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Bimonthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board

From the Director



*Duane A. Smith
OWRB Executive Director*

Over the course of the past several years, the OWRB Leadership Team, comprised of employees in upper management, has spent considerable time examining agency goals and objectives, performance measures, strategic planning, and ways to operate the agency's programs more efficiently while also improving service to our customers. In October, the OWRB's Management Team convened three separate meetings involving "key players" in the agency's water management efforts. With the overarching goal of further developing our leadership/

management model, which is critical to agency success, each two-hour meeting brought together our frontline workers, those who are frequently closest to our customers, to discuss our traditional and emerging management efforts. How and how well are we succeeding? Why is the

See From the Director, Page 2

Water Board Loan Program Achieves Second Landmark Rating

For the second time since June, a pending OWRB bond issue has received an exceptionally high rating from top financial ratings services.

In October, Standard & Poor's, Fitch, and Moody's assigned 'AAA' ratings to the OWRB's \$125 million series 2003 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) revenue bonds. To obtain the lofty ranking, the Water Board had to demonstrate extremely strong bondholder security and excellent oversight of the DWSRF loan program, which funds community drinking water system improvements in Oklahoma. In June, the agency's Bond Loan Program received a 'AA+' rating for a separate bond issue. The Bond Loan Program funds both water and wastewater infrastructure projects.

"We are again thrilled to receive this direct validation of our efforts to bring affordable and sound financing to Oklahoma's cities, towns, and rural water districts," emphasized Duane Smith, OWRB Executive Director. "This rating is especially noteworthy because it's the highest ever achieved by an uninsured state entity that issues revenue debt in Oklahoma," he added.

"The rating attained through this bond issue will enable the Board to provide an extremely competitive interest rate on loans for drinking water projects, leading to even more savings for our citizens who rely so much upon dependable water supply," added Joe Freeman, chief of the OWRB's Financial Assistance Division.

Currently, the Board has 19 DWSRF loan applications for more than \$120 million either approved or on the 2004 project priority list awaiting funding from the bond proceeds. An additional six applications for \$64.4 million are on the fiscal year 2005 priority list. In addition to loan fund repayments and establishment of reserves, the bond issue will help fund Oklahoma's 20 percent match required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which sponsors the program.

In the November-December *Water News*

**Highlights from the
2003 Governor's Water Conference**

OWRB a good place to work? What makes our programs effective? Where can we make improvements?

These and other questions were posed to the OWRB's Key Players. There was general consensus that our product is better now than it has ever been before and agreement that our management skills are better as well. As we encouraged staff to assess areas where we must improve the agency, we asked them to consider a radically different management scenario for the agency—specifically, “managing up.”

This topsy-turvy management style would emulate an organizational chart drawn upside down with frontline workers at the top of the chart and senior management at the bottom. The workers, who are frequently closest to the customers, manage “down” to obtain the resources they need to satisfy customer needs, and they are empowered to exploit new opportunities. Senior managers have to manage “up” to support their frontline workers. The strength and success of the Water Board is our people. I believe this strategy will enable us better to tap into the wealth of talent, experience, and diversity embodied in our staff.

However, to be successful, such a radical change cannot be implemented in a short span of time. Because it involves changing conventional habits, and because people learn best informally from experience, managing up must be taught through daily work activities. Members of both the Management Team and Key Players are currently working together to integrate this new philosophy into routine tasks and behaviors.

These Key Player Workshops presented opportunities to celebrate our agency and further develop our knowledge and skills as we take the Water Resources Board—its managers, its leaders, its frontline workers—from good to great. Successful leaders, wherever they reside in an organization, must listen as well as follow through on their commitments. At the OWRB, this becomes even more important in light of the state's current budget situation. How do we maintain productivity and morale asking employees to transition from “doing more with less” to “doing *even* more with *even* less”? Managing up could be the answer.

OWRB Launches On-line Well Search Program

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board has instituted an on-line program allowing the public to search the agency's extensive database of water wells drilled in Oklahoma. The new Web-based system, in development since last February, became operational October 1.

“This free and easily accessible water well search feature culminates many months of work by Water Board staff. It not only greatly enhances our customer service by providing information to citizens in a more timely fashion, but it frees up staff for other important programs and tasks,” says Duane Smith, OWRB Executive Director.

Establishment of the system was enabled through joint partnership between the OWRB and developers at YourOklahoma, the state's government Web portal. Funding was provided through the Oklahoma Well Drillers Indemnity Fund. The Oklahoma Water Well Drillers Council authorized expenditures from the Fund.

Continued on Page 3

OWRB Offers Arbuckle-Simpson Fact Sheet

The Water Board has created a fact sheet summarizing its ongoing study of the hydrology of the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer and related water resources. The publication can be viewed and downloaded through the OWRB's Web site at www.owrb.state.ok.us.

The Arbuckle-Simpson Hydrology Study is being coordinated by the OWRB and Bureau of Reclamation, but will involve participation from dozens of agencies and organizations, as well as private citizens. The investigation will focus on characterization of the region's geology and hydrology, as well as identification of future water resource management options for the aquifer and other water resources in the region, with emphasis on the current and potential impacts of well pumping on springs and streams.

Specific objectives of the study include the following:

1. Characterize the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer in terms of geologic setting, aquifer boundaries, hydraulic properties, water levels, groundwater flow, recharge, discharge, and water budget.
2. Characterize the area's surface hydrology, including stream and spring discharge, runoff, base flow, and the relationship of surface water to groundwater.
3. Construct a digital groundwater/surface water flow model of the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer system for use in evaluating the allocation of water rights and simulating management options.
4. Determine the chemical quality of the aquifer and principal streams, identify potential sources of natural contamination, and delineate areas of the aquifer that are most vulnerable to contamination.
5. Construct network stream models of the principal stream systems for use in the allocation of water rights.
6. Propose water management options, consistent with state water laws, that address water rights issues, the potential impacts of pumping on springs and stream base flows, water quality, and water supply development.

Visitors to the Water Board site can search water wells—including monitoring, geothermal and other types of wells—by county, legal description, or identification number. The available database also includes current and historical water well level information gathered through the Board's statewide groundwater level measurement program, which measures the depth to water for more than 1,000 wells each year. Search results can be printed out or downloaded directly into many spreadsheet or database programs.

"This is just one of many useful Web site applications we have planned to better serve the citizens of Oklahoma," Smith adds, pointing out that a geographic mapping program is in the early development stage.

The OWRB's database of well logs contains more than 80,000 records of historical and existing wells. A typical log includes the well location and type, depth to water, well yield, construction data, lithology encountered by the driller at varying depths, plugging information, and proximity to pollution sources. The agency's new well search program will provide a mechanism for citizens to access this information freely from the comfort of their homes or offices. A second, perhaps more valuable, component of the search program provides a mechanism for Oklahoma's water well drillers to submit on-line logs of their individual water well drilling operations.

"In a little over two weeks since the launch of this new application, the drilling community has already made frequent use of the system. They seem generally pleased with the interface, which makes it relatively easy to enter the required information," according to Jann Hook, supervisor of the OWRB's Information Services Section. A very useful on-line help page is also available.

Prior to formal development of the program, Hook reveals that Board staff surveyed Oklahoma's drillers to gather information on the type of product that would work best for both users and agency data processors. Several drillers also visited Board headquarters in Oklahoma City and accessed the Board's server to user test the application during the latter stages of its development.

"Every one of the drillers surveyed indicated that they would utilize the on-line completion report feature. And, although larger drilling firms typically generate about 90 percent of the state's well logs, many smaller firms also indicated a willingness to participate," she says.

Prior to implementation of the new on-line program, OWRB staff were required to verify, image and index all incoming well logs, as well as search and copy well records requested by the public. (The agency charges a nominal fee for that service.) Savings to the OWRB and state will amount to many thousands of dollars and hundreds of staff hours each year, Hook points out.

"The well completion report application has also been designed to ensure the accuracy of well log data—that completion reports are filled out accurately and completely," says Bob Fabian, head of the Board's Technical Studies Section. "The program is not only relatively easy to use, but it contains many built-in features that check the data supplied by our drillers. In many instances, it will 'flag' wells that fail to meet state well construction standards, which could lead to potential pollution of our groundwater resources." Fabian added that the OWRB has already received more than 100 well logs through the on-line service.

The on-line well log filing program is available only to licensed drillers who have requested a user account. Drillers are required to submit a signature form with a valid e-mail address, and then a user name and personal identification number will be e-mailed to each driller and/or firm. The form may be downloaded from the Board's Web site or requested by mail or telephone.

To access the OWRB's water well search feature, visit the OWRB's Web site at www.owrb.state.ok.us.



Theda Adkisson and Bob Fabian of the Planning and Management Division test the new on-line Well Search Program.

Nance Named Employee of the Quarter

At the September OWRB staff meeting, Leslie Nance of the Financial Assistance Division was recognized as Employee of the Quarter. Providing exemplary customer service, Leslie handles questions about loan requirements. She is known for being extremely efficient and has provided invaluable assistance in the OWRB Accounting Unit. Leslie was also praised for her positive attitude and efforts to improve morale and productivity.



Leslie Nance with Duane Smith, OWRB Executive Director

FLOOD CURRENT



Planning, Partnerships Move Association Forward



*Mike Mathis
State Floodplain Coordinator, OWRB*

As you may know by now, Ken Morris has officially retired from the OWRB. Although Ken will continue to work under contract for the Water Board and retain an important role in state floodplain management activities, I have assumed his duties as Oklahoma's State NFIP Coordinator. As chief of the OWRB's Planning and Management Division, along with my associated involvement with the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association and its members, I know firsthand of the tremendous benefits afforded through this agency's existing partnership with OFMA. Each is made stronger by the other, and both the OWRB and OFMA are more capable of achieving the state's floodplain management goals through this close and critically important working relationship. I look forward to my increased role in strengthening this partnership.

Planning has been key to the OWRB/OFMA partnership and is critical to achieving each entity's specific mission. Through the Board's ongoing strategic planning process, we have determined (and explicitly stated) that the OWRB best serves the State of Oklahoma through the formation of alliances with our many partner agencies and organizations. In this way, we increase responsiveness to our customers, expand our capabilities, reduce costs, and avoid duplication of effort. Without a doubt, one of this agency's most important alliances rests with the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association.

Goals included in OFMA's updated strategic plan, approved at its August meeting, mirror the Water Board's alliance-building approach. Because education and certification of Oklahoma's floodplain managers is a major focus of the organization, OFMA members must continue to

garner support from municipal organizations, the State Legislature, and other groups to implement regular training through the Water Board's Floodplain Management 101 course and other educational tools.

As Oklahoma's non-governmental floodplain management association, OFMA must continue to foster partnerships among key agencies and organizations, such as the Water Board, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Association of Professional Engineers, Oklahoma Association of Emergency Managers, Oklahoma Insurance Department, Oklahoma Association of Insurance Agents, Oklahoma Municipal League, and Oklahoma State Legislature. Such alliances not only provide OFMA with the overall support it requires, but allow access to vast expertise and experience in the flood mitigation and land development community.

These many alliances, which must be constantly nurtured, are vital to promoting local and individual responsibility in flood protection. Working together, the Water Board, OFMA, and our many current and future partners can make Oklahoma a flood-safe place to live.

Morris Retires

Following 26 years of service to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Ken Morris retired September 25. Water Board staff and friends celebrated Morris' achievement during a brief reception held in Oklahoma City.

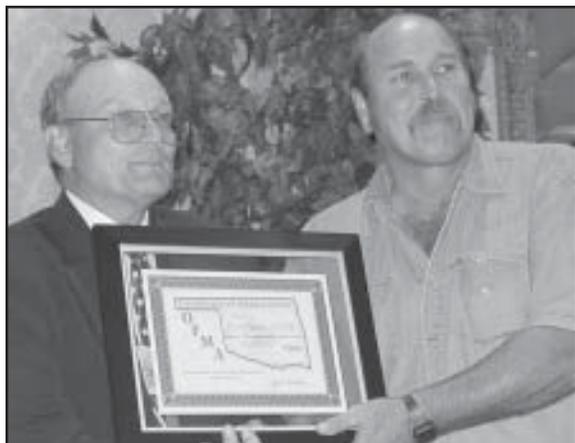
As a member of the agency's Planning and Management Division and the state's official floodplain coordinator, Morris was cited for his personal commitment in making Oklahoma's floodplain management program one of the finest in the nation. Morris was also integral to creation and furtherance of the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association.



Oklahomans Honored at Annual OFMA Meeting

Eight individuals and organizations were honored for their contributions to state floodplain management at the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association (OFMA), held September 21-24 in Oklahoma City. The awards and honorees are listed below:

- **Charles Don Ellison Memorial Award**
Anna Waggoner, City of Woodward
- **Public Official of the Year**
Washington County Floodplain Board
- **Floodplain Manager of the Year Award**
Searles F. (Jick) Grant, Washington County
- **Project Award (Platinum)**
City of Tulsa, Elm Creek/Centennial Park Stormwater Detention Facility
- **Outstanding Recognition**
Connie Dill & Hazard Mitigation Staff of OEM
- **Special Recognition Award**
Kent Wilkins, McAlester
Jim Coffey, City of Bixby
Laureen Gilroy, City of Tulsa
Tom Graham, Davis
David Sprouse, Madill
- **W. Kenneth Morris Honorary Lifetime Membership Award**
Ken Morris
- **Appreciation Award**
OFMA's Regional Representatives:
John Harrington (Region 1)
Nancy Wade (Region 2)
David Sprouse (Region 3)
Tom Graham (Region 4)
Robert Hitt (Region 5)
- **Special FEMA Appreciation Award**
Ken Morris



Madill's David Sprouse (right), past Region 3 Representative, receives OFMA's Appreciation Award from Andy Kincaid at the group's annual meeting in September.



Lynne Stevenson, the state's top floodplain manager of last year, presents the 2003 Floodplain Manager of the Year Award to Jick Grant (right), of the Caney River Conservation District.

NFIP Myths and Facts

Who needs flood insurance? Everyone. And everyone in a participating community of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) can buy flood insurance. Nationwide, more than 18,500 communities have joined the NFIP. In some instances, people have been told that they cannot buy flood insurance because of where they live. To clear up this and other misconceptions about flood insurance, the NFIP has compiled a list of common myths about the Program, and the real facts behind them.

Myth: You can't buy flood insurance if your property has been flooded.

Fact: It doesn't matter how many times your home, apartment, or business has flooded. You are still eligible to purchase flood insurance, provided that your community is participating in the NFIP.

Myth: Only residents of high-risk flood zones need to insure their property.

Fact: Even if you live in an area that is not flood-prone, it is advisable to have flood insurance. Between 25 and 30 percent of the NFIP's claims come from outside of high flood-risk areas. The NFIP's Preferred Risk, available for just over \$100 per year, is designed for residential properties located in low to moderate flood-risk zones.

Myth: Federal flood insurance can only be purchased directly through the NFIP.

Fact: NFIP flood insurance is backed by the federal government and sold through private insurance companies and agents.

*(Information courtesy
Federal Emergency Management Agency)*

United Way Campaign Raises Record Amount

As part of the 2003 United Way State Employee Campaign, OWRB staff members participated in a number of exciting activities. This year, 67 people donated \$7,178, an increase of over 8%.



The OWRB Chili Cookoff winner was Mary Nell Brueggen (far left, with champion skillet). Second and third places went to Tracey Anderson and Mary Schooley. Serving as judges were Miles Tolbert, Secretary of Environment; Oscar Jackson, Director of the Office of Personnel Management; and Gene Whatley, Director of the Oklahoma Rural Water Association.



OWRB Chairman Grady Grandstaff donated \$25 to United Way as the winning bid to smash a pie in Duane Smith's face. Smith had agreed that if the agency reached \$7,000 in donations, he would take a pie in the face.

Day of Caring

OWRB staff members participated in the Day of Caring on October 3rd as part of the Campaign. Participants cleaned floors and cabinets, painted walls, assembled shelves, and planted flowers for the volunteers at the CONTACT Crisis Helpline office in Oklahoma City. CONTACT provides 24-hour emotional support, suicide prevention, crisis intervention, community information, and referral, and all calls to CONTACT are anonymous, confidential, and free.



This year's Day of Caring volunteers included Mary Schooley and Paul Koenig (front); Mike McGaugh, Julie Cunningham, Darla Whitley, Shelly Bacon, Katera Whitaker, Jim Schuelein, Lynda Williamson, and Jerry Barnett (middle); Esther Shaw, Laura Oak, Anita Ray, Rick Wicker, Allyson Childress (back); Matt and Megan Cogburn (not pictured).

Board Director Marks 25th Year

Duane Smith, OWRB Executive Director, was honored at the Board's October meeting for 25 years of service to the agency. Grady Grandstaff, Board Chair, praised Smith for his accomplishments and hard work as director. Smith, a meteorologist, began working for the Water Board as an engineer, and has since held the title of Chief of the Groundwater Division, and Assistant Director.

Smith joins 11 other current OWRB employees who have served the State of Oklahoma for 25 years or more: Mike Melton, Terri Sparks, Jann Hook, Cecil Bearden, Tiger Feng, Rhonda Bowers, Anita Ray, Mike Mathis, Jim Schuelein, Gene Doussett, and Mike McGaugh.



Grady Grandstaff, OWRB Chair, presents a 25-year certificate to Executive Director Duane Smith.



Halloween contest winners Katera Whitaker and daughter

Oklahoma Drought Monitor

Reservoir Storage

Lakes in southwest Oklahoma continue to suffer from critically low levels. Lake storage elsewhere remains generally good, despite a gradual decline statewide. As of November 12, the combined normal conservation pools of 31 selected major federal reservoirs across Oklahoma (see below) are approximately 87.5 percent full, a 1.7 percent decrease from that recorded on October 16, according to information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Tulsa District). Twenty-seven reservoirs have experienced lake level decreases since that time. Twenty-four reservoirs are currently operating at less than full capacity (compared to 21 three weeks ago). Two reservoirs—Lugert-Altus, 15.2 percent; and Tom Steed, only 56 percent—are below 80 percent capacity.

Storage in Selected Oklahoma Lakes & Reservoirs

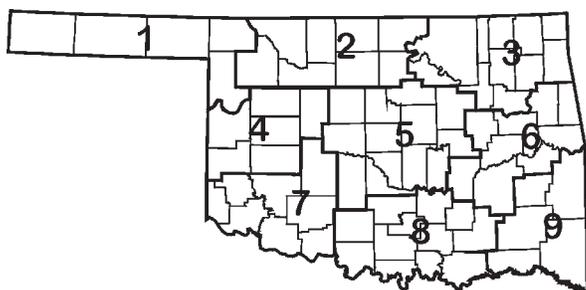
As of November 12, 2003

Climate Division	Conservation Storage (acre-feet)	Present Storage (acre-feet)	Percent of Conservation Storage
North Central	444,015	443,197	99.8
Northeast	3,710,194	3,497,857	94.3
West Central	276,790	243,174	87.9
Central	154,225	141,960	92.0
East Central	2,915,043	2,416,067	82.9
Southwest	301,810	143,200	47.4
South Central	3,078,236	2,631,072	85.5
Southeast	1,485,969	1,300,264	87.5
State Totals	12,366,282	10,816,791	87.5

Drought Indices

According to the latest Palmer Drought Severity Index (November 8, below), no regions in Oklahoma are currently experiencing drought conditions. However, most areas have become somewhat drier within the past few weeks. Eight of Oklahoma's nine climate divisions have undergone PDSI moisture decreases since October 11. The greatest decrease occurred in the Northwest climate division.

The latest monthly Standardized Precipitation Index (through October, below) indicates some long-term dryness in southern, eastern and western Oklahoma. Among the *selected* time periods (3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month SPIs), "very dry" conditions are indicated in the Southeast climate division throughout the last 12 months. "Moderately dry" conditions are indicated in the Southeast, South Central, West Central, East Central and Southwest regions at various times during the past 9- and 12-month periods. Considering longer periods (through six years), Southeast Oklahoma is "very dry" throughout the past 15- and 18-month periods; East Central Oklahoma is "moderately dry" during those two periods.



Palmer Drought Severity Index

Climate Division (#)	Current Status 11/8/2003	Value		Change In Value
		11/8	10/11	
NORTHWEST (1)	NEAR NORMAL	0.42	1.94	-1.52
NORTH CENTRAL (2)	NEAR NORMAL	0.24	1.61	-1.37
NORTHEAST (3)	INCIPIENT MOIST SPELL	0.91	2.04	-1.13
WEST CENTRAL (4)	INCIPIENT DROUGHT	-0.66	0.79	-1.45
CENTRAL (5)	NEAR NORMAL	0.31	1.70	-1.39
EAST CENTRAL (6)	INCIPIENT MOIST SPELL	0.58	1.10	-0.52
SOUTHWEST (7)	INCIPIENT DROUGHT	-0.79	0.37	-1.16
SOUTH CENTRAL (8)	INCIPIENT MOIST SPELL	0.60	0.97	-0.37
SOUTHEAST (9)	NEAR NORMAL	0.01	-0.04	0.05

Standardized Precipitation Index

Through October 2003

	3-Month	6-Month	9-Month	12-Month
NORTHWEST (1)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
NORTH CENTRAL (2)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
NORTHEAST (3)	MODERATELY WET	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
WEST CENTRAL (4)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	MODERATELY DRY
CENTRAL (5)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
EAST CENTRAL (6)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY
SOUTHWEST (7)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	NEAR NORMAL
SOUTH CENTRAL (8)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	MODERATELY DRY
SOUTHEAST (9)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	VERY DRY

Financial Assistance Program Update

Loans/Grants Approved as of November 4, 2003

FAP Loans—283 totaling \$481,890,000

The OWRB's Financial Assistance Program (FAP), created by the State Legislature in 1979, provides loans for water and wastewater system improvements in Oklahoma. The tremendous popularity of the bond loan program is due, in part, to extended payoff periods of up to 30 years at extremely competitive low-interest rates, averaging approximately 4.762 percent since 1986.

CWSRF Loans—148 totaling \$498,165,794

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loan program was created in 1988 to provide a renewable financing source for communities to draw upon for their wastewater infrastructure needs. The CWSRF program is Oklahoma's largest self-supporting wastewater financing effort, providing low-interest loans to communities in need.

DWSRF Loans—32 totaling \$86,026,324

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan program is an initiative of the OWRB and Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to assist municipalities and rural water districts in the construction and improvement of drinking water systems. These projects are often mandated for communities to obtain compliance with increasingly stringent federal standards related to the treatment of drinking water.

REAP Grants—382 totaling \$33,072,389

The Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) Program was created by the State Legislature in 1996. REAP grants, used for water/wastewater system improvements, target primarily rural communities with populations of 7,000 or less, but priority is afforded to those with fewer than 1,750 inhabitants.

Emergency Grants—500 totaling \$29,274,446

OWRB emergency grants, limited to \$100,000, are awarded to correct situations constituting a threat to life, health, and/or property and are an indispensable component of the agency's financial assistance strategy.

Total Loans/Grants—1,345 totaling \$1,128,507,953

Applicants eligible for water/wastewater project financial assistance vary according to the specific program's purpose and requirements, but include towns and other municipalities with proper legal authority, various districts established under Title 82 of Oklahoma Statutes (rural water, master/water conservancy, rural sewage, and irrigation districts), counties, public works authorities, and/or school districts. Applications for agency financial assistance programs are evaluated individually by agency staff. Those meeting specific program requirements are recommended by staff for approval at monthly meetings of the nine-member Water Board.

More information about the OWRB's Financial Assistance Program can be obtained by calling the OWRB at (405) 530-8800.

Grady Grandstaff, *Chairman*; Glenn A. Sharp, *Vice Chairman*; Ervin Mitchell, *Secretary*

Harry Currie, Lonnie L. Farmer, Jack W. Keeley, Richard McDonald, Bill Secrest, Richard C. Sevenoaks

Brian Vance, *Writer/Editor* • Darla Whitley, *Writer/Layout* • Barry Fogerty, *Photography*

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