

OKLAHOMA

water news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OKLAHOMA
WATER RESOURCES BOARD

Gerald E. Borelli, Chairman

Earl Walker • L.L. Males • John B. Jarboe • Ralph G. McPherson • Gary W. Smith • Ernest R. Tucker • Robert S. Kerr, Jr. • R.G. Johnson

Oh, What a Relief It Is! To Have 21 Student Employees

"We've depended on them a lot. They feed vast amounts of data into our records, organize our files and help us get caught up on clerical chores and field work. Their contribution to the agency cannot be overstated," says Oklahoma Water Resources Board Executive Director James R. Barnett, speaking about the people that "make the difference." The people are summer employees, hired under state regulations that allow temporary employment of extra personnel from May through October.

More often than not, the seasonal employees are college students, working to gain valuable "hands-on" experience in their field. This year, the OWRB has 21 temporary helpers, with college majors ranging from biology to natural resources management to engineering to botany. And it's not only those with scientific backgrounds who find their way to the OWRB — students from education, English and history are "summering" within the Stream Water, Ground Water, Engineering, Water Quality, Planning and Development and Administration Divisions.

The workers get what they come for. Barnett says the practice of hiring people for the summer is a sound one, providing the students practical experience and an opportunity to learn more about Oklahoma's water.

Vahan Hoonanian, who holds a master's degree in environmental science from OU, agrees with Barnett that the training has been worthwhile.

"I'm learning something every day, whether it's about contaminants in the water or public relations as expressed in public hearings. I've always wanted to do this type work and I find it very exciting," he says.

The work experience has added to the concern over the state's waters for Jami Mueller, a microbiology graduate from OU by way of Cyril.

"Working out in the field I've really become aware of how much industrialization is increasing in Oklahoma. Where I come from, there's not much water. I'd hate to see growth jeopardize what water there is," she says.

Continued on page 2

Citizens Helpful in Reporting Suspected Pollution Incidents

A woman calls the Oklahoma Water Resources Board offices, concerned that there is gasoline in her family's water well. A rural resident calls to report seeing a milky liquid spilling from the rear of a cement plant into a stream. A man calls to report an oil slick on a creek running through his property. What can be done about it?

The answer depends on the responses the citizen with a pollution complaint gives to a series of questions posed by OWRB Water Quality enforcement personnel. Investigators must first determine which agency should receive the complaint. Overlapping jurisdiction between state agencies with regard to pollution problems sometimes creates confusion among citizens seeking to contact the agency with appropriate regulatory powers.

A breakdown of basic pollution responsibilities looks like this: The OWRB handles complaints regarding industrial discharges into the state's waters, including the regulation of refinery discharges; the State Department

Continued on page 3



Photo by John Oliver

Student helpers Jan Walstrom, Vahan Hoonanian, Jami Mueller and Ann Crocker are briefed by OWRB Water Quality Division Chief Ron Jarman (second from right).

Student Employees, continued from page 1

Mueller, who works in the Water Quality Division investigating citizens' pollution complaints, sees her job as not only enforcing compliance to standards, but also as "preventive medicine" through acquainting industries with rules and regulations before problems develop.

The state profits as much from the arrangement as the individuals do.

"Ninety-nine percent of them are an asset. They fill in manpower gaps, and bring new ideas and new ways of looking at things," Barnett says.

James Adams, Water Quality Division enforcement section head, adds that the boost in personnel is a planned for and necessary part of his section's operation.

"They're worth their weight in gold. Knowing that we can acquire that type of employee, we take advantage of it by scheduling our heaviest workload between May and September.

"By using them for complaint investigation, we can switch our experienced regular personnel to industrial inspections. With the talent and enthusiasm of summer employees, they can get the basic information needed—and then we can follow up and finish the work with less time expenditure than we'd have needed otherwise," Adams says.

The experience has been positive enough to attract some summer employees to seek permanent status. Ten current OWRB employees started as seasonal workers, supporting Barnett's assertion that hiring summer personnel is a good way to "recruit" people for careers in water.

Aside from those already mentioned, the OWRB employs on a seasonal basis the following: In the Water Quality Division, Connie Keating, OU environmental sciences major, assisting in the Tar Creek investigation;

Ann Crocker, a Wayne State University history graduate, coordinating data and serving as a clerk; Jan Walstrom, a graduate in botany from the University of Tulsa, investigating citizen complaints; Laura Stout, geography major from OU and Gary Shapiro, holder of a master's degree in biology from OU, taking water samples and collecting data as part of the Clean Lakes Program at Lake Overholser and Northeast Lake in Oklahoma City.

In the Planning and Development Division, Beverly Graham, CSU public relations major is editing reports and organizing the conservation library; Erin Offill, OSU English graduate, is compiling and writing the monthly water supply report and monitoring the return of water use cards; John Oliver, photo-journalism major at OCU, is shooting pictures for use in a conservation slideshow, the annual report, and the newsletter; and Jim Bryant, a natural resources management major from Rutgers, is serving as a planning assistant.

In the Ground Water Division, CSU education major Barbara Bowens is serving as a typist clerk; Georgia Slaughter, a Connors State sociology major, is also working as a typist clerk, as is Sonia Keathley of Choctaw. John Nostrand of Oklahoma City is drafting a map detailing well locations throughout the state.

In the Stream Water Division, George Reimer, a student at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, is apportioning Soil Conservation Service sites; and June Elkins, criminal justice major from CSU, is working as a file clerk.

Lorree Lockhart of Mustang is assisting as a clerk in the Engineering Division, and Linda Shelton, an engineering and science major at Oscar Rose, is working in the Administration Division microfilming files. Kevin Case is working out of the Tulsa office, investigating pollution complaints.



Corps Studies Poteau River Proposal

The preliminary phase of a \$470,000, two-year study of the possible channelization of the Poteau River and construction of a port at Panama is due to be completed by the Corps of Engineers this summer.

Study of the \$20 million Poteau River Project, proposed as an offshoot of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, was originally limited to a channel and flood control project. Concerns over water and energy shortages caused expansion of the study to include water supply and hydropower for the area.

Schuelein to Head New OWRB Division

James R. Barnett, executive director, announced in mid-June creation of a new division in the OWRB and named as its chief Jim Schuelein, formerly of the Board's Planning and Development Division.

Continued on page 4



Staff photo by John Oliver

Jim Schuelein (right), Division Chief of Administration, describes OWRB operations to George Reimer, Linda Shelton, Jim Bryant and Erin Offill.

Citizens Helpful, continued from page 1

of Agriculture deals with pollution resulting from all agricultural or silvicultural activities; the Oklahoma State Department of Health has responsibility for pollution from municipal waste treatment plants or controlled industrial (hazardous) waste sites; the Corporation Commission is empowered to investigate pollution problems stemming from oil and gas activities; and the Department of Pollution Control functions as a coordinating entity between all agencies with pollution enforcement activities, serving as a central registry for citizen complaints.

"Residents of an area know what a body of water should look like, and they usually recognize right away when something is wrong. And although they may have some idea what the problem is, they aren't always quite sure," says James Adams, head of the OWRB Water Quality Division's enforcement section.

Agricultural pollution in a pond or stream can often be identified by an "algae bloom," a sudden, heavy growth of algae caused by nutrients carried in runoff from heavily fertilized lands.

Municipal waste treatment plant contamination of waters will also be marked by increased algae, Adams says, but often accompanied by a strong odor.

Oil pollution may be the easiest to identify, floating on the surface of the water as a filmy coating. Drilling mud on the bottom of ponds or streams often can be distinguished by a white, tan or gray color in contrast to the normal dark brown or red color.

Persons contacting the OWRB enforcement section with a pollution complaint receive the rudiments of a water quality education over the phone. A caller will be asked if the contamination is in pond, stream, lake or ground water; what about the water leads the caller to believe it is polluted; what the source of the pollution is; how the pollution traveled to the contaminated area; and the extent of the contamination. The questions reduce an expanse of information to data that keys in on identification and resolution of the problems.

When the Board receives a complaint from any citizen concerning pollution or a report of a fishkill or oil spill, investigation of such complaints takes priority over all other Division activities. As soon as possible after receiving the complaint, an investigator will be at the site to confirm the source of the pollution and develop a strategy to halt it.

The number of complaints has been rising. In 1980 the staff responded to 147 complaints, an increase of 44 over 1979. Last year, the OWRB investigated 157 complaints, and while not even halfway through 1982, the enforcement section already has answered 81.

Adams says that in about 80 percent of the cases, investigators were able to determine the source of the pollution. Approximately one-quarter of the investigations resulted in official state inspections, with the other complaints being resolved by simply calling the problem to the attention of the party responsible for the pollution.

**ACTIVE CONSERVATION STORAGE IN SELECTED
OKLAHOMA LAKES AND RESERVOIRS
AS OF JUNE 22, 1982**

PLANNING REGION LAKE/RESERVOIR	CONSERVATION STORAGE (AF)	PERCENT OF CAPACITY
SOUTHEAST		
Atoka	124,100	100.0
Broken Bow	918,100	100.0
Pine Creek	77,700	100.0
Hugo	157,600	100.0
CENTRAL		
Thunderbird	105,925	100.0
Hefner	75,500	100.0
Overholser	16,200	100.0
Draper	83,600	84.0
SOUTH CENTRAL		
Arbuckle	62,571	100.0
Texoma	2,637,700	100.0
Waurika	203,100	100.0 ¹
SOUTHWEST		
Altus	99,162	74.6
Fort Cobb	78,423	100.0
Foss	150,317	61.6 ²
Tom Steed	88,030	98.9
EAST CENTRAL		
Eufaula	2,329,700	100.0
Tenkiller	627,500	100.0
Wister	27,100	100.0
NORTHEAST		
Eucha	79,567	100.0
Grand	1,491,800	100.0
Oologah	544,240	100.0
Hulah	30,594	100.0
Fort Gibson	365,200	100.0
Heyburn	6,600	100.0
Birch	19,200	100.0
Hudson	200,300	100.0
Spavinaw	30,000	100.0
NORTH CENTRAL		
Kaw	428,600	100.0
Keystone	616,000	100.0
NORTHWEST		
Canton	97,500	100.0
Optima	5,000	— ¹
Fort Supply	13,900	100.0
Great Salt Plains	31,400	100.0
STATE TOTALS	11,821,229³	98.6³

1. In initial filling stage
2. Temporarily lowered for maintenance
3. Conservation storage for Lake Optima not included in state total

Data courtesy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Oklahoma City Water Resources Dept., City of Tulsa Water Superintendent's Office.

An added bonus of citizen complaints is that the investigation may take a staff member to an area of the state that had not been looked at before. Recently, an OWRB investigator discovered eight water quality violations merely driving through a town en route to an inspection elsewhere.

The enforcement section relies heavily on citizen complaints, Adams says.

Continued on page 4

Mainstream, continued from page 2

The new Administration Division consolidates sections in mapping and drafting, public information, accounting, data processing, library and personnel. Some previously had been part of the Planning and Development Division and others had been either directly under the assistant director or the executive secretary. Barnett said the reorganization, necessitated by growth and expansion of activities, will provide better service to the public and streamline the Board's internal operations.



Staff photo by John Oliver

This 130-foot tower houses the control gates at the Arcadia Lake site on the Deep Fork River one and one-half miles southwest of the town of Arcadia and five miles east of Edmond. Construction of the Corps of Engineers project continues on schedule, according to Project Engineer Dennis Frazier, and completion is expected in 1987.

Citizens Helpful, continued from page 3

"I'm not sure we could ever calculate the total costs of cleanup required by pollution, but I would estimate they are several magnitudes greater than the price of preventing pollution by eliminating the sources.

"We don't have the manpower to be everywhere. That's why calls from concerned citizens are so important. They are at the source of pollution and can alert us. With that kind of help, we can get out, investigate a problem and stop it before it requires expensive cleanup," Adams says.

JUNE CROP AND WEATHER SUMMARY

Cool temperatures and recurring thundershowers continued to slow harvesting of wheat and small grains for the month, further testifying to the urgent need for sunshine to dry moisture-saturated fields. Wheat was generally in good condition, although some rain-soaked areas of the state showed signs of crop deterioration. Only extreme western areas of the Panhandle indicate short moisture supplies.

Alfalfa harvest was also hindered by showers that virtually stalled hay baling across the state.

Row crop planting was hampered by wet fields that allowed farmers only three and one-half days of field work, although drier conditions in the southern part of the state at mid-month did permit considerable planting of cotton and peanuts.

Pastures and ranges have flourished due to the cool, wet conditions, with over 95 percent of the state's pasturage in good to excellent condition.

Temperatures ranged from three degrees below normal in the southeast to seven below in the west.

Oklahoma Crop and Livestock Reporting Service

This monthly newsletter, printed by the Central Printing Division of the State Board of Public Affairs, Oklahoma City, Okla., is published by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board as authorized by James R. Barnett, executive director. 10,000 copies are printed and distributed monthly at an approximate cost of 20 cents each, defrayed in part by funds provided by the U.S. Water Resources Council.

MARY E. WHITLOW, Editor

STEVE LINDLEY, Writer

MIKE McGAUGH, Layout

OKLAHOMA WATER NEWS

Oklahoma Water Resources Board
1000 N.E. 10th P.O. Box 53585
Oklahoma City, Okla. 73152

BULK RATE
U. S. POSTAGE

PAID

Oklahoma City, Okla.
Permit No. 310

