

OKLAHOMA WATER NEWS

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board



*from
the desk
of Gary
Sherrer*

As I review the Legislative Session closed May 31, I am proud of the new responsibilities and programs awarded the Water Resources Board. I believe it's symbolic of the trust the Governor, Senate and House of Representatives have in this agency. Among the important measures enacted was an appropriation to the Water Resources Board to stay foreclosure on the state's debt to the Corps of Engineers for water storage in Sardis Reservoir. An appropriation of \$508,030 will allow Oklahomans a year in which to consider all the options in marketing Sardis water and negotiate a long-term solution beneficial to southeast Oklahomans and the state.

The Legislature also entrusted us with \$4.5 million to administer a new sewer and water grant program enabled by HB 1434 -- the Rural Economic Action Plan. REAP makes assistance available to small communities and rural areas for infrastructure improvements.

I was pleased that Governor Keating and the Legislature approved funding for a significant study that addresses the concerns of Panhandle residents concerning pollution and/or depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer. It provides \$100,000 as state matching funds for a 3-year study by the U.S. Geological Survey to determine amount of water in storage and explore potential for pollution.

HB 2824 appropriated \$1 million to the Water Resources Board for implementing a statewide weather modification (cloud seeding) program. The Board's Planning and Management

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Enid High School Volunteers Presented Governor's Award

*Water Watch monitoring group mentored by OWRB
wins Governor's Environmental Achievement Award*

Enid High school science students and teachers, active in the state's longest running citizens volunteer monitoring group, were rewarded for their diligence when Governor Keating recognized them with an Environmental Achievement Award. The award was presented at the Environmental Conference held April 23-24 in Oklahoma City. From more than 60 nominations received from governmental, indus-

trial and citizen sectors, eight were selected for recognition.

OWRB Executive Director Gary Sherrer said, "It is an award the City of Enid, the students and their teachers can be very proud to win. Their program and their commitment to it deserve recognition by the State of Oklahoma," he said.

The EHS students in "Oklahoma Water

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Enid High School monitors were recognized with a Governor's Environmental Achievement Award. Seated: Kevin Krey, Adrienne Nixon, advanced biology teacher; Terry Sacket, physics, chemistry teacher; James Fagan. Standing: Keith Owen, OWRB Water Watch trainer, Jessica McCreight, Sarah Hopping, Tina Moore, Justin Eck, Sara Haymaker and Juli Waterson, OWRB.

Enid HS, continued from page 1

Watch" have assisted the Water Resources Board in studies at Enid's Meadow Lake since 1993. Honored with their teachers at the special reception were Kevin Krey, James Fagan, Jessica McCreight, Sarah Hopping, Tina Moore, Justin Eck and Sara Haymaker. Their teachers are Adrienne Nixon, advanced biology, and Terry Sacket, physics and chemistry.

The Enid Water Watch monitoring program was set in motion by EHS teachers Terry and Deanne Sacket and Adrienne Nixon, with the assistance of Keith Owen, Juli Watterson and Paul Koenig of the OWRB Water Quality Programs division. The teachers long had been advocates of reinforcing classroom studies with hands-on science in the field. The OWRB Phase I Diagnostic Study of Meadow Lake, completed with an EPA Clean Lakes grant and matching funds appropriated by the legislature, determined the lake was polluted with excessive nutrients and sediments. The 12-acre lake in the park was shallow and abandoned by recreationists.

The need for willing hands to assist in the Meadow Lake Project led the Water Board's Clean Lakes staff to recruit the science teachers and students as volunteer monitors. The students have worked consistently in collecting biological data and water samples, measuring flow, recording and analyzing data, and helping in the design of a watershed protection strategy.

According to Water Watch Coordinator Keith Owen of the OWRB, the student monitoring program has been so successful that it has expanded to include monitors at the junior high level. Owen estimates some 350 EHS students have participated in the program since 1993.

On May 4, Enid High monitors demonstrated their successful methods at five sites around Meadow Lake as part of the Citizens Volunteer Monitoring Conference sponsored by the OWRB May 3-4. The conference began with classroom sessions at MetroTech in Oklahoma City on May 3, then moved to Enid on Saturday for hands-on practice in the field. At stations around Meadow Lake, EHS monitors instructed conferees in biomonitoring, flow measuring, water quality monitoring, stream modeling and a Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) activity. □

"Our" Emily March of Dimes Ambassador

Emily Lane Brown, the daughter of OWRB Secretary Kim Brown and her husband, Dean, was recently named Ambassador for the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, Western Oklahoma Chapter. Emily was born December 29, 1994 with Phocomelia, the absence of a left arm, just below the shoulder. In its place, Emily has a tiny limb with two fingers that "work."

Emily made her debut as March of Dimes Ambassador at WalkAmerica in downtown Oklahoma City on May 4. She kicked off the six-mile benefit walk accompanied by her mom and dad, grandparents Terry and Earl Neese and 10 of Kim's co-workers from the Water Resources Board.

Emily reigned as Ambassador over the walk from the comfort of her stroller, but her folks declared it was the only way to keep the lively toddler from running too far ahead of them.

WalkAmerica is the single largest source of funding for the March of Dimes, which focuses on improving the health of babies by preventing birth defects and infant mortality. The national campaign encourages Americans to "walk for someone you love." And, indeed the Water Board loved Emily, with pledges of \$1481 to the March of Dimes, raised by 10 walkers, a lunch hour picnic and the sale of t-shirts, all coordinated by Kim, who chaired the OWRB in-house March of Dimes campaign.

As Ambassador, Emily will participate in many important fundraising events in the coming months in her domain west of Interstate 35 (including Ponca City but excluding the Panhandle.)

Dean and Kim Brown said they had no warning that Emily would be born with Phocomelia., but they realize she is a very special blessing. □



Emily and Kim Brown

Wendell E. Thomasson Named to Board

Governor Frank Keating announced the appointment of Wendell E. Thomasson to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board on April 17. Thomasson, a Choctaw County rancher, replaces Michael Henson on the OWRB. He is appointed to a 7-year term, the first Choctaw County resident to serve on the Water Resources Board.

Thomasson is owner and manager of Apple Farms, a cattle operation near Hugo.

He attended Mesa Junior College in Grand Junction, Colorado, and graduated from Community College of Denver with a degree in business management.

He came to the cattle business in



Wendell E. Thomasson

Farmer, Secrest Honored for Service to ORWA

Two members of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board received awards for their service to rural water users at the annual meeting of the



Lonnie Farmer, a founding member of the ORWA and member of the Water Resources Board was named Rural Water Man of the Year.

Oklahoma Rural Water Association in Tulsa on April 9-11. ORWA President Jim Murphy presented awards to Lonnie Farmer and Bill Secrest.

Farmer, a banker from Davidson, was named Man of the Year, an award recognizing exceptional contribu-

tions of time, energy and expertise in advancing rural water in Oklahoma. Farmer is one of the original incorporators of the Oklahoma Rural Water Association and has served on that Board for 26 years. He is credited with helping secure state and federal funding for ORWA training and technical assistance programs and has worked diligently for more reasonable regulation of water systems. He is assistant secretary-treasurer of the Rural Water Association and serves on the association's Legislative and Audit and Budget Committees. Farmer was appointed to the Water Resources Board in 1993.

Earlier, Farmer had pioneered a regional water supply system in southwestern Oklahoma to help water users avoid nitrate concentrations in drinking water supplies. It was Farmer's idea to blend groundwater from the Tillman Terrace Aquifer with surface water to provide a safe supply.

Also honored was Bill Secrest, vice chairman of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, who was named 1996 Outstanding Manager. Secrest is manager of Wagoner County RWD #4 in Broken Arrow, the state's

Farmer and Secrest, continued

second-largest water district. Secrest has been a member of the OWRB since 1982, Board vice chairman since 1988 and member of the ORWA Board since 1976. He was honored in 1994 as Man of the Year.

Also recognized with a Friend of



Bill Secrest, manager of Wagoner RWD #4, receives the Outstanding Manager Award from ORWA President Jim Murphy.

Rural Water plaque was OWRB Photographer Barry Fogerty, who has assisted the ORWA by providing photographic services for special events. Fogerty has been an employee of the OWRB since 1982. □

Thomasson, continued

1981 from a background with highway heavy construction firms. He runs the ranch with the help of his wife Kathleen and daughter, Stacy, a high school junior and honor student.

Michael Henson, Stillwater, was honored for her service to the OWRB at the May 14 Board meeting. She was appointed to the Board in 1989, and as a former mayor of Stillwater, she was an ombudsman for cities and towns. Henson often expressed concern for the plight of communities overwhelmed with federal regulations without the funding to implement them.

In her tenure on the Board, she worked hard to reinforce the agency's image of being helpful and responsive to the needs of the public. Henson and her husband, Ray, are property managers in Stillwater.

The Board prepared a Resolution of Appreciation and a scrapbook of staff mementos, but an illness in the family prevented Henson's attendance at the May 14 Board meeting. □

New Program Will Assist Rural Communities

On May 20, Governor Keating signed HB 1434, the "Rural Economic Action Plan of 1996," or REAP. It is good news to the small cities and towns who find themselves with declining population, limited access to services and diminishing quality of life. Governor Keating and the Oklahoma Legislature -- especially House authors Representatives Mike Mass and Randall Erwin -- worked hard for its passage because they believe it is important to restore the economic health of the state's small communities.

The Oklahoma Legislature entrusted the Water Resources Board with the responsibility of helping in the administration of the program.

REAP establishes a program targeted to improving water and sewer infrastructure; constructing and repairing roads and bridges; and promoting economic development in a variety of projects to improve the quality of life in rural Oklahoma.

The Bill allocates \$17 million to be distributed to cities, towns and unincorporated areas with populations less than 7,000, but awards priority to communities of 1,500 or less and towns with less financial capacity. Of the \$17 million, the OWRB will oversee the \$4.5 million grant account to be distributed for sewer and water improvements; the Department of Transportation will administer \$7.5 million for roads, bridges and other transportation projects; and the substate planning districts will distribute \$5 million for projects to enhance economic development. Eligible as "economic development" projects may be rural water and wastewater improvements, roads and streets, health care services, telecommunications systems, municipal energy distribution systems, projects to increase employment levels and other purposes.

Since the REAP program is so new, there remain questions concerning its

Board Okays \$19 Million Loan to Ponca City

Ponca City Utility Authority will soon begin improvements to the city's wastewater system enabled by a \$19 million loan from the OWRB Financial Assistance Program approved at the

May 14 Board meeting. According to FAP Division Chief Joe Freeman, this is the second largest loan made through the Board's successful Financial Assistance Program.



Representatives of Ponca City came to the May 14 Board meeting to ask a \$19 million loan for utility improvements. Left to right: Dick Stone, city commissioner; Joe Freeman, chief, Water Resources Board Financial Assistance division; Gary Martin, city manager; Sherri Irving, assistant director of public utilities; Mayor Marilyn Andrews; Robert Howard, Ponca City Chamber of Commerce; Tom Short, assistant city manager.

With approval of this loan, the Board has provided a total of \$31 million in loans to Ponca City for infrastructure improvements, Freeman said.

Mayor Marilyn Andrews, Dick Stone, city commissioner; Gary Martin, city manager; Sherri Irving, assistant director of public utilities; Robert Howard, Ponca City Chamber of Commerce; and Tom Short, assistant city manager, represented Ponca City at the Board meeting.

Freeman said the loan is expected to modify or replace the pump station, structures, treatment facilities, lines, electrical system, computer monitoring equipment and sludge systems in the city's wastewater operation.

Board Chairman Ross Kirtley pointed out that the OWRB Financial Assistance Program is unique in the nation. The loan program has been awarded an exceptional AA rating by Standard and Poor's, enabling long-term, low interest loans. The Ponca City loan was made under another facet of the program, the State Revolving Fund Loan Program, an initiative that assists communities in financing wastewater improvements. □

"nuts and bolts." Additionally, the Water Resources Board has before it the task of setting rules to guide the communities in applying for REAP grants. Guidelines will be in place soon and communities may apply after July 1, although none will be considered for six months. The six-month period allows all communities an equal chance and time to draft their applications.

Local government organizations that will accept the grant applications are the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, Association of South Central Oklahoma Governments, Central Oklahoma Economic Development District, Eastern Oklahoma Economic Development District, Grand Gateway Economic Development Association, Indian Nations Council of Governments, Kiamichi Economic Development District, Northern Oklahoma Development Association, Oklahoma Economic Development Association, Southern Oklahoma Development

Association and Southwestern Oklahoma Development Authority.

The Water Resources Board Financial Assistance Division that has administered the agency's well respected loan and grant program for sewer and water improvements will manage the \$4.5 million REAP water and sewer grant account. To make the application process easier and fair, the OWRB is preparing an application form to be used for all entities interested in participating in the REAP for sewer and water projects. Communities eligible may call their substate planning district or the Financial Assistance division of the Water Resources Board for a copy of the application form.

Joe Freeman, Financial Assistance division chief, notes that eligible projects are sewer line construction and repair and related storm or sanitary sewer projects, water line construction or repair, water treatment, water acquisition, distribution or recov-

ery and related projects.

According to REAP guidelines, the OWRB will establish nine separate accounts of \$450,000 and split the remaining \$450,000 between two subaccounts for INCOG and ACOG, which represent Tulsa and Oklahoma City areas respectively. The money in these accounts will be available to the local government organizations through the Water Resources Board.

Executive Director Gary Sherrer said, "We're excited about the program and the promise it holds for small communities in our state. In these coming days, we will forge the details and establish the rules that will make the REAP fair and workable."

In the meanwhile, communities who need water and wastewater improvements and meet REAP requirements may call local substate planning district offices or the Financial Assistance division of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board at (405) 530-8800. □

Sherrer, continued from page 1

division will oversee implementation of the initiative.

A legislative appropriation of \$195,000 to the OWRB Clean Lakes Program will enable more water quality gages and stream flow gages on the Poteau and Illinois Rivers. Additional gages and data requested by the Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Commission, will be cost shared by the OWRB, USGS and Oklahoma Scenic River Commission.

From the standpoint of the OWRB, it was a successful session. This agency is dedicated to spending the money entrusted to us wisely, prudently and in the best interest of the citizens of Oklahoma. □



36% Surface Water Polluted

A recent EPA report declares more than one-third of the nation's surface water is too contaminated to be considered fishable and swimmable. The Environmental Protection Agency review submitted to the president blames contaminated runoff from agriculture, industry and general urban growth, but notes results are similar to the review of three years ago.

Nutrient overloading, the most common problem, causes excessive algae and weed growth, fish kills and foul odors in waterways, the report noted. Water quality surveys reflected in the report were conducted by states and other agencies covering 616,000 miles (17 percent) of U.S. rivers; 17 million acres (42 percent) of lakes; and 27,000 square miles (78 percent) of estuaries. □

Love Canal Cleanup Closed

In accepting the final payment of \$129 million from Occidental Chemical Company to the federal government, Attorney General Janet Reno said "Today, we write the final chapter of the Love Canal story."

The 16-year dispute arose from the company's dumping 22,000 tons of chemical waste at Love Canal from 1942 to 1953. Abandoned, the dump site was later developed into a residential neighborhood. Of the final installment, \$102 million went to Superfund; the balance to FEMA, for relocating Love Canal residents. □

Workshops, Special Training Alert Floodplain Managers

Gov. Frank Keating proclaimed May Flood Awareness Month, and Ken Morris, administrator of the Board's National Flood Insurance Program, saw to it that the month was appropriately observed.



Alan Johnson of FEMA, Washington, D.C., was the main instructor at the OFMA Spring Technical Conference at Rose State College in Midwest City.

Gov. Keating said the proclamation is important because it lets Oklahomans know that affordable flood insurance is available to communities that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program administered by the Water Resources Board.

Morris points out that over 30,000 structures in Oklahoma lie in the regulatory floodplain and are not protected by flood insurance. In preparation for Flood Awareness Month, Morris trained 122 state floodplain administrators in

workshops in all quadrants of the state. Throughout April, Morris and OWRB staff conducted workshops at Antlers, Fountainhead Lodge, Midwest City, Woodward and Lawton.

Workshop participants learned how to determine base flood elevations and administer and enforce flood damage prevention ordinances.

On May 7, more than 50 members of the Oklahoma Floodplain Management Association attended OFMA's annual Technical Conference in Midwest City. Instructors from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in Washington, D.C., held workshops on mapping issues.

In Tulsa on April 10, the OWRB, Oklahoma Civil Emergency Management Agency and Tulsa District Corps of Engineers staff instructed 80 members of the Southwestern Construction Codes Council on construction in the floodplain. □



Gov. Keating signed a proclamation declaring May Flood Awareness Month in Oklahoma. Water Board staff who work in the NFIP were at the capitol for the ceremony. Shown with Gov. Keating, from the left: Donnie Blanton (McAlester), Mike Mathis, Ken Morris, Hank Elling (Lawton), Nancy Kennedy and Executive Director Gary Sherrer.

19 Get Their Feet Wet in Water Education

The Water Quality Programs lab was the setting May 21 for a workshop for Water Board employees interested in knowing more about Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), a water education curriculum developed for Grades K-12. Gary Cook, Project WET Coordinator at the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and Keith

great enthusiasm by teachers because it cuts across many disciplines in the study of water and water resources — chemistry and physics, life science, earth systems, natural resources management, history and culture.

For more information on WET, call Gary Cook at (405) 521-2384 or Keith Owen at (405) 530-8800. □



Workshop participants were provided sticks, string, willow branches and dry grass to build a boat. Mary Schooley, Dave Goughnour, Ken Morris (background) Sylvia Ritzky, Brian Vance and Mary Whitlow construct a boat with birch pontoons laced together with willow.

Owen of the OWRB Water Quality Programs division facilitated the workshop in which participants sampled activities in the workbook.

The national, nonprofit WET program, based at Montana State University at Bozeman, is sponsored in Oklahoma by the Water Resources Board, Oklahoma Conservation Commission and Department of Environmental Quality. In the year since its introduction in the state last June, more than 250 teachers have attended workshops. Coordinator Gary Cook says the program has been met with

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE

Approved at April and May 1996 Board Meetings

FAP Loans

3.772% 1995 Bonds: 28.5 year maximum term

3.922% 1994: 28.5 year maximum term

Roland UA	\$ 4,165,000.00
Coyle PWA	\$ 350,000.00
Krebs PWA	\$ 605,000.00
Tulsa MUA	\$ 6,750,000.00

FAP Grants

Ringling MA	\$ 25,000.00
Town of Garvin	\$ 50,000.00
Roland UA	\$ 70,000.00

SRF Loans

Owasso PWA	\$ 2,410,000.00
Tulsa MUA	\$ 4,000,000.00
Pittsburg PWA	\$ 105,000.00
Ponca City UA	\$ 19,000,000.00

TOTALS AS OF 5/14/96

	FAP Loans	FAP Grants	SRF Loans
APPROVED	167	384	42
Amount	\$212,315,000.00	\$21,461,077.00	\$172,948,834.23
FUNDED	158	353	35
Amount	\$195,705,000.00	\$19,291,707.41	\$141,204,834.23

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