are using water for drilling mud and for cleaning platforms and equipment without permits for water use. Other water uses are for irrigation and domestic watering, and in some areas users have been asked to stop watering entirely," he said.

There are relatively few complaints from eastern and southeastern Oklahoma due to greater supplies, and virtually none from the Panhandle, since there is little stream water available there, Springer said. Areas from Stillwater and north received some relief in the form of recent sporadic showers, so problems there also have been minimized.

"Most people have plenty of water available in conservation storage to make it through the drought with little trouble. If owners of dams upstream would release some water to downstream users, it would help tremendously," he explained. "This is everyone's problem. Water rights holders call us to settle disputes instead of working it out with their neighbors. It is a form of feuding, and the only solution to these problems is cooperation between water users."

The unprecedented releases from Waurika and Pine Creek Lakes earlier this summer were small, but they were highly effective in supplying water downstream.



Col. James J. Harmon

New District Engineer, Deputy for Corps' Tulsa District Office

Col. James J. Harmon is the new District Engineer of the Tulsa District of the Corps of Engineers. His appointment to the post vacated by Col. Robert G. Bening on retirement last month was announced September 15.

Harmon is a 1961 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and he holds a master's degree in civil engineering from Princeton University. He is also a graduate of the Army Command and General Staff College and the Army War College.

Also recently named to a Tulsa District post is Lt. Col. Richard S. Waldrop, who succeeds Lt. Col. Jack J. King as Deputy District Engineer.

Waldrop holds a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering and a master's degree in engineering from Auburn University. He served two years in Viet Nam and came to Tulsa following a 3-year tour in Hawaii as engineer adviser to Reserve Components in the Pacific.

Regionalism Continues to Haunt Legislative Committee Studying Statewide Water Transfer Plan

The September 10 meeting of the Interim Study Committee on the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan — the fourth in a series of 10 — mirrored previous meetings in aligning the “haves” versus the “have-nots” on the issue of east-west water transfer. In fierce defense of their area’s water resources, eastern Oklahoma legislators pitted themselves against those of the west, where declining ground water supplies threaten the agricultural economy.

Perennial fears were revoiced that a plan to supply water to western regions would deprive eastern areas of water needed for future growth and development. Although statutorily defined and reiterated in the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan published by OWRB earlier this year, definitions of surplus water and area-of-origin continued to be the bogey men of the transfer plan.

James R. Barnett, OWRB executive director, called fears of low lake levels in eastern Oklahoma ungrounded and pointed out that water appropriated from reservoirs to holders of stream water rights is allocated from conservation storage, not from the flood flows which are proposed for capture, storage and conveyance westward. He told eastern legislators that the Eastern Oklahoma Water Supply System included in the Plan recognizes and provides for satisfying the area’s claim to year 2040 water needs, more than doubling those originally projected in the Plan.

In order to dispel the surplus water bogey man, Sen. Robert S. Kerr III, committee chairman, assured his colleagues that all future needs of eastern Oklahoma would be insured prior to any transfer of water. He also recommended that OWRB present the committee with a breakdown by use of the land involved in the proposed water transfer system and thereby removed from local tax rolls.

SEPTEMBER CROP AND WEATHER SUMMARY

Crop and pasture conditions continued to deteriorate as the scattered showers that teased most of the state provided insignificant amounts of rain. Wheat seedbed preparation lagged, slowed by lack of moisture.

Corn, sorghum, soybeans, peanuts and cotton were rated in fair to poor condition. Recent rains slightly improved the soybean crop in the northeast, but dryland acreages of soybeans and peanuts have been cut for hay in many areas. Only Panhandle and north central areas report part of the pastures and ranges in good condition as a result of recent rains. Generally, more rain is needed statewide to rejuvenate forage growth for winter feed.

Oklahoma Crop and Livestock Reporting Service

Charles Huddleston, an Ames attorney representing the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, sketched a bleak picture for rural areas. He said if the legislature fails to move on a statewide water plan, it is likely the federal government or Oklahoma’s two major cities will remove any opportunity for decision. As municipal water needs increase, Tulsa and Oklahoma City can be expected to engage in a shootout for available water that could dry up rural areas. “An orderly statewide plan of water development would assure balanced growth, instead of allowing metropolitan areas to capture most of the state’s water and populations,” said Huddleston.

Serving on the study committee with Sen. Kerr are Sen. Herschel H. Crow, Jr., vice-chairman, Altus; Sen. Don Cummins, Tulsa; Sen. Mike Combs, Oklahoma City; Sen. John Dahl, Barnsdall; Sen. Herbert Rozell, Tahlequah; Rep. Lewis M. Kamus, Freedom; Rep. Don Mentzer, Sallisaw; Rep. Roy B. Hooper, Jr., Lawton; and Rep. Mick Thompson, Poteau.

As in previous public meetings of the legislative committee, OWRB presented a new 22-minute slide show summarizing nontransfer alternatives, costs, and water development and conveyance strategies included in the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan.

At the fifth meeting in the series — held in Tulsa on September 25 — representatives of the Corps of Engineers presented a status report on chloride control efforts and explained the role such measures would play in the Plan.

Five additional meetings of the legislative committee are scheduled throughout the state through early December.

James R. Barnett, OWRB executive director, said the slide show on the water plan is available to groups interested in reviewing it. The 22-minute show contains more than 130 color slides and a taped narrative sketching elements of the Plan.

Group showings may be scheduled by calling the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, (405) 271-2555, or by writing Board offices, P.O. Box 53585, Oklahoma City, 73152.

Well Drillers and Water Users Need Sanction, Reminds Board

All users or potential users of ground water for other than domestic purposes must obtain a permit before beginning construction of a well and the driller they hire must be licensed by OWRB, reminded J.A. Wood, OWRB Ground Water Division chief.

Applications for ground water use and drillers’ licenses are available from OWRB and are required by state law for the protection, proper allocation and management of the state’s ground water from each basin.

Wood explained that the licensed water well contractors are needed to insure that wells are properly constructed, test holes and abandoned water wells properly

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Water Use Sanctions, continued from page 2

plugged, and wells not in use properly capped. "Our licensing law insures sanitary standards for sealing off abandoned wells and test holes to prevent pollution of the state's ground water basins," he pointed out.

"The permits for water use are a valuable management tool, allowing each person to take only his equal proportionate share of the fresh ground water, since the water in each basin underlies the property of many land-owners. It is not simply a requirement of a state agency; it is a law and we are required to enforce it."

Domestic users — those who use ground water for household purposes, watering farm or domestic animals up to the normal grazing capacity of the land, or for irrigation of household gardens and orchards up to three acres in size — are exempt from the permit requirement.

Violation of the law by ground water users or well drillers can be prosecuted as a misdemeanor, punishable by fines of \$25 to \$250. If violation continues, each day can be counted as a separate violation. Members of OWRB's Ground Water Division are available for information and assistance Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. by calling (405) 271-2555.



Dates of Prior Rights Hearings Changed

Prior rights hearings and the work sessions that accompany them have been rescheduled in two central Oklahoma counties. Representatives of OWRB's Ground Water Division will conduct work sessions in Oklahoma County October 27-30, with prior rights hearings on October 29; and in Kingfisher County December 1-4, with prior rights hearings on December 3.

These sessions afford landowners the opportunity to establish prior ground water rights for beneficial uses which meet the requirements of laws prior to July 1, 1973.

Drought Qualifies State for FmHA Loans

Effective August 14, all counties in Oklahoma were designated for emergency loans from the FmHA to cover physical or production losses inflicted by the current drought. The incidence period for 18 counties is September 15, 1979 to August 14, 1980: Beckham, Bryan, Caddo, Carter, Comanche, Cotton, Grady, Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnston, Kiowa, Love, Marshall, Murray, Stephens and Tillman.

The incidence period for the remaining counties is from June 25 to August 14, 1980, and losses due to drought and high temperatures are eligible. FmHA loans at an interest rate of five percent are available to farmers and ranchers so that they may continue their operations and return to local sources of credit as soon as possible.

ACTIVE CONSERVATION STORAGE IN SELECTED OKLAHOMA LAKES AND RESERVOIRS AS OF SEPTEMBER 15, 1980

PLANNING REGION LAKE/RESERVOIR	CONSERVATION STORAGE (AF)	PERCENT OF CAPACITY
SOUTHEAST		
Atoka	61,600	49.9
Broken Bow	721,787	78.6
Pine Creek	60,688	78.1
Hugo	109,867	69.7
CENTRAL		
Thunderbird	92,427	87.3
Hefner	63,400	84.1
Overholser	10,800	71.2
Draper	77,900	77.9
SOUTH CENTRAL		
Arbuckle	55,314	88.4
Texoma	2,216,710	84.0
Waurika	98,000	48.3 ¹
SOUTHWEST		
Altus	29,491	22.2 ²
Fort Cobb	69,962	89.2
Foss	150,003	61.5 ³
Tom Steed	72,697	81.7
EAST CENTRAL		
Eufaula	1,817,569	78.0
Tenkiller	530,627	83.2
Wister	27,100	100.0
NORTHEAST		
Grand	1,087,540	72.9
Oologah	489,732	90.0
Hulah	19,969	65.3
Fort Gibson	365,200	100.0
Heyburn	5,125	77.7
Birch	17,721	92.3
Hudson	200,300	100.0
NORTH CENTRAL		
Kaw	426,752	99.6
Keystone	489,618	79.5
NORTHWEST		
Canton	107,030	92.3
Optima	5,200	— ¹
Fort Supply	11,489	82.7
Great Salt Plains	22,325	71.1
STATE TOTALS	9,508,743	80.9⁴

1. In initial filling stage
2. Figures quoted as of September 10, 1980
3. Temporarily lowered for maintenance.
4. Lake Optima storage excluded from state total.

Data courtesy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Water and Power Resources Service, Oklahoma City Water Resources Dept.

Corps Offers Revised Navigation Charts

Revised navigation charts for the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System from the Port of Catoosa to the mouth of the White River (Mississippi River) are available from the Tulsa and Little Rock Engineer Districts.

The new charts include the sailing line, location of navigation aids, bridges, navigation structures, pipeline and aerial crossings, docks and safety harbors, as well as regulations, mileage chart and lists of terminals, marinas and public use areas. Cost of the charts is \$7 from the Corps' Tulsa office in the federal building (old post office).

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Rural Water Survey Ready from OWRB

"Rural Water Systems in Oklahoma," the newest OWRB publication is now available free for public distribution. The survey traces the development of 398 rural water systems that serve over half a million Oklahomans, maps their locations, provides water sources and other pertinent data, summarizes authorizing legislation, outlines funding options and presents quality analyses.

Coordinating Committee Meets October 11

The Fall meeting of the Governor's Coordinating Committee on Water Resources Research will be held Saturday, October 11 at 9 a.m. in the Council Room of the OSU Student Union, Stillwater. The coordinating committee is made up of heads of state and federal agencies with an interest in water resources development, conservation and management. Programs suggested by the committee become the research priorities of the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute at OSU.

Clinton W. Hall New Director of Kerr Lab

In a move effective September 15, Clinton W. Hall replaced William C. Galegar as director of the Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Laboratory in Ada. Hall comes to the Oklahoma post from Washington, D.C. Galegar has accepted an interagency personnel agreement position with East Central State University.

OIDC Creates New Waterways Division

The Oklahoma Industrial Development Commission has added a Waterways Division within the Department of Industrial Development and named as director Jim Lay, former Northeast Oklahoma Area Director for the department. The purpose of the new division is to give full attention to one of the primary resources that Oklahoma has — the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System.

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New Irrigation Conservation Bulletin Ready

A new brochure produced by the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute at OSU in cooperation with OWRB tells irrigators how to hold the line on energy bills, which are expected to pyramid in the next two years by 80 percent for electricity and 30 percent for natural gas. The brochure offers dozens of water conservation hints to help increase the efficiency of irrigation systems, and is available free. Write to the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute, 203 Whitehurst, Stillwater, Okla. 74078.

Albert, Morris Attend Waurika Dedication

Hundreds gathered northwest of the town at Waurika Lake September 18 to hear featured speakers Carl Albert, former speaker of the House of Representatives, and Lt. Gen. John W. Morris, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers chief from Washington, D.C. Morris conducted the first public meeting on the project in Waurika as Tulsa District engineer in 1962.

The ceremony marked a quarter of a century of planning and work by local citizens and government officials. First conceived after a disastrous flood in 1955, Waurika residents formed a caravan that visited surrounding southern Oklahoma communities to seek support from the municipalities that would become the lake's water customers.

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