

OKLAHOMA Water News

1st Quarter 2008

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OWRB to Review Statewide Stream Water Rights and Use

To comply with and enforce provisions of Oklahoma's water law, as well as enhance the understanding of available water resources in the state, the OWRB is conducting a comprehensive review of stream water permits and individual water usage.

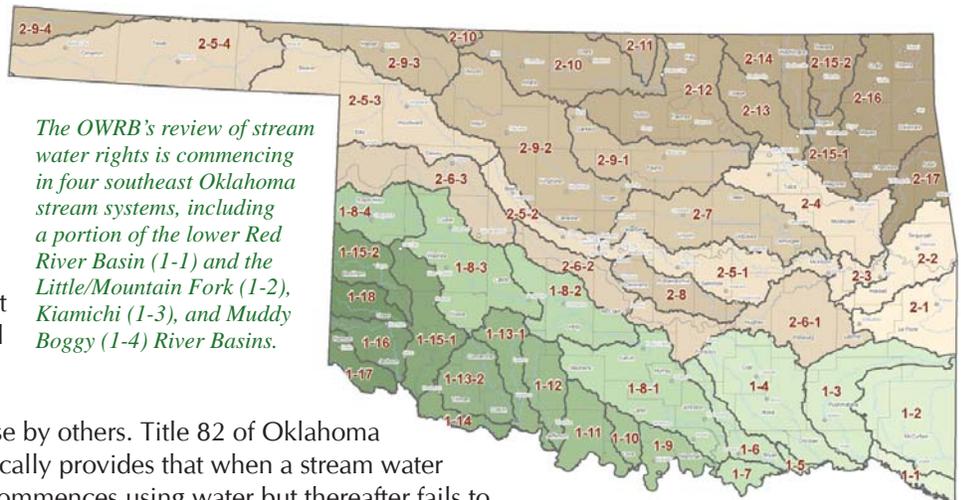
This particular review addresses only stream water because it is considered a public resource while groundwater belongs to the overlying private property owner. This unique difference makes groundwater permit holders subject to a separate set of rules, although both surface and groundwater users are required to submit annual reports disclosing the amount of water used each year.

Oklahoma law requires the OWRB to review stream water rights for nonuse and cancel a water right if the water is not actually placed to beneficial use. This frees

up water for use by others. Title 82 of Oklahoma Statutes specifically provides that when a stream water right holder "commences using water but thereafter fails to beneficially use all or any part of the water... for a period of seven continuous years, the right of use of the unused amount of water... shall be lost and such unused water shall revert to the public..."

In essence, this "use or lose" statute insures that the maximum amount of surface water remains available to prospective water users. Also, as the OWRB and its partners update the state's water

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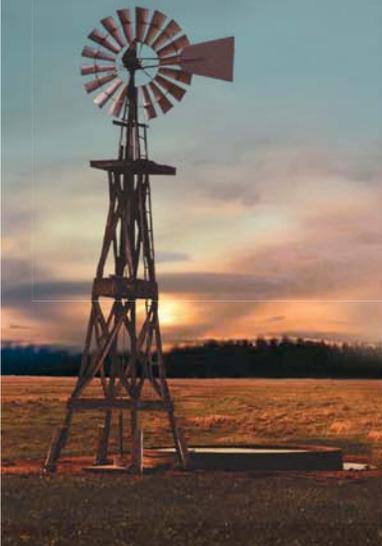
From the Director

Technical studies of Oklahoma's water resources are taking center stage as we enter another major phase of the Water Plan update process. About a dozen studies, many involving issues that dominated discussion at our recent local input meetings, will soon commence to provide water planners with much of the information required to establish water policy for the state's second century. Growing population and increased water demand, intense competition for water and deteriorating infrastructure present serious challenges in how we will balance and manage the use of our water resources. These issues are compounded by our variable climate, vulnerabilities posed by drought and flooding, and other factors. As a result, innovation will be a key component of all Water Plan studies.

(continued on page 2)



Duane A. Smith, Executive Director
Oklahoma Water Resources Board



Water Rights (cont.)

plan, it is imperative that water is not only used in a responsible manner, but that there is an accurate accounting of its use—a precise water budget for Oklahoma. A vital aspect of the ongoing Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan update is a statewide inventory of existing water supply that will allow planners to project future needs. The OWRB is also working to modernize its vast water management database, including more than 2,700 active stream water permits allocating the use of more than 9 trillion gallons of water.

To address the large number of stream water permits effectively, the agency has established a systematic review procedure beginning in the Red River stream system and its sub-basins (OWRB Stream Systems 1-1, 1-2, 1-3 and 1-4) then extending later to permits in the Arkansas River basin. In the coming weeks, the OWRB will begin sending letters to stream water right holders who have used less than the amounts authorized by their water rights. They will be notified

that their right is subject to reduction or cancellation. Each user will be provided with an opportunity to correct water use reports or explain why the water has not been used beneficially. If the agency receives no response, a “show cause” hearing will be scheduled.

During the hearing, the water right holder will be given an opportunity to show that failure to use the water was beyond his or her control. Regardless, if a water right is reduced or forfeited, the user would not be precluded from filing for a future stream water permit.

For information about a specific water right or pending water use application, contact the OWRB’s Planning and Management Division at 405-530-8800. OWRB rules governing stream water rights administration in Oklahoma can be viewed at www.owrb.ok.gov under Rules, Chapter 20. 💧

From the Director (continued from page 1)

Recent technological advances have placed an entirely new and more effective set of water management tools at our disposal. In addition, Oklahoma possesses a uniquely skilled water planning and science community, including the Water Resources Research Institute, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers, Oklahoma Climatological Survey, universities, and engineering firms.

Soon, the OWRB and our partners will initiate the necessary starting point for any water planning effort—an inventory of Oklahoma’s existing water supplies and projections of future needs. Comparing supplies with projected demands will help us to identify areas of the state that are likely to experience water supply shortages or “gaps.” In April, a pilot project will commence to map key water infrastructure in Pontotoc County. Results of that effort will help us demonstrate the viability of a statewide program to map major water conveyance and distribution lines and facilities. A comprehensive water infrastructure database will provide vital information concerning potential regional partnerships and other water supply opportunities.

Other Water Plan studies will involve development of a statewide water allocation model and methodologies to analyze supply gaps in some areas. Two additional studies will assess the interaction between stream and groundwater and provide immediate benefits to the ongoing Arbuckle-Simpson Hydrology Study. In addition, the Climatological Survey will evaluate the possible impacts of climate change on water resources and management in Oklahoma.

Study cooperators will evaluate in-stream flows and their value in sustaining aquatic animals and plants. Water quality issues will also be addressed, such as the mechanism through which phosphorus, a common pollutant, is transported to Oklahoma’s rivers and streams. We will evaluate the use of remote sensing and satellite imagery in monitoring irrigation, especially in western Oklahoma. Water pricing will be studied as will the regionalization of rural water systems, which

involves a sharing of water system infrastructure. Through the Water Plan process and enhanced partnerships with the Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation, the Water Board will step up efforts to solve impending municipal water supply shortages, such as in Bartlesville and Bristow. And, of course, the OWRB continues to modernize its water rights permit system to ensure that we make sound water management decisions.

Through innovation, the OCWP process is blending science, technology, engineering, and related disciplines to establish a secure water future for our citizens. Our final Water Plan will include measures to protect us against drought and related hazards. At the same time, water attracts business, so the Plan will also acknowledge that Oklahoma’s abundant water supplies gives us a tremendous competitive advantage over other states, including our thirsty neighbor to the south. As the Governor and Legislature strive to grow Oklahoma’s economy through research and technology via the EDGE initiative, I believe that water—like energy, education or medicine—must be a cornerstone of this state’s growth.

Throughout this ongoing legislative session, the OWRB and our planning partners will continue to work closely with members of the State Legislature to identify long-term sources of funding that will allow us to implement priority planning projects, including many well in advance of our 2012 Water Plan deadline. At the same time, legislation proposing major changes in water policy should first run the gauntlet of public opinion and expert analysis through our deliberate and carefully designed planning process. Oklahomans who were unable to attend any of our 42 Local Input Meetings can still contribute to **their** Water Plan by telling local legislators and representatives in Washington D.C. about the need for local water supply and water quality projects, or they can attend our Regional Input Meetings, which begin this summer. I urge all Oklahomans to support the Water Plan as well as the water planning process through which we lay the groundwork for our water future. 💧



National Group Endorses Oklahoma's Water Plan

The OWRB and Water Plan update process have received high praise from a well-respected national organization.

On March 11, in its testimony to the Congressional Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment, the Water Resources Coalition—consisting of the National Association of Regional Councils, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Public Works Association and others concerned with the welfare and future of the nation's water and associated infrastructure—called the OCWP update process “a model that should be considered on a national scale for proper water planning.” Furthermore, the Coalition told Subcommittee members that the OCWP is “an excellent example of what the new trend line should be... the future in water resources planning.”

The subject of the Congressional hearing was the federal government's role in mitigating drought conditions in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida.

The Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan, published and continuously updated by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, establishes guidelines for the present and future use of the state's water resources and outlines policy recommendations for water resources management.

Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan Process

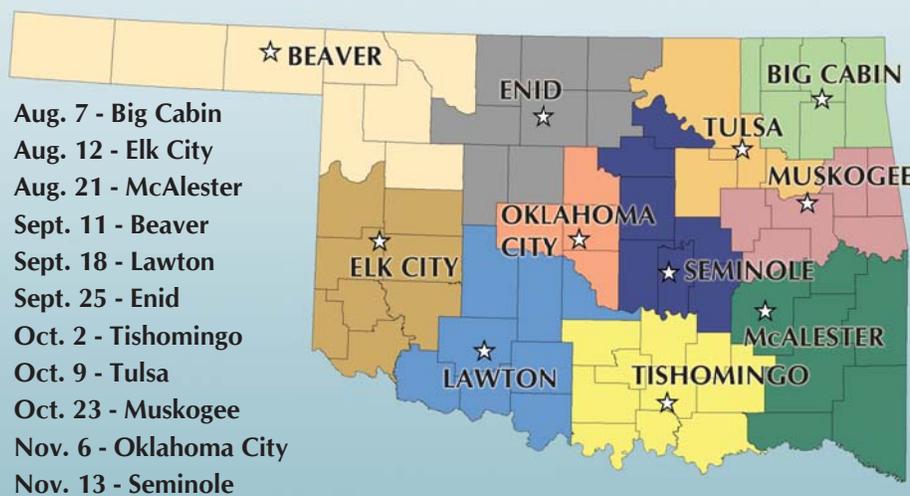


Recent Developments

- OWRB contractors have concluded a pilot project in Pontotoc County to demonstrate the viability of a statewide program to map major water conveyance and distribution lines and facilities. A comprehensive water infrastructure database will provide vital information concerning potential regional partnerships and other water supply opportunities.
- This summer, the OWRB, OWRRI and OU College of Law will host a two-day seminar to better familiarize OCWP Regional Input Meeting participants with Oklahoma's surface and groundwater law. A specific date and location is pending.

Upcoming

The first of eleven OCWP Regional Input Meetings (RIM) will begin in August, 2008. Meeting dates and locations are listed below. For further details, go to waterplan@okstate.edu.



Goals of the OCWP Update

- To provide safe and dependable water supply for all Oklahomans while improving the economy and protecting the environment.
- To provide information so that water providers, policy-makers, and water users can make informed decisions concerning the use and management of Oklahoma's water resources.

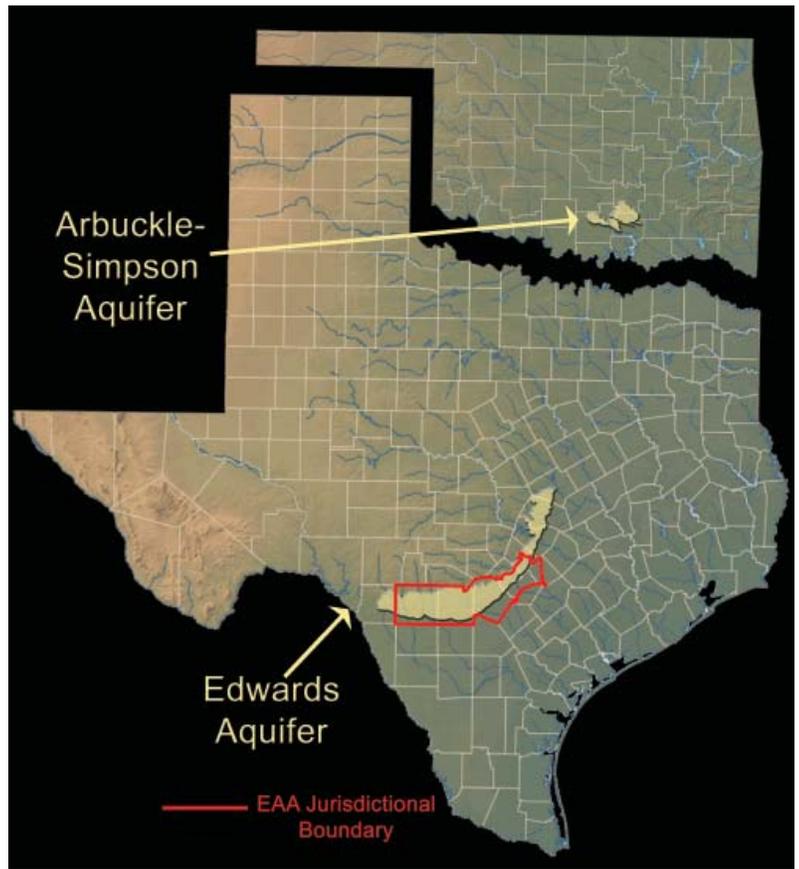
For more information on the OCWP, visit the OWRB's website at www.owrb.ok.gov. For questions and comments concerning policy development and public meetings, contact the OWRRI at 405-744-9994, by e-mail at waterplan@okstate.edu, or go to <http://okwaterplan.info>.

Arbuckle Study Team Visits Edwards Aquifer

The focus of the final year of the Arbuckle-Simpson Hydrology Study is on developing and evaluating various management options. Along with conducting computer simulations, disseminating information, and soliciting input from stakeholders, study participants are considering management strategies utilized for aquifers in other states, such as the Edwards Aquifer in Texas. In February, OWRB staff and Board members, along with various representatives of state and federal agencies, special interest groups, stakeholders, and research teams involved in the Arbuckle-Simpson Study, toured the Edwards Aquifer area near San Antonio and visited with staff of the Texas Water Development Board and Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) to learn about the aquifer and the strategies utilized for its management.

During the two-day meeting and field trip, participants visited area springs and caves while EAA staff provided detailed information. The Edwards and Arbuckle-Simpson aquifers are both designated as “sole source” by the EPA. The aquifers are also geologically similar in that they are comprised of heavily fractured carbonate rock and possess typical karst characteristics, such as large springs, sinkholes, and caves. However, the Edwards has a massive drainage area of approximately 5,400 square miles, where streams and four large rivers—the San Marcos, San Antonio, Guadalupe, and Nueces—lose water to the aquifer as they cross the outcrop, thus recharging the aquifer. Additionally, eight species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act reside in the aquifer or in prolific springs emanating from the aquifer. The aquifer is the primary source of drinking water for approximately two million Texans.

The EAA, a regional groundwater conservation district with the authority to adjudicate and permit groundwater rights and to meter and enforce withdrawals, was created in 1993 by the Texas Legislature, driven by the Endangered Species Act and associated lawsuits. The EAA, funded solely through user fees, receives 60 percent of its annual operating budget of about 10 million dollars from the City of San Antonio. A permitting cap of 572,000 acre-feet per year has been established based on maximum historical use. No new regular water use permits are issued although permit holders can sell or lease their water rights or portions of them. Marketing of these rights can be quite profitable with prices for water reaching up to \$5,500 per acre-foot. Groundwater cannot be transferred out of the conservation district area, and during critical periods, when water levels and spring flows reach a specific trigger point, the EAA restricts groundwater withdrawals. The Authority requires metering of wells and conducts random audits of water use. Credits are awarded for artificial groundwater recharge. ♦



Comparison of Edwards and Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifers

	Edwards	Arbuckle-Simpson
Outcrop Area (square miles)	1,250	500
Subcrop/Confined Area (square miles)	2,100	65
Catchment Area (square miles)	5,400	0
Medium Annual Recharge (acre-feet)	560,900	*128,000
Medium Annual Withdrawal (acre-feet)	321,100	3,800
Common Well Yields (gal/min)	8,000	25-600
Artesian Well Maximum Flow (gal/min)	30,000	**3,000
Largest Spring Mean Annual Flow (cubic ft/sec)	284	***18
Number of Listed Endangered/Threatened Species	8	0
Population Served (Drinking Water Supply)	1,700,000	390,000

*Based on 4.7 inches, from USGS Circular 91. **Vendome Well (current flow is ~500 gpm). ***Byrds Mill Spring.



Edwards Aquifer Authority staff provide tour participants with detailed information on local hydrology, karst processes, dye tracing, and monitoring of endangered species.

Proclamations Stress Flood Season Preparedness

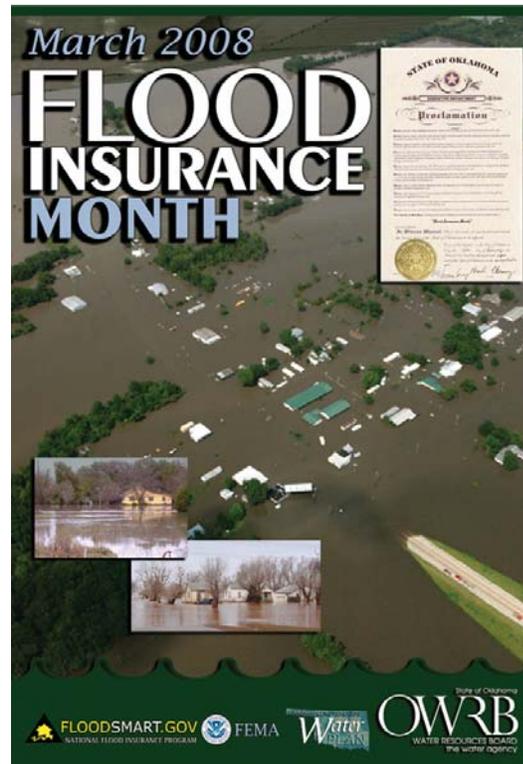
Each year in Oklahoma, thousands of citizens experiencing flood damage lack the protection afforded through readily available flood insurance. To enhance awareness of the availability of federal flood insurance, as well as inform Oklahomans about intelligent floodplain management and development procedures, Governor Brad Henry has designated March as "Flood Insurance Month" in Oklahoma. The Governor's proclamation provides the OWRB, insurance companies, and emergency management organizations with a valuable opportunity to spread the word on the availability of relatively inexpensive flood insurance, which can be purchased from any licensed property insurance agent. Currently, more than 88 percent of homes and businesses in the state that lie in the 100-year floodplain have no flood insurance. With Oklahoma's spring flooding season just around the corner, the timing for "Flood Insurance Month" is prudent.

As a complement to "Flood Insurance Month," Governor Henry has also designated May as "Flood Awareness Month" in Oklahoma. This proclamation will be of tremendous help in educating the public on flood safety procedures and floodplain management techniques. Severe flooding episodes occur in Oklahoma

virtually every year, and Oklahomans need to be aware of the dangers they may face. Almost one-half of all flood-related fatalities occur in vehicles, primarily when people drive into flooded highway dips or low drainage areas at night. As little as six inches of water can cause drivers to lose control of their vehicles, and two feet of water will sweep most cars off the road.

Of the 54 Presidentially-declared disasters in Oklahoma since 1955, 36 have involved flooding, including four just last year. In an effort to mitigate such emergencies, Governor Dewey Bartlett designated the OWRB as the agency to coordinate the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in 1969. The NFIP assists Oklahoma and its 382 member communities by making flood insurance available at affordable rates and helping communities make wise decisions concerning floodplain use. To be eligible for flood insurance, participants must establish a floodplain board, recognize floodplain boundaries, and restrict development in those areas. Such strategies typically result in reduced federal outlays to mitigate flood damages. The OWRB coordinates the NFIP in Oklahoma in a cooperative

partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management, Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association, and Oklahoma Insurance Department. The OWRB also works closely with the Oklahoma Insurance Department (OID) to educate state property/casualty agents and adjusters on NFIP rules and procedures. ♠



2007 Centennial Edition of the Oklahoma Water Atlas

MAIL ORDER FORM

For postage/handling, please enclose a \$6 check, money order, or purchase order payable to "OWRB."

Mail this form to:

OWRB Water Atlas
3800 N. Classen Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73118

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To pick up a free Oklahoma Water Atlas, visit the OWRB in Oklahoma City at 3800 North Classen Blvd or one of four agency branch offices:

Lawton - 601 "C" Avenue, Suite 101, (580) 248-7762

Tulsa - State Agencies Building, 440 S. Houston, Room 2, (918) 581-2924

Current Major State Water Legislation

Below is a list of selected bills introduced during the Second Session of the 50th State Legislature that could impact the Water Resources Board and state water users.

HB 2238—Stream Water Application Amendments:

Prohibits amendments to stream water applications that would change the identity of the applicant without the express written approval of the Water Board. Provides clarification and changes to recently amended statutes relating to the withdrawal of three-year-old pending stream water applications. For pending applications filed after June 2000, it affords the applicant the opportunity to extend the pending application by showing good cause.

HB 2702—OWRB Water Conservation Grant Program:

Creates the Oklahoma Water Conservation Grant Program, administered by the OWRB. Directs the OWRB to develop criteria, establish a competitive proposal process, and solicit proposals for establishment of pilot programs to implement innovative water conservation projects and plans for Oklahoma communities. Contingent on funding availability, the OWRB is authorized to award \$250,000 community assistance grants and \$10,000 education and information grants.

HB 2774—OWRB Recreational Site Swine Setback:

Requires swine feeding operations that apply for a groundwater use permit or amendment from the OWRB to obtain certification from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry that the operation is not within three miles of a nonprofit camp or recreation site.

HB 2775—OWRB Water Portal System: Directs OWRB to establish a water portal system website that serves as the single point of access to state government water-related services and information for the public.

HB 3135—Well Drillers Indemnity Fund:

Increases enforcement of well construction and plugging standards

by increasing individual remediation expenditures from the Indemnity Fund from \$5,000 to \$15,000. Also increases the OWRB's noncompliance penalty related to commercial drilling or plugging of wells and boreholes or installation of pumps from \$500 to \$5000.

HB 3242—Gross Production Tax REAP Water Projects Fund:

Specifies that all monies accruing to the credit of the OWRB Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) Water Projects Fund is appropriated and may be budgeted and expended by the OWRB for the purpose of implementing the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan.

SB 746—Floodplain Management Flexibility Act:

Improves language in the Oklahoma Floodplain Management Act to provide consistency with FEMA regulations. Provides more options and flexibility, especially for small member communities, in creation of local floodplain boards.

SB 1410—OWRB Aquifer Recharge Demonstration Projects:

Directs OWRB, in development of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan, to conduct pilot aquifer recharge projects where most feasible throughout the state. A technical work group consisting of representatives from state and federal environmental agencies would review and consider locations for individual projects.

SB 1627—Water Plan Marginal Water Quality Technical Work Group:

Directs the OWRB, in development of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan, to create a marginal water quality technical work group consisting of state environmental agencies and stakeholder groups. The Group would identify potential sources of marginal quality water and how this

water could be used as an effective and economic source of supply.

SB 1693—Water Sales Taxation Task Force:

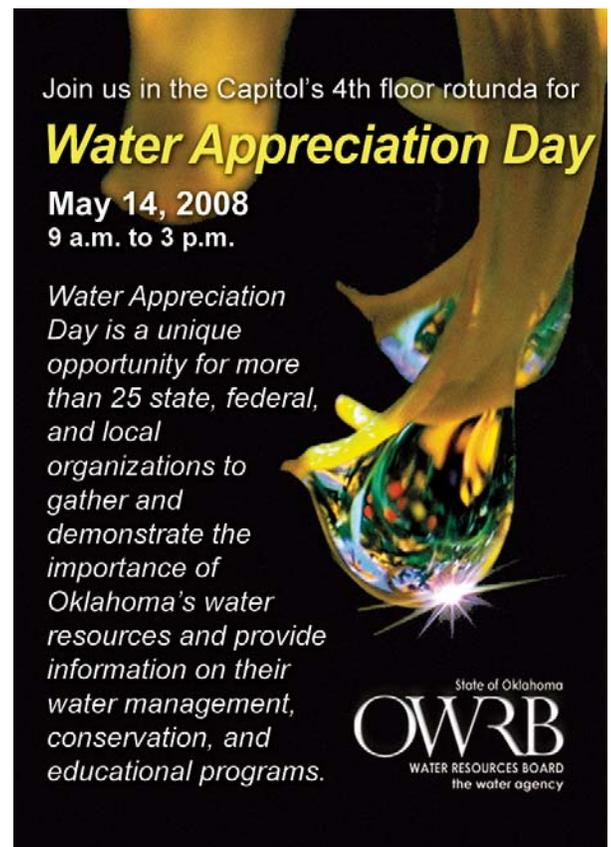
Creates a six-member legislative Task Force on Taxation of Water Sales. The Task Force would be charged with studying issues of taxation of water sales, including review of current statutes and relevant case law, discussions of how various types of tax might be applied to the sale of water, and issues surrounding implementation of such taxes.

SB 2116—Water Sales Compensation:

Requires compensation (i.e., the value of the water taken plus any injury caused by the taking) to the state or political subdivision should a final judgment by the courts mandate the sale, transport or export of water under its control or jurisdiction.

SCR 57—Navigation System Channel Rectification:

Requests the federal government to fully fund operation and maintenance expenditures for the Kerr-McClellan Arkansas River Navigation System as well as funding to deepen and widen the navigation channel. ♦



Join us in the Capitol's 4th floor rotunda for
Water Appreciation Day
May 14, 2008
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Water Appreciation Day is a unique opportunity for more than 25 state, federal, and local organizations to gather and demonstrate the importance of Oklahoma's water resources and provide information on their water management, conservation, and educational programs.

State of Oklahoma
OWRB
 WATER RESOURCES BOARD
 the water agency

Drought Update

Reservoir Storage

As of March 5, six reservoirs (of 31 selected major federal reservoirs across Oklahoma, see right) are operating at less than full capacity, according to information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Tulsa District); five reservoirs have experienced lake level decreases since February 5.

Palmer Drought Severity Index

According to the latest Palmer Drought Severity Index (March 1, bottom), state moisture conditions remain generally good. No climate divisions are currently experiencing drought conditions. None of Oklahoma's nine climate divisions has undergone a PDSI moisture category decrease since February 2.

Standardized Precipitation Index

The latest monthly Standardized Precipitation Index (through February, bottom) reflects some long-term dryness, primarily in the Panhandle and southern Oklahoma. Among the selected time periods (3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month SPIs), the Northwest, South Central, Southeast and East Central regions report dry conditions.



Storage in Selected Oklahoma Lakes & Reservoirs (March 5, 2008)

LAKE	Change in Elevation (feet) 2/5/08-3/5/08	Current Flood Control Storage (acre-feet)
North Central (2)		
Fort Supply	-0.40	225
Great Salt Plains	0.07	3,609
Kaw	-2.82	37,770
Northeast (3)		
Birch	1.78	2,069
Copan	1.77	14,078
Fort Gibson	1.25	84,039
Grand	4.37	-69,081
Hudson	2.78	37,584
Hulah	3.77	22,620
Keystone	0.00	-2,190
Oologah	2.04	135,638
Skiatook	1.45	-15,863
West Central (4)		
Canton	0.19	3,492
Foss	-0.43	-3,474
Central (5)		
Arcadia	1.31	2,090
Heyburn	0.82	1,012
Thunderbird	0.44	5,612
East Central (6)		
Eufaula	3.61	-219,241
Tenkiller	-6.89	80,183
Southwest (7)		
Fort Cobb	-0.09	3,582
Lugert-Altus	1.28	-26,582
Tom Steed	-0.37	-4,578
South Central (8)		
Arbuckle	0.69	-70
McGee Creek	1.50	-16,505
Texoma	-0.02	-37,759
Waurika	0.04	7,028
Southeast (9)		
Broken Bow	8.41	53,907
Hugo	6.88	130,704
Pine Creek	9.16	45,780
Sardis	2.14	36,720
Wister	14.97	180,426

Standardized Precipitation Index (through February 2008)					Palmer Drought Severity Index
CLIMATE DIVISION	3-month	6-month	9-month	12-month	March 1, 2008
Northwest (1)	Near Normal	Moderately Dry	Moderately Dry	Near Normal	Near Normal
North Central (2)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Very Wet	Extremely Wet	Very Moist Spell
Northeast (3)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Moderately Wet	Very Wet	Unusual Moist Spell
West Central (4)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Extremely Wet	Extremely Wet	Very Moist Spell
Central (5)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Extremely Wet	Extremely Wet	Very Moist Spell
East Central (6)	Moderately Dry	Near Normal	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Moist Spell
Southwest (7)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Very Wet	Very Wet	Unusual Moist Spell
South Central (8)	Moderately Dry	Very Dry	Near Normal	Moderately Wet	Near Normal
Southeast (9)	Moderately Dry	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal	Moist Spell

For more drought information, and to obtain updated information on Oklahoma's drought and moisture conditions, go to www.owrb.ok.gov/supply/drought/drought_index.php.

*Mark Nichols, Chairman • Rudy Herrmann, Vice Chairman • Ford Drummond, Secretary
Lonnie Farmer • Ed Fite • Jack W. Keeley • Kenneth K. Knowles • Linda Lambert • 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.



1st Quarter 2008

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FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE

Loans & Grants Approved as of March 11, 2008

FAP Loans—321 totaling \$629,870,000

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—185 totaling \$657,302,629

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—75 totaling \$346,240,542

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—492 totaling \$44,343,088

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—535 totaling \$31,414,017

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: 1,611 totaling \$1,709,470,276

Estimated Savings: \$539,353,553

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.ok.gov/financing.**