

# OKLAHOMA Water News



November  
December 2006

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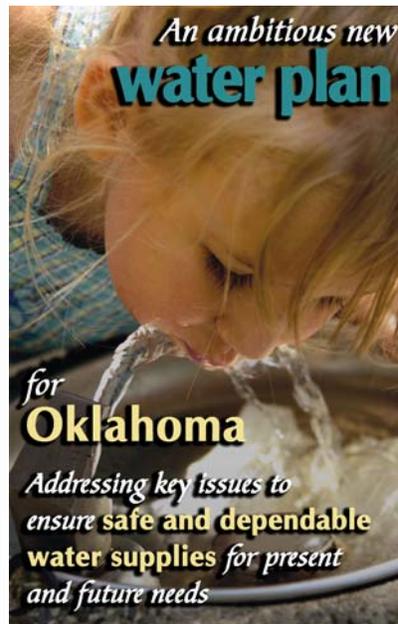
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## Water Plan Endorsed at Annual Conference

The 27th Annual Governor's Water Conference, held in Oklahoma City on November 13-14, attracted hundreds of citizens and water officials who demonstrated bipartisan, widespread support for updating the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan. The Conference was titled "Oklahoma's Water Plan: Charting the Course for Sustainable Growth" and served as the "kick off" event for the Water Plan study.

The first day of the conference featured a Water Planning Symposium with exhibits, presentations, and remarks by key players involved in the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan update. OWRB Chairman Rudy Herrmann opened the second day with a presentation outlining critical water planning issues, followed by presentations and remarks by the state's



foremost water experts. The morning session culminated with comments by Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmonson on current legal issues concerning water.

Special guest speaker Lieutenant Governor Jari Askins made remarks at the Conference luncheon, followed by presentation of Water Pioneer Awards. This year's recipients included the late W. C. Austin and former longtime Water Board member Ervin Mitchell (see page 6). The State legislative update followed featuring Senators Jeff Rabon and Charlie Laster and Representatives Lance Cargill (House Speaker) and Don Armes.

Highlights of the Water Conference are on pages 2-3 of this issue.

*"What do we want Oklahoma to look like in 50 years when it comes to our water resources? Let's try this on for size: aquifer levels that are stable, rivers and lakes that are swimmable and fishable, access for everyone to quality drinking water that meets or exceed [EPA] requirements, compliance at all Oklahoma water and wastewater treatment facilities, sustainable management of water resources by Oklahoma's agricultural industry, a sufficient stability of water resources and infrastructure to support future population growth and broad-based economic development. If we work smart we can get there."*

*Rudy Herrmann,  
OWRB Chairman*

## From the Director

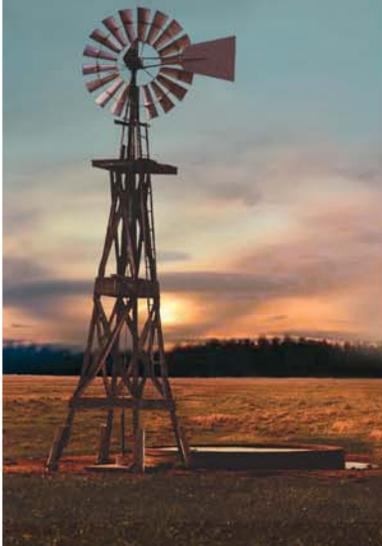
At its December meeting, the Water Resources Board took an important first step that set the state on a course to prepare for Oklahoma's water future. With formal approval of an agreement between the OWRB and Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute (OWRRI), the state will now officially begin soliciting public input and investigating pertinent water issues for a new and unprecedented statewide water plan.

On behalf of the OWRB, over the next few years the OWRRI will lead and facilitate crucial stakeholder participation in the water policy analysis phase of the State Water Plan update project, scheduled for completion by 2011. The Research Institute, which is housed at Oklahoma State University, lends credibility to our planning process as it leads the public input and policy

*(continued on page 3)*



Duane A. Smith, Executive Director  
Oklahoma Water Resources Board



# 2006 Oklahoma Governor's Water Conference



The OWRB and 35 other sponsoring organizations would like to thank all the speakers at the 27th Annual Oklahoma Governor's Water Conference on November 13-14, 2006. Together, your remarks and presentations opened a dialogue on water planning in Oklahoma that will serve as a springboard for the development of Oklahoma's Comprehensive Water Plan over the next several years.

## 2006 CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

*Representative Guy Liebmann*

*Bill Mullican*

*Texas Water Development Board*

*Dr. Will Focht*

*Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute*

*Steve Thompson, Executive Director*

*Oklahoma Dept. of Environmental Quality*

*Trish Weedn, Executive Director*

*Oklahoma Association of Regional Councils*

*Ed Rossman*

*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

*Mike Irlbeck*

*U.S. Bureau of Reclamation*

*Kell Kelly, President*

*SpiritBank of Bristow*

*Danny George*

*Oklahoma Municipal League*

*Terry Peach*

*Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture*

*Ronn Cupp*

*The State Chamber*

*Clay Pope, Executive Director*

*Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts*

*Shaun McGrath*

*Western Governors' Association*

*Dr. Ken Crawford, Director*

*Oklahoma Climatological Survey*

*Miles Tolbert*

*Oklahoma Secretary of the Environment*

*Gary Allison*

*University of Tulsa*

*Larry Rice*

*University of Tulsa*

*Attorney General Drew Edmondson*

*Lieutenant Governor Jari Askins*

*Michele Nellenbach*

*Senate Committee on Environment/Public Works*

*Representative Lance Cargill (House Speaker)*

*Representative Don Armes*

*Senator Charlie Laster*

*Senator Jeff Rabon*

## *From the Director (continued from page 1)*

development component of the planning process. The OWRRRI will host approximately 100 open meetings with the specific objective of engaging citizens and water specialists in open and innovative discussion of water issues, including problems and solutions, to clear the way for a safe and secure water future for Oklahoma.

Concurrent to this activity, the OWRB and the Research Institute will sponsor numerous research projects to answer the state's priority water questions that arise throughout the project. The OWRB will match federal water resources research funds allocated to the OWRRRI each year to support independent research of specific issues that arise throughout Water Plan policy development. Since its establishment in 1965, the OWRRRI has awarded more than \$3 million in research grants to water researchers at universities across Oklahoma and they've trained scores of students in water resources management.

Having the Research Institute lead this challenging and exciting public participation and research effort will result in a Water Plan that is feasible, scientifically sound, and acceptable to Oklahomans from a socio-political standpoint. Stay tuned for notice of meeting dates for the 40 listening sessions that will be held throughout the state beginning this spring.

During the past session, the State Legislature established a funding source for the Water Board to complete the initial phase of Water Plan development and help recapitalize the dwindling Statewide Water Development Fund. One-third of the Gross Production Tax REAP Water Projects Fund, supplemented through a tax levied on both oil and gas production in Oklahoma, is now dedicated to the OWRB for these purposes.

While subject to the uncertainties of future oil/gas production, we've estimated that the tax will generate more than \$2 million annually to support state water planning and financing. That's a nice sum, but it is simply insufficient to cover Oklahoma's projected \$5.4 billion water and wastewater project need, and that's just over the next 20 years. While many projects included in the final Water Plan will reflect those currently identified, there will be additional, currently unforeseen, water and sewer infrastructure projects that will be targeted for implementation within the next 20 to 50 years.

Unfortunately, the amount of money that can be held in the gross production tax account is limited, or capped, and funds generated in excess of that amount are returned to the state's general revenue. During next year's legislative session, the Water Board and other agencies will be promoting the removal of that cap so that more money will be available for Oklahoma's considerable water/sewer infrastructure needs, and especially projects that will be required to provide water service to future generations of Oklahomans.

As always, the Governor's Water Conference in November was a great opportunity to renew friendships and make new acquaintances. Many excellent speakers updated conferees on state and national water issues. Once again, the Conference provided an ideal forum for Oklahoma's water people to discuss, one-on-one, how this state will address future water needs, infrastructure requirements, and rapidly evolving policy and law.

Next year's Water Conference promises to be especially memorable as we will present a special program to observe our state's centennial as well as celebrate the OWRB's 50th year of service to Oklahomans. We'll provide more information about this important event within the next few months.

This is an exciting time for the state and at the OWRB. I hope each of you will participate in the planning effort when the OWRRRI team comes to a town near you!



# Flood Current

What did that  
A car sits flooded out on  
just west of Broken Arrow

## *It will flood again. Are you ready?*



Gavin Brady, OWRB  
State Floodplain Coordinator

As you probably know, past NFIP State Coordinator, Mike Mathis, retired from the OWRB in November. Preceding Mike in that position was Ken Morris, who retired in 2003. As Mike's replacement, I am fortunate to have learned much from two of the most influential and experienced leaders of Oklahoma's floodplain management program. Their past accomplishments make my current job easier. As the new State Floodplain Coordinator, I

obviously have very big shoes to fill. Fortunately, I can draw upon the expertise of OWRB staff and utilize the exemplary leadership of the Oklahoma Floodplain Manager's Association (OFMA) to accomplish the organization's goals and objectives. I began my employment with the OWRB in Oklahoma City in 1982. I transferred to the Tulsa field office soon after the 1984 Memorial Day floods that devastated Tulsa. Since that time, I have worked closely with the NFIP and have coordinated floodplain management-related efforts in the state's northeast region. I look forward to working with you as the new State Coordinator.

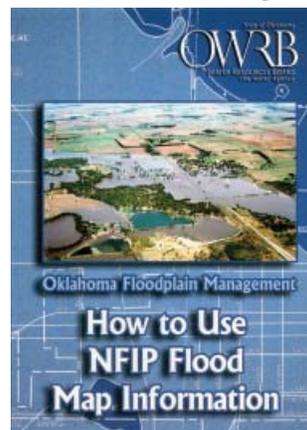
During a recent two-day retreat at the University of Oklahoma, the OFMA Board of Directors and several Committee Chairs met to review our 2006 Strategic Plan and update OFMA's Bylaws and Constitution. OFMA Chairman Lauren Gilroy facilitated the retreat and completed our objectives, even as a snowstorm blanketed the facility and closed the OU campus. You can view the results of the retreat at [www.okflood.org](http://www.okflood.org) and/or read the next BFE Newsletter in February.

As we look to the new year, please mark your calendars for a few important dates. The Floodplain Administrators 101 Workshop dates are February 15, March 14, April 19 and May 15 at the Center for Continuing Education at OU. With Governor Henry's Declaration of March 2007 as Flood Insurance Month, our training staff will take the show on the road and hold workshops in McAlester on March 6, Lawton on March 20, Bartlesville on March 22, and Woodward on March 29. Thanks to our partnership with Joe Remondini and the Corps of Engineers, 202 Workshops will also be held in March at these same locations. Also, a 202 Workshop will be held on March 27 in Oklahoma City at the OWRB office. Plenty

of opportunities to expand your floodplain management knowledge and you can register online at [www.owrb.state.ok.us](http://www.owrb.state.ok.us) or call Rhonda Bowers at 405-530-8800.

With the exception of some flooding in Broken Arrow and Wagoner County, 2006 has been a year when floodplain administrators could take a relatively relaxed approach to floodplain management. This has been a year where your thoughts and activities were more focused on a lack of rainfall rather than too much. I have visited areas in Oklahoma where lake levels are approaching critical stages and I realize floodplain management may not be at the forefront of the minds of city, county, or tribal officials. But as floodplain administrators, we can't forget the value of this program. We are in a position to make a difference. The primary emphasis in establishing the NFIP back in 1968 was to provide flood insurance to flood-prone communities. We need to remember we are also protecting the lives and property of Oklahoma citizens. It will flood again...are you ready?

## *New Training Video Available*



The OWRB is pleased to present "How to Use NFIP Flood Map Information," a video containing recommendations on the use of flood map information, other detailed forms of various flood studies, soil surveys, and historical flood records. The video also presents detailed instructions, primarily geared to floodplain administrators, on determining the base flood elevation (BFE) using a flood profile found in a Flood

Insurance Study, as well as methods for determining an approximate BFE.

The video is available to floodplain administrators free of charge during Floodplain Management classes in 2007. Go to [www.owrb.state.ok.us/hazard/fp/fp\\_workshops.php](http://www.owrb.state.ok.us/hazard/fp/fp_workshops.php) to register.



As the NFIP State Coordinator, the OWRB partners with other state and federal agencies and local governments to prevent and mitigate the catastrophic effects of flooding disasters in Oklahoma. For more information, go to [www.owrb.state.ok.us.hazard/fp/floodplain.php](http://www.owrb.state.ok.us.hazard/fp/floodplain.php) or call (405) 530-8800.

## Sand Springs Receives CRS Award

On December 8, the City of Sand Springs received an award from the Federal Emergency Management Agency commemorating the city's move to Class 6 status under the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System (CRS). The higher rating (the city was formerly Class 9) results in a 20% reduction in flood insurance premiums to Sand Springs citizens who reside in a floodplain (designated "special flood hazard area"). T. J. Davis, Sand Springs Project Administrator, is largely responsible for

implementing community floodplain management activities that exceed federal requirements. Davis previously served as chairman of the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association and also chaired the organization's Professional Development Certification Committee. Nationwide, only 37 communities have received a higher CRS rating than Sand Springs. The City of Tulsa, a Class 2 community, maintains the nation's second highest ranking in the NFIP's point ranking scheme.



Left to right: Mayor Robert L. Walker; Carl Watts, Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VI representative; and T. J. Davis, Project Administrator

### National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System

Class	Premium Reduction in SFHA	#U.S. Communities
1	45%	1
2	40%	1
3	35%	1
4	30%	1
5	25%	33
6	20%	80
7	15%	207
8	10%	422
9	5%	303
10	0%	--

\*Special Flood Hazard Area

## PLEASE JOIN US! Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association Spring Technical Workshop

**Thursday March 1, 2007  
Moore-Norman Technology Center  
4701 12th Ave NW, Moore**

The Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association Spring Workshop offers a unique chance to learn about and view a major river development on the Oklahoma River in Oklahoma City.

The workshop features a bus-and-walking tour of the river development and lock facilities. This tour will provide you with first-hand knowledge of what these developments look like. You also will learn details about the process of evaluating and permitting an urban river development.

The morning training sessions on Community Development processes, Basic Training for Floodplain Administrators, and GIS training, and the afternoon river tour provide a varied and timely array of subjects.

The highlight of the Spring Conference will be the Keynote Address by Governor Brad Henry (schedule permitting).

This workshop is designed for anyone involved with floodplain issues: Floodplain Administrators; planners; engineers; insurance agents; lenders; real estate professionals; elected and appointed officials; local, state, and federal government employees; interested citizens; dam owners; developers; emergency responders; teachers; and students. Workshop provides 6 CECS.

For registration information, visit the OFMA Web site at [www.okflood.org](http://www.okflood.org).

**"A River Runs Through It:  
Build Up or Build Out"**

## 2006 Oklahoma Water Pioneers



OWRB member Mark Nichols, Bill Cunningham (grandson of the late W. C. Austin), and OWRB Executive Director Duane Smith

**W. C. Austin** was an early state lawyer and public servant whom many consider the father of Oklahoma water resources and reclamation. He served two years in the Oklahoma Senate, authoring several important pieces of legislation. Mr. Austin spearheaded a local effort to develop the Altus-Lugert Irrigation Project, which benefited 52,000 acres of dry farm land in Jackson, Greer, and Kiowa Counties. He was appointed chairman of the State Water Resources Committee in 1943 and he led Oklahoma delegations to annual meetings of the National Reclamation Association in order to promote public awareness and interest in water resources management. In 1947, just after his death, Lake Altus-Lugert dam was dedicated and the undertaking was formally renamed the "W. C. Austin Project" in his memory by the 80th U.S. Congress.

**Ervin Mitchell** served on the Oklahoma Water Resources Board for 21 years, under five governors, holding the positions of both Chairman and Secretary. During this time, Ervin earned great respect for his intense interest in and passion for Oklahoma's vital surface and groundwater resources, both as a member of the Board and as a model farmer and rancher. As a member of the Board's Finance Committee, Ervin played an instrumental role in providing financing to hundreds of Oklahoma communities, both rural and urban, to fund vital water and sewer infrastructure through the agency's Financial Assistance Program.



Emma and Ervin Mitchell with Duane Smith

## Study Models Ecological Impacts in Arbuckle-Simpson Streams

A study is now underway to correlate instream flow and ecological impacts in springs, creeks, and rivers that originate in the Arbuckle-Simpson Hydrology Study area. Under a cooperative agreement with OSU, Drs. Bill Fisher and Titus Seilheimer will initially survey field sites to identify specific springs and stream reaches to be studied. Fish and habitat data will then be collected at these sites over the next year to obtain a seasonal picture of changes in stream flow, habitat, and fish populations over multiple life stages (such as larval, juvenile, and adult). This information will be used to model the effects of different steam flows on the amount and quality of available aquatic habitat for a few selected species under different scenarios of water withdrawals.

The least darter (*Etheostoma microperca*) and redspot chub (*Nocomis asper*) have been identified as suitable species for habitat modeling at sites on the Blue River. Suitable species for other sites are currently being determined by studying species collected while surveying sampling sites.

This project was spearheaded by the Arbuckle-Simpson Surface Water Committee, created in 2006 to evaluate surface water needs and impacts to flows. For more information on the Arbuckle-simpson Hydrology Study, go to [www.owrb.state.ok.us](http://www.owrb.state.ok.us) and click on "Arbuckle-Simpson Hydrology Study 2006 Annual Report" under "Featured Links."



At top, redspot chub (*Nocomis asper*), which can grow up to 10 inches, and the least darter (*Etheostoma microperca*), usually smaller than 1.5 inches.

# Drought Update

## Reservoir Storage

As of January 4, the combined normal conservation pools of 31 selected major federal reservoirs across Oklahoma (see below) are approximately 93.3 percent full, a 4.0 percent decrease from that recorded on December 12, according to information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Tulsa District). Three reservoirs have experienced lake level decreases since that time; 19 reservoirs are currently operating at less than full capacity. Eight reservoirs are now below 80 percent capacity.

## Palmer Drought Severity Index

According to the latest Palmer Drought Severity Index (December 30, below), state drought conditions have improved significantly. However, the North Central and Northeast climate divisions remain in "mild drought." None of Oklahoma's nine climate divisions have undergone PDSI moisture decreases since December 9.

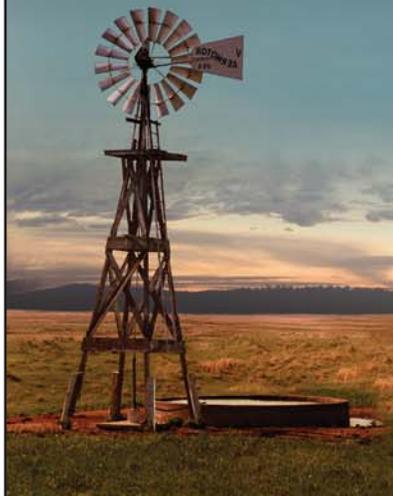
## Standardized Precipitation Index

The latest monthly Standardized Precipitation Index (through December, below) reflects improving moisture conditions throughout Oklahoma. Among the selected time periods (3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month SPIs), "very" dry conditions are present only in North Central Oklahoma during the past 9 to 12 months. The Northeast region is the only other climate division currently experiencing dry ("moderately") conditions.

Storage in Selected Oklahoma Lakes & Reservoirs As of January 4, 2007			
CLIMATE DIVISION	Conservation Storage (acre-feet)	Present Storage (acre-feet)	Percent of Storage (acre-feet)
North Central (2)	494,140	481,848	97.5
Northeast (3)	3,698,902	3,378,398	91.3
West Central (4)	276,790	206,550	74.6
Central (5)	154,225	111,391	72.2
East Central (6)	2,968,683	2,968,683	100.0
Southwest (7)	301,810	130,614	43.3
South Central (8)	2,948,828	2,741,224	93.0
Southeast (9)	1,464,929	1,464,929	100.0
<b>State Totals</b>	<b>12,308,307</b>	<b>11,483,637</b>	<b>93.3</b>

Palmer Drought Severity Index	
CLIMATE DIVISION	Current Status 12/30/2006
Northwest (1)	Unusual Moist Spell
<b>North Central (2)</b>	<b>Mild Drought</b>
<b>Northeast (3)</b>	<b>Mild Drought</b>
West Central (4)	Moist Spell
Central (5)	Incipient Drought
East Central (6)	Moist Spell
Southwest (7)	Moist Spell
South Central (8)	Incipient Moist Spell
Southeast (9)	Unusual Moist Spell

Standardized Precipitation Index Through December 2006				
CLIMATE DIVISION	3-month	6-month	9-month	12-month
Northwest (1)	Very Wet	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Near Normal
<b>North Central (2)</b>	Near Normal	<b>Moderately Dry</b>	<b>Very Dry</b>	<b>Very Dry</b>
<b>Northeast (3)</b>	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal	<b>Moderately Dry</b>
West Central (4)	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal
Central (5)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal
East Central (6)	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal
Southwest (7)	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal
South Central (8)	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal
Southeast (9)	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal



*Rudy Herrmann, Chairman • Mark Nichols, Vice Chairman • Bill Secrest, Secretary  
Ford Drummond • Lonnie Farmer • Ed Fite • Jack W. Keeley • Kenneth K. Knowles • Richard Sevenoaks*

*The mission of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board is to manage and protect the water resources of the state and plan for Oklahoma's long-range water needs in a responsive, innovative, and professional manner to ensure that all Oklahomans have adequate quantities of good water.*



**November-December 2006**

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or call us at (405) 530-8800*

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE**

*Loans & Grants Approved as of December 12, 2006*

**FAP Loans—318 totaling \$619,350,000**

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 very competitive interest rates, averaging approximately 4.762 percent since 1986.

**CWSRF Loans—176 totaling \$622,930,922**

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—65 totaling \$299,406,372**

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—462 totaling \$40,389,038**

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—529 totaling \$31,019,692**

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

**Drought Response Program Grants—3 totaling \$300,000**

Through the OWRB's Drought Response Program, limited funding is available for communities in most dire need during state drought emergencies declared by the Governor. A maximum of \$300,000 is diverted from existing OWRB Emergency Grant funds to establish the Program.

**Total Loans/Grants: 1,553 totaling \$1,613,396,024**

**Estimated Savings: \$505,087,593**

*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.*

*For more information, call 405-530-8800 or go to [www.owrb.state.ok.us/financing](http://www.owrb.state.ok.us/financing).*