

OKLAHOMA WATER NEWS

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board

Better Service to Water Users Goal of OWRB Reorganization

Governor Walters' challenge to state agencies to "do more with less money" inspired a reorganization of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board in January. According to Executive Director Patty Eaton, the changes which restructured management and the working divisions are aimed at improving OWRB services to the public without increasing costs. The nine-member executive board had unanimously approved the plan at the Board's December meeting.

Eaton said the plan, developed over several months by consensus, consolidates most of the activities of the Stream Water, Groundwater and Engineering Divisions into a Water Management Division; splits the Financial Assistance Program from the

Two new assistant directors oversee realigned services



Dave Dillon

Planning Division; and forms a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) Division and a Water Quality Programs Division from the former Water Quality Division. The plan provides for two new assistant directors, Duane Smith and Dave Dillon. Smith, former Groundwater Division chief, will oversee the Financial



Duane Smith

Assistance, Planning and Water Management Divisions. Dillon, former Water Quality chief, will supervise the SPDES Division and the Water Quality Programs Division.

Mike Melton will serve as assistant to the director and work in legislative programs and special projects.

Dean Couch, general counsel, and Jim Schuelein, chief of Administrative Services, will report directly to Eaton. Appointments to Division Chief announced January 23 include Walid Maher, Financial Assistance; Mike

Mathis, Planning; J. A. Wood, Water Management; Dave Dimick, SPDES; and Shon Simpson, Water Quality Programs. Harold Springer is OWRB Chief Engineer.

To further the agency's goal of more cost-effective operation, employees in the OWRB's four field offices will report directly to one of the divisions in Oklahoma City and be assigned specific tasks. A top priority is strengthening the permitting program of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), an effort which will require the full-time efforts of six field office employees.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expected to delegate NPDES responsibilities to the state in 1993, so realignment of the Board's water quality functions is geared to putting sufficient staff in place to manage the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. According to Eaton, state delegation would allow municipal and industrial dischargers to obtain a single permit instead of two—one issued by the state; another required by EPA. Such a move would enhance economic development by making Oklahoma more attractive to industry, she says.

The Water Quality Programs Division will conduct stream studies; prepare State Water Quality Standards; certify permits for dredge-and-fill operations; cooperate in the Underground Storage Tank program; certify laboratories in water quality testing; and investigate water pollution complaints.

The most significant change in terms of improving service to state

Continued on page 2

Reorganization, continued from page 1

water users is the consolidation of stream water and groundwater permitting in the new Water Management Division. The division will also license commercial drillers of water wells, observation, monitoring and heat exchange wells, drillers of geotechnical bores and pump installers. Water Management will also handle dam safety programs and inspection of non-federal dams in OWRB jurisdiction; and oversee hydrologic studies and data collection.

By being independent of the Planning Division, the new Financial Assistance Division will be able to focus entirely on administering the Board's successful loan and grant program for the construction or improvement of water and wastewater facilities.

Eaton pointed out that it is the responsibility of the Planning Division to develop short- and long-term plans for the most effective use of the state's water resources, including updates of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan. The division will also handle floodplain management, interstate stream compacts, U.S. Geological Survey cooperative programs, weather modification and regulation of irrigation districts.

Accounting, data processing, mapping and drafting, library, personnel and public information services will remain in the OWRB Administrative Services Division.

"We look forward to this streamlining of the Water Resources Board to help us be more responsive to the needs of our customers, the citizens of Oklahoma, as well as provide expanded services on a leaner budget," said Eaton.

Meet the Water Resources Board

With this issue, we begin to introduce you to each of the nine members of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. Appointed by the governor as public representatives of all areas of water use in Oklahoma, our Board members have indicated a desire to present to "Oklahoma Water News" readers their views on important water issues facing the state.

Gerald E. Borelli, a cattleman and independent oil producer, has been a member of the OWRB for 20 years. Appointed by Governor David Hall as agricultural representative, Borelli was the youngest member ever named to the Board. For 15 years, he served as Board chairman, where he championed water development, establishment of the State Financial Assistance Program (FAP), protection of Oklahoma's groundwater basins and development of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan.



Gerald Borelli

Borelli's interest in water and the Water Board was spawned by his uncle, Francis Borelli, who served as the first director of the OWRB. Through his tenure on the Board, Borelli believes that the three most important issues involving the agency have been completion of the Water Plan; creation of the FAP; and initiation of the Governor's Water Conference in 1979.

"The Water Plan cataloged the re-

sources and potential needs of every area of the state. For the first time, Oklahoma had not only an inventory but a proposed plan on how to develop our resources for the benefit of all.

"The FAP's benefits to Oklahoma are obvious. One of the finest elements of the grant program is that we are able to return to the taxpayers some of the tax collections they have paid in over the years. And since a majority of the principal on the State-wide Water Development Revolving Fund is used as collateral, the monies will be retained by the state for use by future generations. However," Borelli points out, "we are sorely in need of a reliable funding mechanism to replenish the program so that we can continue to make loans and provide emergency grants to communities in need."

He also believes that Oklahoma's abundant water resources are attractive to other states and can thus be utilized for mutual benefit. "Perhaps, through our sister states, Oklahoma can prudently market our excess waters for the benefit of our citizens."

Borelli credits OWRB employees for much of the agency's success. "I believe that the main reason the agency has been so successful in administering its programs is not due to laws enacted or dollars appropriated, but to the staff that has administered and followed our established philosophy."

Dick Seybolt, appointed to the Board in 1988, represents recreational interests. He is a former city commissioner of Miami, Oklahoma and now owns a recreational vehicle business.

Seybolt exhibits a genuine interest in Oklahoma's water resources and in their proper use and regulation. "Although an enormous challenge, the importance of maintaining good quality water is immeasurable and it is vital in encouraging growth and economic development," he says.

As a long-time resident of northeast Oklahoma, Seybolt is intensely interested in the current pollution cleanup at the Tar Creek Superfund site. In October, Seybolt and other Board members held their regular monthly

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE Approved at February Board Meeting

Grants		Loans (5.292%; 28-year maximum term)	
Garvin County Rural Water District #6	\$20,000	Wagoner Co.	
		RWSG&SWMD #4	\$7,200,000
		Walters Public Works Authority	\$1,200,000
		Muskogee Municipal Authority	11,533,000

from State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program

Totals as of 2/11/92			
	FAP Loans	FAP Grants	SRF Loans
Approved Amount	90 \$85,035,000	253 \$15,501,660	4 \$38,512,500
Funded Amount	81 \$70,305,000	231 \$13,861,327	3 \$26,959,500

meeting in Miami and followed it with an inspection of OWRB remedial activities at the abandoned lead and zinc mining area, north of the city.

"Holding occasional meetings in various regions of the state allows our members a firsthand look at the waters we regulate," he says. "These out-of-town meetings also present us with an opportunity to learn firsthand the water-related concerns of community officials, farmers, industry representatives and citizens in contrasting geographic and economic regions."



Dick Seybolt

Seybolt believes that the Board's role in assisting cities, towns and rural water districts through the State Financial Assistance Program is of extreme importance to Oklahoma. "I think that the most important issue that we deal with is helping communities who have no alternative financial resources to draw from. It is essential for these communities to know that the Board is willing and able to help them solve their water and wastewater problems."

mainstream

Eaton to Speak at Seminar

Patty Eaton, Secretary of Environment and executive director of the OWRB, will speak at an Environmental Dispute Resolution Conference April 20. Eaton will present views from the executive branch of Oklahoma government.

The conference, sponsored by Attorney General Susan Loving's office, the Water Resources Board and other state agencies will be held at Metro Tech Business Conference Center, 1900 Springlake Drive in Oklahoma City.

The conference, designed for environmental policy makers and decision makers, will teach consensus building in resolving environmental conflicts. Keynote speaker will be

Suzanne Goulet Orenstein, Director of Mediation and Training for RESOLVE, Washington, D.C.

Early Bird registration (by April 10) costs \$50; regular registration costs \$75. For more information, write to Environmental Dispute Resolution, OSU, College of Arts & Sciences Extension, 205 Life Sciences East, Stillwater, OK 74078-0276.

Dams Topic of Lake Meeting

The Oklahoma Clean Lakes Association, a chapter of the North American Lake Management Society, will host a symposium from March 31 to April 3 at the Marriott Hotel in Tulsa.

The meeting focuses on "Clean Lakes—Are They In Our Future?" and will kickoff with the OWRB's Annual Dam Safety Workshop. Symposium topics will include eutrophication, point and nonpoint source pollution, wetlands, watershed management, legal issues and citizens' lake monitoring. For more information or to register, call Joanne Kurklin at (405) 231-4256.

Registration for the dam safety portion of the symposium is separate and costs \$10. For information, call Cecil Bearden, of the OWRB's Water Management Division, at (405) 231-2536.

Board Members Attend ICWP

Executive Director Patty Eaton, Board Members Gerald Borelli, Mike Henson, Ervin Mitchell and OWRB Planner Terri Sparks attended the 1992 National Water Policy Roundtable February 18–20 in Washington, D.C.

The Roundtable, sponsored by the Interstate Council on Water Policy, assisted public- and private-sector water managers explore public policy concerning vexing environmental issues.

Eaton and the Board members also visited with the Oklahoma Congressional delegation to express support for Oklahoma water studies and projects.

State Flows Near Average

According to U.S. Geological Survey stream gages on the Red River at Index, the Little River at Horatio and the Arkansas River at Van Buren (all near the Arkansas/Oklahoma line), flows leaving Oklahoma were down significantly from the previous wet year. More than 27 million acre-feet of water flowed out of Oklahoma in Water Year 1991 (October 1, 1990 through September 30, 1991), compared to 69.1 million in 1990. Average annual flow is almost 35 million acre-feet.

Students Tour Water Board

Four hearing-impaired students in Susan Bishop's class at Kerr Junior High School in Del City visited the Water Resources Board in Oklahoma City on February 26. Mary Wyatt of the OWRB Water Quality Programs Division and mother of Kerr ninth-grader Richard Wyatt, Jr., coordinated the tour with Ms. Bishop and school officials. Mrs. Wyatt and Virginia Roy, a hearing-impaired secretary in the Water Management Division, signed for the students as duties of the various divisions were explained.



Kerr Junior High students visited the OWRB February 26. From left: Bobby Frentz, Richard Wyatt, Jr., Dustin Shafer, Bianca Dedeaux, Virginia Roy of the OWRB, teacher Susan Bishop, and Mary Wyatt of the OWRB.

THE FLOOD CURRENT

MARCH --APRIL 1992

Gov. Walters Proclaims March Flood Awareness Month

Because March marks the unofficial beginning of Oklahoma's flood season and to make citizens cognizant of flooding problems and solutions, Governor David Walters has designated March as "Flood Awareness Month."

"The spring flood season is one of the most dangerous times of year. The Governor's proclamation in 1991 was of tremendous help to the OWRB in educating the public on flood safety procedures and floodplain management techniques and spreading the word about the availability of affordable flood insurance," said Ken Morris, state NFIP coordinator.

Oklahoma has experienced flood disasters since before statehood. Of

the 30 presidentially declared disasters in the state since 1955, 24 have involved flooding. In an effort to mitigate such emergencies, the OWRB was named the state coordinating agency for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) by Governor Dewey Bartlett in 1969. The NFIP assists Oklahomans by making flood insurance available at affordable rates and helping communities to make wise decisions concerning floodplain use.

"Many property owners and renters do not realize that their homeowners' policies do not offer protection against flood losses," Morris points out.

As part of Flood Awareness Month,

several flood insurance/management meetings have been scheduled across the state. The Water Board, along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and several sub-state planning districts, will host four floodplain administration workshops to update state and local officials on floodplain management activities in Oklahoma. The dates and locations are March 5, Wilburton; March 17, Muskogee; March 19, Miami; and April 2, Duncan. For more information or to register, call Morris at (405) 231-2533.

Finally, FEMA is sponsoring agent/lender combined workshops on March 31 in Oklahoma City at the Holiday Inn, 3535 N.W. 39th Expressway; and April 2 in Tulsa at the Holiday Inn, 8181 East Skelly Drive. The cost is \$25; to register, call Deborah Frank at (713) 690-0115.



Don't get caught high and dry by rising floodwaters—BUY FLOOD INSURANCE!

All Floodplain Uses Deserve Scrutiny

In the business of promoting floodplain management and risk reduction one question always haunts us—What is the best land use within the floodplain?

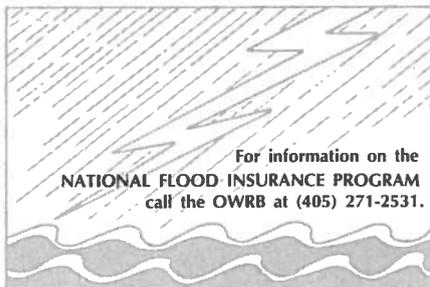
The best use is that which imposes no human designed uses and allows the floodplain to continue its natural function. While it is true that recreational uses are probably the most compatible, we must understand that even these uses will have an impact on the floodplain. Recreational uses are not a panacea. Within the floodplain there are many subclassifications, including wetlands, floodways, floodway fringes, coastal high hazard areas, barrier islands, channels, sand dunes and riparian zones. Each has a differing set of characteristics which must be used in guiding both natural and designed uses.

For example, consider the riparian zone—technically, the adjacent area along the banks of rivers and streams which has been expanded to include areas bordering springs, wet meadows, ponds, lakes and reservoirs. Some areas are able to withstand heavy use by humans with little damage to the ecosystem; other areas are very fragile and can be severely damaged by even moderate use. Some areas recover quickly from impacts; others will take years.

Even seemingly harmless uses (hunting, fishing and other recreational activities) can damage the floodplain. Access to humans and motorized vehicles can harm vegetation, cause damage to stream banks, lead to excessive erosion, cause loss of habitat and nutrients and disrupt the food chain. In turn, such problems

can lead to changes in stream width and depth and water temperature, a decrease in the underlying water table and an overall change in the area's natural characteristics. Recreational use of a floodplain can, in fact, destroy the very resources which originally gave value to the area and render it useless for its natural purpose.

Excerpted from the Texas Water Commission's Floodplain Management Newsletter, Spring 1991



Verify Flood Insurance

Residents are asked to be aware of recent attempts by some lenders to unnecessarily compel the purchase of flood insurance by property owners residing outside of designated floodplains.

"Several residents in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa areas have received letters from firms which have misled them into purchasing flood insurance when in fact they are not required to," said Ken Morris, state NFIP coordinator.

"In these cases, we suggest that property owners contact their lenders and ask them to verify in writing whether the structure securing their loan is located in the special flood hazard area. Such a determination is the responsibility of the lender, not the borrower," he stresses.

Project Improves Bixby Drainage

Flooding and drainage problems in Bixby have been alleviated somewhat through a recent channelization project, according to Ken Morris, of the OWRB's Engineering Division.

"Bixby has had numerous flooding problems over the years, primarily due to the presence of two drainage ditches built in the 1920's as agricultural levees. Accumulation of brush, trees and various debris and increased urbanization in the area have decreased the ditches' ability to accommodate elevated flows," Morris pointed out.

Late last year, OWRB and Federal Emergency Management Agency representatives performed a community

assistance visit with Bixby officials in an attempt to solve the recurring flooding nuisance. As a result, the city was required to complete flood prevention modifications by March. Three floodways which flow through Bixby, all tributaries of the Arkansas River, are now being cleaned out and better maintenance measures will be implemented to prevent future problems.

"Bixby officials have worked diligently toward compliance with state and federal floodplain management regulations. They deserve much credit for their efforts to alleviate their flooding problems," Morris emphasized.

Fry 2 Ditch, a 70-year-old agricultural drainage canal, before and after being purged of vegetation and debris. The levee is one of three sites included in Bixby's flood management compliance scheme. Better maintenance will allow the areas to remain relatively free of material which inhibits the flow of floodwaters.



**STORAGE IN SELECTED OKLAHOMA LAKES & RESERVOIRS
AS OF FEBRUARY 25, 1992**

PLANNING REGION LAKE/RESERVOIR	CONSERVATION STORAGE (acre-feet)	PRESENT STORAGE (acre-feet)	PERCENT OF STORAGE		PLANNING REGION LAKE/RESERVOIR	CONSERVATION STORAGE (acre-feet)	PRESENT STORAGE (acre-feet)	PERCENT OF STORAGE	
			conservation	flood				conservation	flood
SOUTHEAST					EAST CENTRAL				
Atoka	124,100	122,312	98.6	N/A	Eufaula	2,314,600	2,277,234	98.4	0.0
Broken Bow	918,070	918,070	100.0	5.8	Tenkiller	654,100	650,432	99.4	0.0
Hugo ¹	187,603	187,603	100.0	1.6	Wister ¹	58,601	58,601	100.0	0.6
McGee Creek	113,930	113,930	100.0	1.1	NORTHEAST				
Pine Creek ¹	73,346	73,346	100.0	1.4	Birch	19,200	19,086	99.4	0.0
Sardis	274,330	274,330	100.0	1.1	Copan	43,400	43,400	100.0	1.1
CENTRAL					Eucha	79,600	79,600	100.0	N/A
Arcadia	27,520	27,485	99.9	0.0	Fort Gibson	365,200	365,200	100.0	0.9
Hefner	75,400	73,691	97.7	N/A	Grand	1,672,000	1,530,980	91.6	0.0
Overholser	15,900	15,475	97.3	N/A	Heyburn	7,105	7,105	100.0	0.5
Stanley Draper	100,000	87,170	87.2	N/A	Hudson	200,300	200,300	100.0	0.9
Thunderbird	119,600	119,600	100.0	0.6	Hulah	31,160	31,160	100.0	0.2
SOUTH CENTRAL					Oologah	553,400	553,400	100.0	0.8
Arbuckle	72,400	72,400	100.0	0.2	Skiatook	322,700	322,700	100.0	0.2
Texoma	2,643,300	2,637,245	99.8	0.0	Spavinaw	30,590	30,590	100.0	N/A
Waurika	203,100	203,100	100.0	1.2	NORTH CENTRAL				
SOUTHWEST					Kaw	428,600	428,600	100.0	0.4
Altus	132,830	112,674	84.8	0.0	Keystone	557,600	551,808	99.0	0.0
Ellsworth	72,490	63,365	87.4	N/A	NORTHWEST				
Fort Cobb	80,010	80,010	100.0	1.4	Canton	111,310	63,651	57.2	0.0
Foss ²	256,220	170,702	66.6	0.0	Fort Supply	13,900	13,900	100.0	0.1
Lawtonka	58,327	58,327	100.0	N/A	Great Salt Plains	31,420	31,420	100.0	1.1
Tom Steed	88,970	85,898	96.6	0.0	STATE TOTALS	13,132,232	12,755,900	97.1	0.7

¹ Seasonal pool operation

² Conservation pool lowered to enhance project operation

N/A—not applicable; no flood storage allocation.

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

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MARY E. WHITLOW, Editor

BRIAN VANCE, Writer

BARRY FOGERTY, Photographer

BRAD NESOM, Layout Artist

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