

OKLAHOMA Water News

2nd Quarter 2008

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New Red River Compact Rules Apportion Shared Oklahoma-Texas Waters

At its annual meeting on April 22 in Marshall, Texas, the Red River Compact Commission revised its rules to provide protection for southwest Oklahoma water users, including farmers in the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District.

The new rules, which resolve a 20-year controversy between Oklahoma and Texas officials, apply to a section of the federal interstate Compact that dictates apportionment of water in Sweetwater Creek and the North Fork Red River between the two states. Both water sources originate in the Texas Panhandle, where they flow in an eastward path prior to Sweetwater Creek's confluence with the North Fork west of the Oklahoma state line. The North Fork then flows into Oklahoma and jogs south before eventually entering Lugert-Altus Reservoir, the source of water for some 46,000 irrigated acres in the District. At one time, Texas interests had proposed construction of a reservoir on Sweetwater Creek that would have interrupted virtually all of its flow into Oklahoma.

The Compact divides Red River water among the member states—Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana—including seven major streams in the Compact area's western reach where flows are apportioned 60 percent to Texas and 40 percent to Oklahoma. Specific rules pertaining to Sweetwater Creek and North Fork have been in contention since the mid-1980s with Texas arguing that the split should apply geographically just downstream of the two rivers' confluence in Texas, before higher quality Sweetwater Creek water is diluted by that of the lower-quality North Fork. This potential removal of Sweetwater Creek water would lower the quality of North Fork water flowing into the northern arm of Lugert-Altus Reservoir.



The confluence of the North Fork and Red Rivers

(continued on page 2)

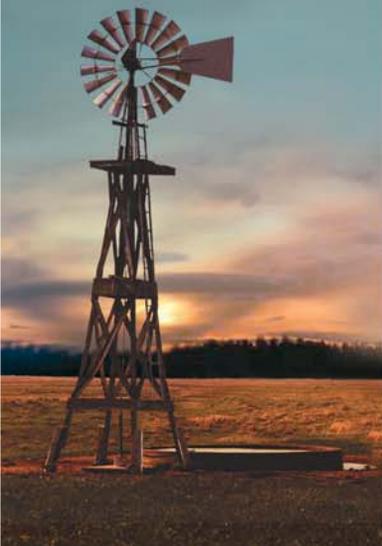
From the Director

Recently, the OWRB was contacted by some special interest groups who stated that the issues targeted for study as part of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan update process are undeserving of attention. The issues receiving scrutiny are identified in the OCWP Draft Programmatic Work Plan, recently finalized and available for review on the OWRB's website. They include (1) conjunctive use or integrated management of stream and groundwater, which involves recognition of the hydrologic connection and its potential relevance in water management programs; (2) consideration of aquifer recharge as a limit in determining groundwater available for allocation and the associated impact on private property rights; and (3) integration of instream flow requirements and/or seasonal stream water availability in the surface water appropriation/permitting process.

(continued on page 3)



*Duane A. Smith, Executive Director
Oklahoma Water Resources Board*



Compact Rules (continued)

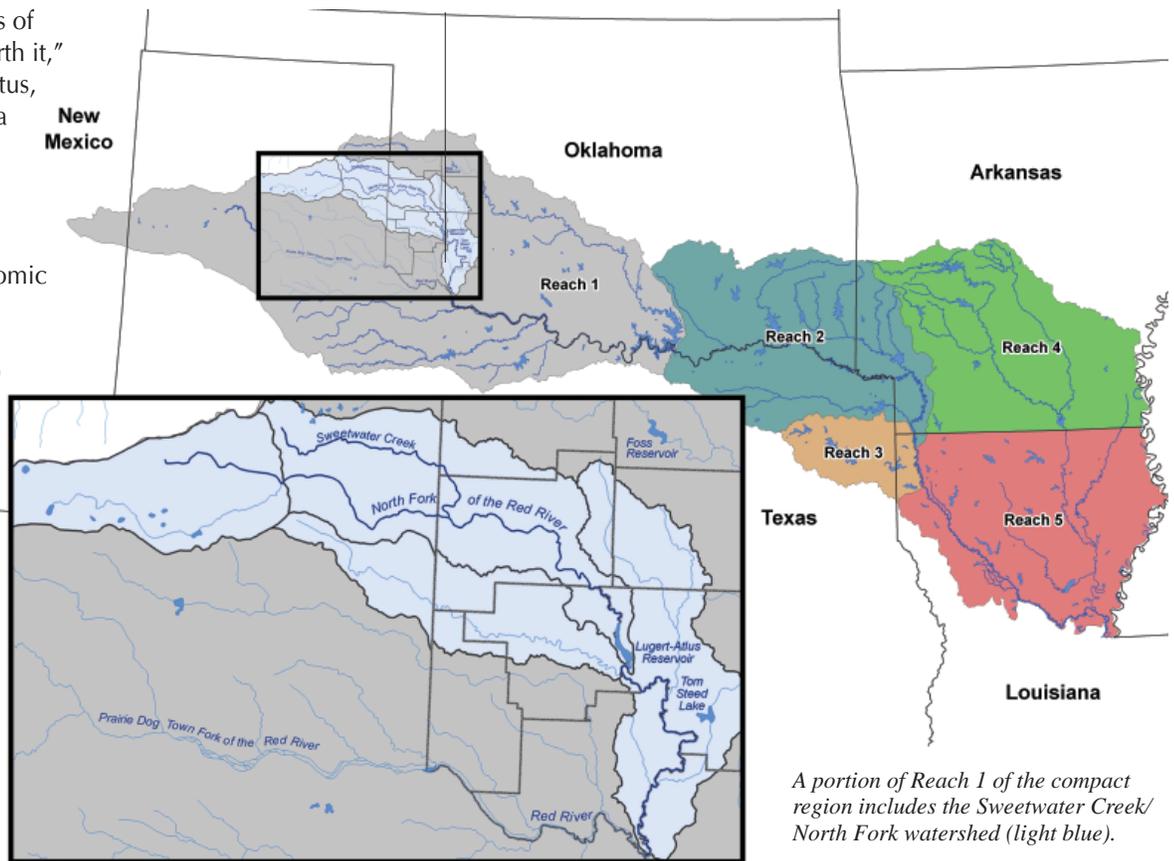
“It took over twenty years of wrangling, but it was worth it,” says Charles Dobbs of Altus, one of the two Oklahoma Commissioners on the Commission. “Protecting Lugert-Altus Irrigation District, which provides critically important economic benefits to southwest Oklahoma and the state in general was integral to negotiations with our Texas counterparts on the Commission,” he explains.

In a typical year, the District produces more than 100,000 bales of cotton, or about one-half of Oklahoma’s total cotton production. This generates some \$45 million in income with a total economic impact of over \$330 million.

“Because the Red River Compact directly impacts the business of the Irrigation District, our members have remained very vocal on this issue,” says Mark Nichols, an Altus cotton grower as well as Chairman of the OWRB. “On behalf of the District, we are extremely pleased at this positive outcome, which in part is due to the District’s strong partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which was not only originally responsible for construction of Lugert-Altus Reservoir but has consistently protected our interests over the years.”

According to Duane Smith, Executive Director of the OWRB and Oklahoma’s other Compact member, credit also goes to Texas officials who were willing to compromise on the issue. “In particular, Texas Commissioner Bill Abney was instrumental in breaking the logjam on the rule change. He helped turn the Texas viewpoint around,” says Smith. “While we are certainly glad the controversy over Sweetwater Creek and the North Fork is behind us, we are now preparing to start discussions with Texas officials on how rules should divide water in Lake Texoma and the Red River itself before it flows into Lake Texoma. We hope the progress we made in Marshall will carry over to this new issue.”

The Red River basin starts in the Texas Panhandle and Western Oklahoma where tributaries flow into the Red River itself. The Red River forms the border between Oklahoma and Texas before flowing downstream to the States of Arkansas and Louisiana south toward the Gulf of Mexico. Interstate stream compacts are unique as law because the U.S. Constitution requires such interstate agreements to be approved by the federal Congress. The original Red River Compact agreement was signed in 1978. The Red River basin covers more than 93,000 square miles. ♦



A portion of Reach 1 of the compact region includes the Sweetwater Creek/ North Fork watershed (light blue).

Water Atlas Receives Awards

The OWRB’s *Oklahoma Water Atlas* has been selected as a recipient of the “Special Achievement in GIS” (SAG) award by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). The OWRB was selected for the honor from over 100,000 users worldwide. ESRI is a world leader in the design and development of geographic information system technology.

The *Water Atlas* was also recognized by the American Libraries Association in their listing of Notable Government Documents for 2007 and was featured in the May 15 issue of *Library Journal*. To recognize this achievement, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries will present the OWRB with a special commendation from Governor Henry at the Board’s July meeting. ♦



A map of Kaw Lake from the Water Atlas

From the Director (continued)

These and other progressive water management subjects mentioned in the OCWP Work Plan are merely those identified for further study, not implementation, and neither the OWRB nor any members of our planning team formally advocate them. However, all deserve additional study. Each issue was specifically raised by citizens during last year's statewide public input meetings. And each has been advocated in previous Oklahoma water plans.

The current OCWP update, due in 2012, and its associated technical and policy studies are building upon enormous success in creating a road map for water policy and the state's future water supply needs. An original 1980 OCWP recommendation is directly responsible for creation of the OWRB's financial assistance program for water and sewer project construction, a program that now boasts more than \$1.7 billion in low-interest loans and grants, benefiting communities and citizens across the state. A permanent statewide water quality data collection and monitoring program was envisioned in the 1995 OCWP, and that vision has become reality. The OWRB's Beneficial Use Monitoring Program is now celebrating its 10-year anniversary. The current update will consider expansion of that program to gain an even more comprehensive assessment of the state's water quality.

Chloride control, recommended in the 1980 and 1995 plans for both the Red and Arkansas River Basins to augment water supply and improve water quality, has received extensive study. A project is now underway to remove chlorides from the Elm Fork of the Red River. Both Water Plans recommended adoption of broad floodplain management legislation, as well as training and education. Today, Oklahoma has a state program that is the envy of the nation, preventing immeasurable property damage. Even Oklahoma's ongoing effort to achieve federal recognition of the OCWP in establishing federal priorities for state water projects was explicitly encouraged in the 1980 Plan.

Similarly, past OCWP recommendations have encouraged the analysis of joint management of stream and groundwater, recognition of instream flows and related environmental/habitat requirements, and development of other innovative strategies to manage, conserve, and protect our invaluable water supplies. To ignore these issues—to narrow the Plan's focus—would be irresponsible. The OCWP must reflect the interests of ALL Oklahomans. The very statutes that created the OWRB in 1957 require us to "develop long-range plans to encourage the conservation, development and utilization of the water resources of the State."

As we determine the sufficiency of Oklahoma's water supplies over the next 50 years, the OWRB and its planning partners must similarly evaluate the state's current water policy and law. Everyone—cities, industries, farmers and ranchers, oil/gas producers, environmentalists, and other water users—deserves a seat at the planning table. But we must work in the spirit of cooperation as we proceed with evaluations that will provide the technical underpinnings of future policy. We must be innovative yet recognize the past accomplishments of state water planners. Most importantly, we must be unafraid of the results or future implications to water management. Sound and fair policy will stand up to thorough evaluation. ♦

Smith Advocates State/Federal Partnerships at WGA Meeting

Duane Smith, OWRB Director and outgoing Western States Water Council Chairman, extolled the virtues of a proposal to collaborate water planning strategies among the states and federal partners at the annual meeting of the Western Governor's Association (WGA), held June 29-July 1 in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The meeting was attended by 11 western governors, the Premiers from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, and guest journalist Tom Brokaw. Below is an excerpt about the meeting that appeared in the July 3 edition of the Casper (Wyoming) Star-Tribune newspaper.

Duane Smith, executive director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, told the governors that fundamental changes need to be made to the mission statements of several federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, in order to make it a priority for these federal agencies to work with states on their water plans.

Currently all federal involvement and planning is done on a project-by-project basis, with no thought to the overall water picture, he said.

Smith urged the governors to push for Congress to make the necessary changes on the federal level.

"We believe this is critically important to the Western states," Smith said. "We're going to change the way the federal government interacts with the states."

Smith helped write the report, which the governors unanimously adopted, titled "Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future." The report calls for improved collaboration among the states and the federal government on water policy, and offers strategies for regionwide planning. ♦

Smith Appointed to National Drinking Water Advisory Council

OWRB Executive Director Duane Smith has been named as the state water management representative to the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC). Smith was officially sworn in at the Council's annual meeting last month in Tucson, Arizona.

The Council consults with and advises U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) leadership on policy issues related to administration of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. The Council also provides an avenue through which EPA establishes vital stakeholder input on drinking water issues from the general public, state and local agencies, and private groups, all of whom are represented on the Council. ♦

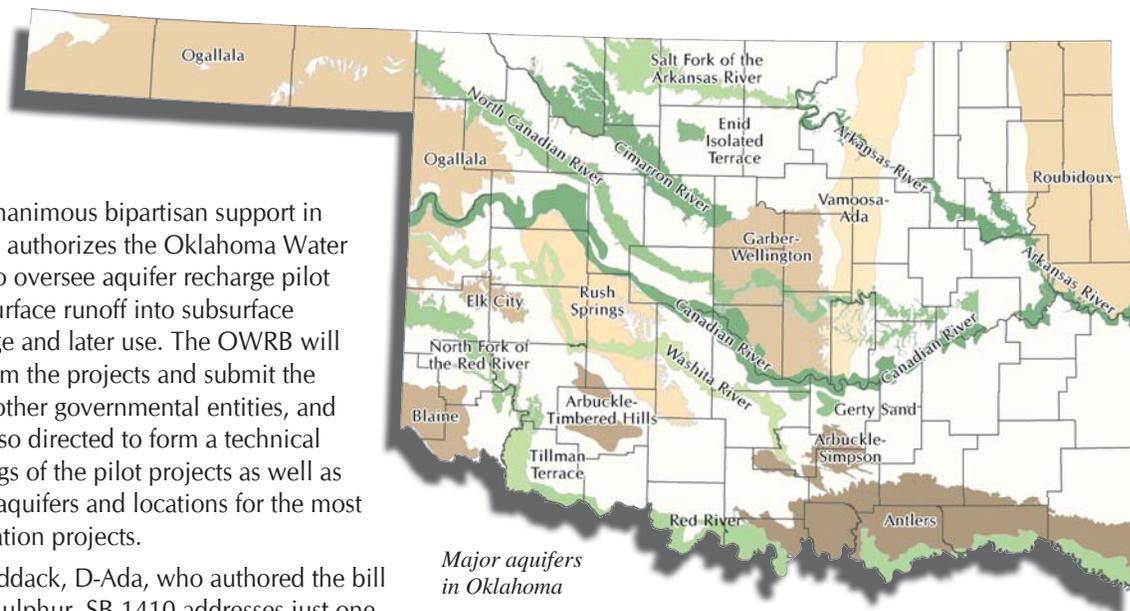
Bill Seeks Technology to Augment State Groundwater Supplies

A bill passed by the State Legislature last month aims to replenish selected underground water supplies throughout Oklahoma.

SB 1410, which received unanimous bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, authorizes the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) to oversee aquifer recharge pilot projects that will channel surface runoff into subsurface cavities and pores for storage and later use. The OWRB will collect and analyze data from the projects and submit the findings to the Legislature, other governmental entities, and the public. The agency is also directed to form a technical workgroup to review findings of the pilot projects as well as assist in selecting potential aquifers and locations for the most feasible recharge demonstration projects.

According to Sen. Susan Paddack, D-Ada, who authored the bill with Rep. Wes Hilliard, D-Sulphur, SB 1410 addresses just one of many future water supply challenges facing Oklahoma. "It's imperative that we aggressively pursue all measures to grow Oklahoma's water supply. In light of population growth, we must maximize our ability to provide water to our citizens as well as increase our resistance to future drought episodes." The bill was signed by Gov. Henry on April 21 and went into effect immediately.

"Both the spirit of the legislation and the implementation of this technology are entirely consistent with the current update of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan, which seeks to establish



Major aquifers in Oklahoma

safe and reliable water supplies for the future of the state and its citizens," says Duane Smith, Executive Director of the OWRB.

"While we strongly advocate additional studies of our aquifers and groundwater basins, especially concerning determinations of their reliability in providing water supply to Oklahomans, we must also investigate technologies, such as artificial recharge, that show promise in augmenting this supply," he points out.

Smith adds that the projects will seek to increase aquifer yields for both public water supply and agricultural use. Work should begin soon, he says. ♦

Caddo County Tops Disaster List

According to a USA Today analysis of federal records, Oklahoma's Caddo County tops the list of America's most disaster-prone counties. Over the past 10 years, Caddo is tied with Monroe County, Florida, as areas experiencing the most federally declared disasters with 13. All of the top 10 disaster-prone counties but one are in Oklahoma or Florida.

"You name it, we've had it," says Larry McDuffey, Caddo County's part-time emergency management chief. Disasters inflicting the County include severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, and winter weather events.

Thirty counties in the nation's unofficial "disaster belt," an area stretching from Florida to Oklahoma, have been declared federal disaster areas at least 10 times over the past 10 years, receiving collective aid of about \$5 billion. Such declarations, originating from a Governor's request and effectuated by the President, activate an array of federal programs that assist in local response and recovery. ♦

Top 10 Disaster-Prone Counties in the U.S.

1. Caddo County, OK
2. Monroe County, FL
3. Canadian County, OK
4. Collier County, FL
5. McClain County, OK
6. Broward County, FL
7. Grady County, OK
8. Volusia County, FL
9. Sullivan County, NY
10. Highlands County, FL

Some content courtesy March 2008, American City & County

Biological Monitoring Team Integral to National Study

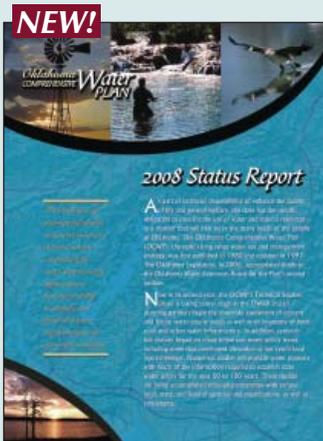
OWRB biological monitoring staff have been given an important role in developing the EPA's "National Rivers and Streams Assessment." This project is a nationwide effort to assess the condition of rivers and streams. Monty Porter, Jason Childress, Josh Bailey, and Chris Nickel of the OWRB's Water Quality Division have provided assistance for the study in various ways, such as development of the study design and sampling protocols through workgroups and committees.

In addition to project development, staff assisted EPA in hosting the national "train the trainer" meeting at Tenkiller State Park. At this meeting, environmental professionals from across the country met in Oklahoma to learn and practice protocols for training crews to perform field sampling for the national project. Since then, these OWRB staff members have provided additional training at Beavers Bend State Park for all study participants in EPA Region 6 (comprised of Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and New Mexico), and will also be assisting EPA Region 7 in training their monitoring participants. ♦



Recent Developments

- Following valuable input and comments from members of the Water Research Advisory Board (WRAB), the final OCWP Programmatic Work Plan is now available on the OWRB's website at www.owrb.ok.gov. The Work Plan serves as a detailed guide for technical studies to be performed over the next few years.
- In June, the Oklahoma Municipal League and Oklahoma Rural Water Association disseminated the OCWP municipal water provider survey, which will be used to discover both future water supply and financial requirements of Oklahoma's water systems. This is one of the first of many data collection efforts conducted as part of the Water Plan's supply/demand analysis.



The 2008 OCWP Status Report is now available online at www.owrb.ok.gov/supply/ocwp/ocwp.php along with the following publications:

- 1980 Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan
- 1995 Update of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan
- 2007 OCWP Status Report



Upcoming

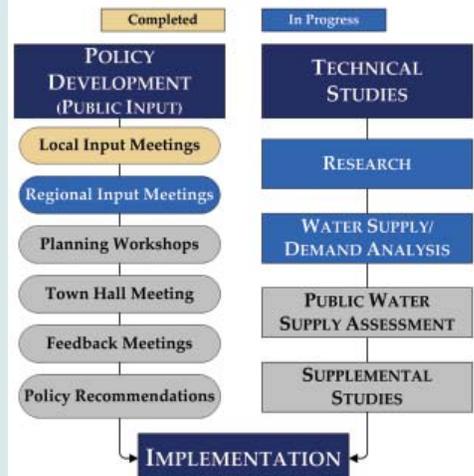
- The OWRB will host a seminar entitled "Basic Oklahoma Water Law" for the 330 Oklahomans selected as Regional Input Meeting participants. The Seminar will be held July 28-29 at the Moore-Norman Technology Center (South Penn Campus). Scheduled topics include the following:
 - ♦ Introduction to Law, Water, and Science
 - ♦ The Law: How It Is Formed and a Roadmap Around
 - ♦ Recreation and Instream Flow
 - ♦ Models of Water Rights
 - ♦ Regulating Water Use in Oklahoma
 - ♦ Federal Agencies and Oklahoma Water
 - ♦ Federal Reserved Rights and Indian Water Rights
 - ♦ Interbasin Transfers

A limited number of additional seats will be available for the public. For registration information, please contact Anissa Maher at (405) 530-8800.

- OCWP Regional Input Meetings (RIM) will begin in August 7 in Big Cabin. For details, go to waterplan@okstate.edu.

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



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>.

Online Licensing Program Created for Drillers

The OWRB has launched a new application that will allow Oklahoma's water well drillers to renew their licenses online. Now, during the biennial renewal period, drilling firms can complete the required renewal form and pay the associated fee, which remains identical to the mail-in charge, at any time, day or night, through the OWRB's website. In addition, drillers can update their firm information and verify credited training hours.

On a related note, in the near future the OWRB will provide the public with an online feature to search for licensed drilling firms in their area and discover specific information related to driller licenses, capabilities, and services. Not only will this free up time for both drillers and OWRB staff, but it will also provide incentive for firms to follow proper drilling techniques and maintain good standing in the community. ♦



29th Annual Governor's Water Conference & 6th Annual OWRRI Water Research Symposium

Sheraton-Reed Conference Center
Midwest City, OK

October 28-30, 2008

Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan
Water Solutions for Oklahoma

Smith Receives Public Service Award

OWRB Executive Director Duane Smith has been honored by the Oklahoma Chapter of the American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) with its Distinguished Public Service Award. The Award was presented during the organization's annual awards luncheon on May 7. ♦



Duane Smith receives the Distinguished Public Service Award from Lathonya Shivers, a representative of the American Society of Public Administration

2007 Centennial Edition of the Oklahoma Water Atlas

MAIL ORDER FORM

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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

Drought Update

Reservoir Storage

As of June 10, four 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); 11 reservoirs have experienced lake level decreases since May 29.

Palmer Drought Severity Index

According to the latest Palmer Drought Severity Index (June 7, bottom), state moisture conditions remain generally good. Only the Northwest/Panhandle climate division is currently experiencing drought conditions.

Standardized Precipitation Index

The latest monthly Standardized Precipitation Index (through May, bottom) reflects long-term dryness in the Oklahoma Panhandle. Among the selected time periods (3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month SPIs), no other regions report dry conditions.



Storage in Selected Oklahoma Lakes & Reservoirs (June 10, 2008)

LAKE	Change in Elevation (feet) 5/29/08-6/10/08	Current Flood Control Storage (acre-feet)
North Central (2)		
Fort Supply	-0.15	-102
Great Salt Plains	-0.26	7,217
Kaw	6.68	309,488
Northeast (3)		
Birch	5.83	9,797
Copan	7.42	87,986
Fort Gibson	9.60	267,844
Grand	0.65	91,640
Hudson	6.38	126,639
Hulah	13.54	132,587
Keystone	3.11	347,396
Oologah	4.14	441,620
Skiatook	4.42	77,008
West Central (4)		
Canton	0.99	11,543
Foss	0.41	4,278
Central (5)		
Arcadia	2.03	4,700
Heyburn	0.88	4,564
Thunderbird	-0.31	8,505
East Central (6)		
Eufaula	0.21	39,813
Tenkiller	-0.82	36,811
Southwest (7)		
Fort Cobb	-0.01	4,259
Lugert-Altus	-0.13	-13,260
Tom Steed	-0.29	-2,132
South Central (8)		
Arbuckle	0.21	2,071
McGee Creek	0.09	8,391
Texoma	0.16	-66,898
Waurika	-0.15	5,778
Southeast (9)		
Broken Bow	-0.79	5,117
Hugo	0.62	19,202
Pine Creek	-0.88	1,801
Sardis	0.04	5,549
Wister	-0.77	6,753

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



2nd Quarter 2008

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FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE

Loans & Grants Approved as of May 14, 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—77 totaling \$357,685,542

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—497 totaling \$44,794,890

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—540 totaling \$31,783,529

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: 1,623 totaling \$1,721,736,590

Estimated Savings: \$544,202,472

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.**