



# 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

## Washington's Message is Clear: State Must Cost-Share in New Water Supply, Quality Programs

"There is strength in cooperation. It is vital that water development supporters maintain their coalition throughout the hard times ahead," Gov. George Nigh told attendees at the Third Annual Water Conference in a speech of encouragement to those disheartened by declining state revenues and the defeat of the state water question.

Speaking to more than 600 water enthusiasts at the Hilton Inn West December 7, Nigh admitted that the failure of SQ 558 at the polls in November opens the possibility that the \$25 million set aside by the Legislature in July to help communities solve their water problems may be used elsewhere. At the same time, though, he stressed the "significant progress" the state has made in water matters to date, specifically singling out adoption of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan and the creation of the current statewide financial assistance program.

"No one should go away from here today thinking we have failed. We haven't, and this conference is proof. We have come together and we are looking toward the future. If we can just maintain many of the things we have achieved, we truly will have accomplished something," Nigh said.

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works William Gianelli echoed Nigh's hopefulness.

"Sometimes it seems like you are retrogressing, but you have to look at the long haul and not be discouraged. Certainly, Oklahoma is a state that has the persistence, the people and the wherewithal to address the problems and come up with the solutions," he said.

It looks like Oklahoma will not only be addressing the problems, but signing the checks as well. Budgetary pressures have forced the Administration to include among its objectives goals of greater non-federal participation in the development of water resources and the commencement of a program for "equitable cost recovery" from water project beneficiaries. Gianelli said he also would like to see "good" water projects authoriz-

ed and built, predicting that "well planned projects with well conceived financing packages" would get quick administrative support, albeit within the constraints of the federal budget environment.

"There is absolutely no way to meet the future water requirements of this country under our past policies and procedures. To move ahead with water development, we must provide for financing and repayment of federal water projects in ways which have never been contemplated before," Gianelli said, making a pitch for what he called "innovative financing."

As examples, Gianelli pointed to 15 projects which had been authorized but never funded for construction. Corps of Engineers officials sought sponsor interest among state and local governments and the private sector, and as a result two-thirds of the projects are now off the back burner and moving ahead with unique financing and repayment opportunities. One new construction start proposed for FY 1983 reversed traditional cost breakdown figures, increasing non-federal expenditure from 14 cents to \$3.81 per federal dollar. The new policies, as yet unapproved by Congress, will shift the burden from the federal taxpayer to the water project beneficiaries, Gianelli said.

Environmental Protection Agency Office of Water Assistant Administrator Frederic Eidsness laid it on the

*Continued on page 2*



**It is the aim of the Administration to shift the burden from the federal taxpayer to those who will benefit most from any new water project, said Gianelli.**

*Water Conference, continued from page 1*

line for conferees, telling the audience that the EPA under the Reagan administration is "doing business differently than it had done in the past."

"We are no longer subscribing to the philosophy that we will just throw money at problems in the hope that one day they will go away. Policies we have adopted are ones that will focus on the use of our limited national, state and private sector resources on real environmental problems," he said.

Two of the major concerns of the EPA right now, according to Eidsness, are redefining the agency's role in setting water quality standards and developing a clear stance in regard to ground water pollution problems.

Water quality standards in the past have been "highly rigid and inflexible," forcing states to set high goals and pollution control requirements to meet national criteria. Proposed changes would be "more practical," emphasizing what is attainable from a scientific point of view for a given state's waters. The new rules also carry with them the notion that a state may one day choose to modify its standards on a "site-specific" basis.

Eidsness reproved those who have found fault with the changes.

"Those who criticize this approach as backing off the goals of the Clean Water Act are dead wrong. In fact, their comments reflect very little understanding of water quality standards or even our system of government. I guess I'm saying to these individuals and organizations, it's time you grow up."

The EPA plans to adopt a policy calling for a state lead in ground water pollution abatement, Eidsness said.

"We have laws now at the federal level that give us extraordinary power to deal with ground water pollution, but the states have even greater powers. It's only right that local pollution problems be dealt with by local agencies with the power to control that pollution."

The new policies in the two areas will be good for the environment and a good demonstration of the appropriate balance of power between the federal and state government, Eidsness told the audience.

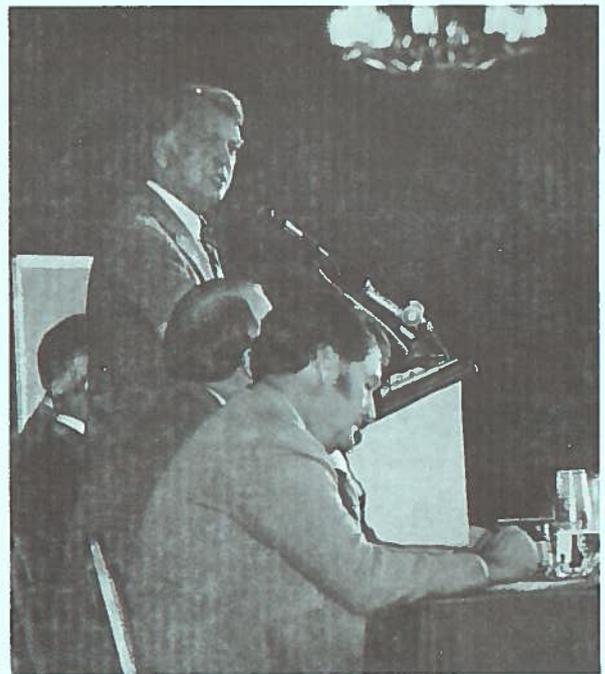
"Who's accountable? Who has the greater resources to deal with problems? Who can prevent problems? Typically, that's the state government, in my view. We are just providing an opportunity for that power to be exercised," he concluded.

Glenn Sullivan, executive vice-president and principal water resources engineer for the Benham Group, told conferees that "it's time for us to cinch up and decide what role we're going to play in future water development."

"Oklahomans don't mind paying their fair share, but if our farmers continue to bear the brunt of economic sanctions brought against countries that are misaligned with our allies, then our economy will not continue to be such that we can meet and solve our own water problems," Sullivan warned.

In sketching the plight of the farmer, he pointed out that several rural water systems have a minimum monthly charge of \$25 for the first thousand gallons of water,

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It is vital that water development supporters maintain their coalition through the hard times ahead, said Gov. Nigh in his keynote address.

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Some 650 water enthusiasts representing all areas and interests in the state gathered at the Hilton Inn on December 7.



Staff photos by Barry Fogarty

Diane Pedicord of the Municipal league, Tom Lay of the OWRB and J.D. Fleming of the Farmers Union discuss a water issue at the cracker barrel session that closed the conference.



tunities for conservation may lie in the agricultural sector because farmers con- as a business cost and are more willing to install new programs, said Ronald B. of the California Department of Water Resources, in his luncheon address.



Discussing the state's water situation over a mid-morning coffee break are Rep. Marvin Baughman, James R. Barnett and former "Oklahoma Farmer Stockman" Editor Ferdie Deering.



Luncheon speakers and honored guests prepare for their turn at the head table. Left to right: OWRB Executive Director James R. Barnett, Lt. Gov. Spencer Bernard, Benham Group Vice-President Glenn Sullivan, OWRB Chairman Gerald E. Borelli and California Department of Water Resources Director Ronald B. Robie.



Col. James J. Harmon, Tulsa District Engineer of the Corps, listens to the remarks of Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Gianelli as Conference Chairman Robert S. Kerr Jr. looks on.



from a dozen agencies and ions attracted this browser others to the Exhibit Gallery.



Dr. Norman N. Durham contributes as a panelist in the "Water for Agriculture" section.



Jim Schuelein and Jacqueline Dudley of OWRB register John Morgan of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission.

*Water Conference, continued from page 2*

while the average farm family in Oklahoma earned only \$14 profit for all of last year.

"I didn't go to school very long, but I guarantee you that just doesn't seem to add up to pay the water bill," Sullivan declared.

He said that top on the list of options for financing water projects is the development of public awareness of problems, then the pursuit of solutions. "We must assure that Oklahoma does get its fair share of the federal dollars that are available, and that we use those dollars in the most effective way," he continued.

"However, in view of the world's need for food and the advances in agricultural technology in Oklahoma, none of us should be anything but optimistic for the future. We should capitalize on the future food needs of the world."

#### **Cleo (Mrs. R.G.) Johnson 1919-1982**

Cleo Johnson, wife of OWRB member R.G. Johnson, died in an Oklahoma City hospital on November 25, succumbing to a 5½ month illness with cancer.

Mrs. Johnson had been employed in the Custer County Court House for 31 years, serving most recently as a deputy county tax assessor. She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Clinton, where she was a longtime teacher of the Women's Sunday School Class. She was the mother of one daughter, Linda Johnson Agan (Mrs. Marvin) and the grandmother of Ryan Garrett (7) and Derrick Kale (4) Agan of Clinton.

She had resided with her husband on a farm east of the city where the family raised wheat, alfalfa and polled Herefords.

He encouraged Oklahomans to plan adequate water supplies and waste treatment facilities so that the state is in a position to produce agricultural products and support agri-industries to finish those products.

"If we work and plan, I am convinced that Oklahoma and its citizens will share the spotlight of economic well being," Sullivan concluded.

#### **DECEMBER CROP AND WEATHER SUMMARY**

Precipitation again highlights the state agricultural situation, as rains in early December stimulated wheat growth, leaving it in good to fair condition at mid-month. The rainfall across the state substantially advanced wheat development with improved growing conditions and stands, and adequate topsoil moisture supplies encouraged some farmers in the northwest to reseed fields having poor stands.

At mid-month, topsoil moisture supplies were short in only 15 percent of the reporting counties, comparing favorably with the 70 percent shortage only a week before. Subsoil moisture was short in 35 percent of the counties.

Winter oats and barley were in generally fair condition at mid-month, while cotton remained in mostly fair condition. Harvests of corn, sorghum, soybean and peanuts picked up again after a delay due to wet fields.

Pastures and ranges were in mostly fair condition, although additional rainfall is needed for continued development, especially in western localities.

Temperatures were generally warm, the highest being 11 degrees above normal in the southeast.

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