

OKLAHOMA Water News

2nd Quarter 2009

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Water Board Approves First Stimulus Water Projects

At its April meeting, the Oklahoma Water Resources Board approved the first round of state water and wastewater infrastructure stimulus projects funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Communities receiving ARRA grants, combined with OWRB Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loans, are Moore (\$32 million), Tulsa (\$8,375,000), Mustang (\$8,140,000), Harrah (\$1,630,000), and Pawnee (\$1,575,000). In all, \$51,720,000 in combined ARRA and CWSRF funds will be used to underwrite these projects, which will both create jobs and fund improvements to local wastewater treatment and disposal systems.

At the meeting, Secretary of State Susan Savage told Water Board members that the agency had done a "marvelous job" in expeditiously preparing the projects and funds for approval. "These projects will help meet critical needs in Oklahoma as well as add value to people's lives," she said.

Created in 1987 and supported through capitalization grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the CWSRF sustains a low-interest loan program specifically designed to assist communities with municipal wastewater infrastructure construction projects and related pollution control measures. The OWRB will leverage about \$62 million in available federal stimulus funds with loans from the CWSRF as well as the agency's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program,

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Left to right: Mark Nichols, OWRB Chairman; Secretary of State Susan Savage; Robert Shelton, engineer for the City of Tulsa; OWRB Member Richard Sevenoaks; Mayor Tom Briggs, Pawnee; Secretary of Environment J.D. Strong; David Cockrell, Mustang City Manager; Earl Burson, Harrah City Manager; Steve Eddy, Moore City Manager; and OWRB Executive Director Duane Smith.

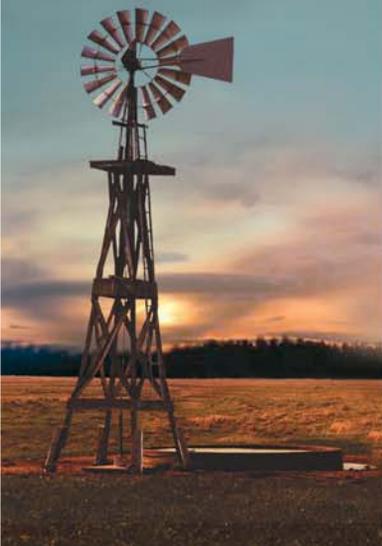
From the Director

As OWRB staff work with our numerous partners in updating the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan (OCWP), it has been particularly interesting and refreshing to witness the gradual disintegration of organizational barriers that have traditionally been detrimental to effective water resource management in Oklahoma. The OCWP process has not only strengthened relationships between citizens and participating federal, state, and local organizations, each bringing unique and integral experience and resources to the table, but it also has fostered entirely new and invaluable partnerships that will help bridge the gap between just talking about progress and actually getting things done.

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



Board Approves First Stimulus Projects (continued)

a sister program that specifically targets water supply system projects, to underwrite at least 50 targeted water and wastewater system projects throughout the state. The DWSRF program is administered cooperatively by the OWRB and Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ).

“Oklahoma should see immediate and quantifiable impacts from these five projects in terms of construction jobs and the ripple effect through the state’s economy. But the long-term benefits in terms of more efficient wastewater treatment and improved water quality in our streams and lakes are almost immeasurable,” says Duane Smith, OWRB Executive Director.

“It’s encouraging that the federal government has chosen to make these special funds available,” Smith adds. “With so many other priorities and limited fiscal resources, Oklahoma communities are often forced to postpone or shelve much-needed water and sewer projects. Communities shouldn’t have to choose between good roads and schools and ensuring safe and dependable water for their citizens.”

For each project, Oklahoma’s program is targeting a 30-percent grant funding level, all from federal ARRA appropriations, with either a CWSRF or DWSRF low-interest loan comprising the remaining 70 percent of the awarded funds. Consistent with the accelerated approach of the federal stimulus funding mechanism, all of Oklahoma’s water and wastewater stimulus money should be obligated and all associated engineering and environmental plans completed by November.

Because the federal government requires a high level of responsibility to guide usage of ARRA money, the OWRB has established an unprecedented financial oversight mechanism for its funding process. “We’re striving not just to meet federal guidelines, but to exceed them,” says Joe Freeman, chief of the OWRB’s Financial Assistance Division.

The agency utilizes a formula-based priority ranking system that objectively rates loan and grant applicants and their

From the Director (continued)

Once the Water Plan moves to full implementation, following its submittal to the State Legislature and Governor early in 2012, it would be a mistake to lose this momentum. To effectuate true change and maximize efficiency, Oklahoma requires a permanent organization to coordinate academic, governmental, and private collaboration in water research and management. Those familiar with the National Weather Center, in Norman, know what such an alliance can accomplish.

Oklahoma faces enormous water management challenges that will require innovative water policy solutions. But first, we must radically improve our understanding of the state’s water resources. “Growing” our water knowledge base will require new and expanded levels

Board Loses Long-Time Member

Lonnie L. Farmer, a 16-year member of the Water Board, passed away on May 12. A fervent advocate of extending service to the many Oklahomans who lack dependable water supply, especially in rural areas, Farmer was a founder and board member of the Oklahoma Rural Water Association. He also drove formation of the Tillman County Development Authority in southwest Oklahoma, where he was a bank president and mayor of Davidson.



Farmer was appointed to the OWRB in 1993 and he represented agricultural water use interests. For his efforts to advance the use and availability of state water supplies, he received the Oklahoma Water Pioneer Award in 1997. ♦

proposed projects by awarding points for various criteria. The OWRB ranks each CWSRF project according to its projected contributions to human health protection, federal Clean Water Act goals, state water quality standards protection, and nonpoint source management. Additional points are awarded to projects in priority or high quality watersheds. The ODEQ prioritizes DWSRF loan applicants according to a variety of factors, but the program primarily targets systems experiencing drinking water system deficiencies that cause noncompliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and thus pose a potential public health risk.

Also in concert with federal ARRA goals and guidance, additional priority points are awarded to “green” infrastructure projects, or those that incorporate water and energy efficiency, stormwater runoff mitigation, or other environmentally innovative activities in Oklahoma. ♦

of collaboration between academic, governmental, and private resources. Through an established center for water research and policy development, Oklahoma would have a focal point for accomplishing initiatives set through the Water Plan and state and federal legislation. This unified approach would put

(continued on page 3)

A member of the Oklahoma House of Representative’s informal water committee, Rep. Colby Schwartz emphasized that while water is often underappreciated, it remains one of the most emotional issues at the State Capitol.

“We often see an ‘It’s ours and we’re going to keep it’ attitude.”

“Interestingly, water issues are rarely split down party lines. It is usually rural vs urban, east vs west.”

“One of the things we take for granted is water. I’ve been to the OCWP meetings and it is obvious that we have to figure out where we are now before we will know where to go.”



Arbuckle-Simpson Meeting Set for August 18 in Ada

On August 18, the OWRB will host an informal public meeting to present results of the Arbuckle-Simpson Hydrology Study and to solicit input on management strategies for the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer. The meeting will be held at the Pontotoc Technology Center in Ada, Oklahoma, from 1 to 6 p.m.

Following an overview of the study by project coordinator Noel Osborn, Scott Christenson with the U.S. Geological Survey will discuss the hydrogeology of the aquifer, how the groundwater flow model was developed, and the results of the management simulations. Derek Smithee, OWRB Water Quality Division Chief, will discuss results of surface water studies regarding the protection of streams and springs. Duane Smith, OWRB Executive Director, will follow with a discussion of possible management strategies of the aquifer and will solicit input from the audience.

The Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer underlies more than 500 square miles in south-central Oklahoma and provides water for municipal, irrigation, mining, fisheries, recreation, and wildlife conservation purposes. The eastern portion of the aquifer provides drinking water to approximately 39,000 people in Ada, Sulphur, and the surrounding area, and was designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a sole-source aquifer. The aquifer is the source of a number of important springs in the region, including Byrds Mill Spring, Ada's primary drinking water source, and springs in the Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Major headwater streams originating in the aquifer, including Blue River, Pennington, Mill, Travertine, Honey, and Hickory Creeks, are sustained throughout the year by groundwater discharge to springs and seeps.

Because of concerns that large-scale withdrawals of groundwater could result in declining flow in streams and

springs, the State Legislature passed Senate Bill 288 in May 2003. The bill imposed a moratorium on the proposed groundwater permits until the Oklahoma Water Resources Board completed a hydrologic investigation of the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer and approves a maximum annual yield that will not reduce the natural flow of water from springs or streams emanating from the aquifer.

The Arbuckle-Simpson Hydrology Study was initiated in October 2003 to obtain information necessary to determine how much water can be withdrawn from the aquifer while protecting springs and streams. A multidisciplinary team of researchers employed several methods to obtain and interpret information on the climate, geology, groundwater, and streamflow. Key to understanding the aquifer was the development of a digital groundwater flow model by the U.S. Geological Survey. The model, which simulates groundwater flow and discharge to streams, was used to estimate the effects of aquifer-scale groundwater withdrawals on streamflow.

After reviewing suggested strategies from the August 18 public meeting and working with stakeholders, OWRB staff will make recommendations to the Board for the maximum annual yield and other management strategies. The Board will then issue a Tentative Order for the maximum annual yield. A formal public hearing on the Tentative Order will be held in the area of the Arbuckle-Simpson Groundwater Basin. Following the formal public hearing, the Board will proceed to issue its Final Order determining the maximum annual yield of the basin.

Registration is free, but space may be limited. Register online at www.owrb.ok.gov or call the OWRB at (405) 530-8800. ♠

From the Director (continued)

Oklahoma in a stronger position to acquire federal funds for research and implementation.

This proposition was also a topic of discussion at the agency's annual management retreat in early June. As usual, staff reviewed agency successes over the past fiscal year, such as maintaining our loan program's AAA rating, and of course, significant progress made in updating the OCWP. We outlined new priorities and we challenged ourselves to take a stronger lead in bringing Oklahomans together to solve important water issues.

We were also honored to have Rep. Colby Schwartz address the OWRB's leadership team. It was invaluable to hear directly from a legislative member in a relatively informal session about his particular water concerns—the issues that are important to him and his constituents. As we've seen through the Water Plan's public input process, this type of insight is incredibly beneficial as we attempt to answer the public's need for long-term supplies of quality water. ♠

Governor's Water Conference & Water Research Symposium

November 3-5, 2009

Understanding Oklahoma Water

Sheraton-Reed Conference Center
Midwest City, Oklahoma

OWRB
Oklahoma Water Resources Board

OCWP
Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan

owri
Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute

New Bill Protects Oklahoma Water Rights

House Bill 1483, sponsored by Rep. Dale DeWitt and signed by Governor Henry, will provide additional protection for Oklahoma's water interests by declaring that no out-of-state water permit shall impair the state of Oklahoma from meeting its obligations under interstate compacts with other states. According to Rep. DeWitt, the bill will ensure we protect Oklahoma's water supply and that our future need for water will take precedence over out-of-state water sales.

OWRB Executive Director Duane Smith agrees: "This bill represents the most consequential water legislation in recent memory in that it gives Oklahoma much greater security in both the current and future use of its surface water resources."

While, in the past, the U.S. Supreme Court has made it clear that it views water as an article of interstate commerce, the courts have also said that a state can restrict the export of water if that water is apportioned to the state through an interstate stream compact, Smith points out. All Oklahoma waters are subject to fair apportionment through four separate federal compacts to which it is a party with neighboring states.

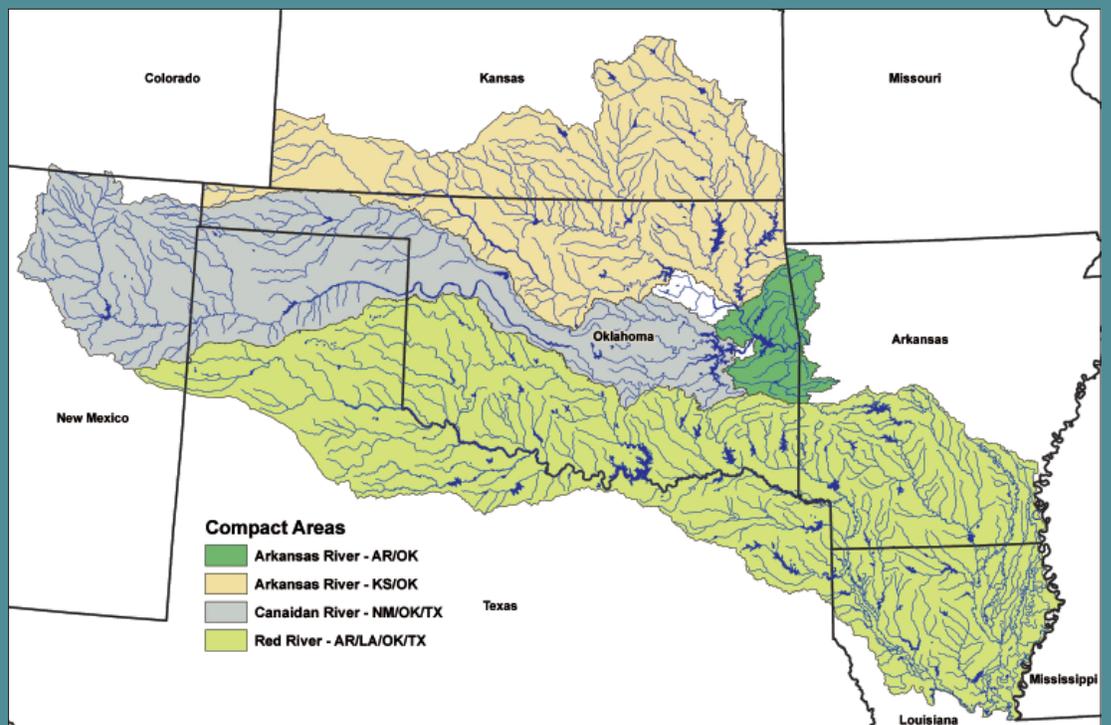
"Through this bill, the State Legislature is utilizing existing interstate agreements, each approved by Congress, to exercise Oklahoma's right to control the use of its water," Smith points out. He adds that the bill does not impact the state's existing moratorium on out of state water transfers and it actually strengthens oversight through requiring legislative approval of water apportioned to Oklahoma through the interstate compacts.

Within the last few years, the OWRB has

received several applications for permits, including from Texas water entities, to use stream water outside the state. The state's current moratorium, set to expire on November 1, 2009, prevents the export or use of water out of state. The moratorium and related statutes have been attacked in litigation before two federal district courts.

Another section of the bill amends current law on the criteria that the Board must review before deciding whether to issue a permit to use stream water. This new language provides additional factors—such as consideration of instate needs and whether the water in question could feasibly be transported to alleviate anticipated water shortages in Oklahoma—that the OWRB would consider prior to approval of an out-of-state water use permit application. In addition, HB 1483 provides a system to review out-of-state permits every 10 years. ♦

Oklahoma Interstate Stream Compacts



To resolve and prevent disputes over waters shared with neighboring states, and to assure the receipt of adequate surface flows/releases from upstream states, Oklahoma participates in four interstate stream compacts: the Arkansas River Compact with Arkansas; the Arkansas River Compact with Kansas; the Red River Compact with Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas; and the Canadian River Compact with New Mexico and Texas.

The OWRB supports the state's compact commissioners in negotiating and administering the interstate agreements that clearly spell out how much water a signatory state is allowed to develop or store on an interstate stream. Generally, the compacts provide a means of working out problems between states in an orderly manner, preventing the likelihood of litigation in most cases.

Although the compacts continue to address problems concerning quantities and equitable development of river waters, annual meetings of the compact commissions deal increasingly with quality and pollution problems. The Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission has begun to address some water quality issues while the Red River Compact Commission has already established a standing environmental committee. ♦



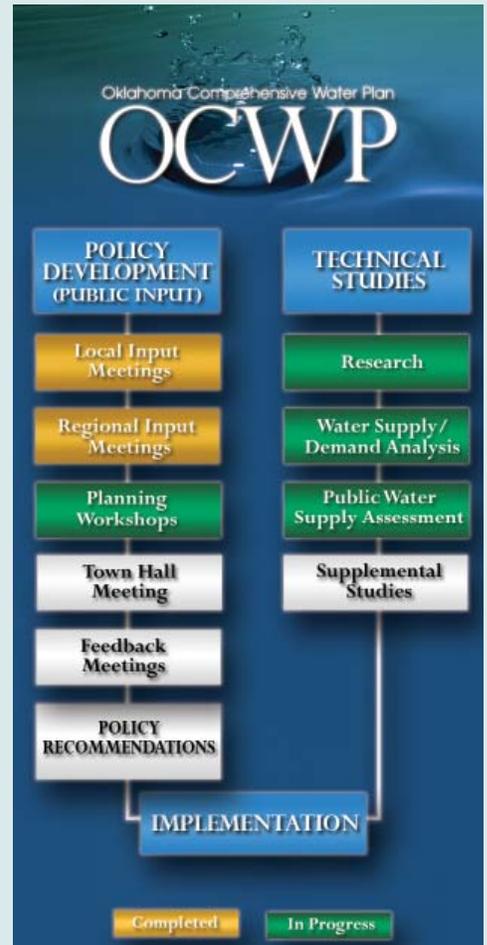
Recent Developments

- The “Basic Water Science Seminar” was held on May 14-15 in Oklahoma City and attended by about 200 OCWP participants (see full article on page 6). Go to <http://okwaterplan.info> for links to presentations and questions/answers brought up by participants at the seminar.
- The first of three Planning Workshops was held on June 4. Workshop discussants will formulate alternative water resource management strategies to address issues that were identified in previously held input meetings.

Below: At the June 4 workshop, Joe Schulte leads the discussion in the Land Use Practices Group regarding balancing supply and demands to meet changing conditions.



Above: Discussants in the Water Availability Group exchange ideas about regional cooperation in developing water management alternatives.



Upcoming

- The final two Planning Workshops will be held on August 14 and October 22 at Metrotech Springlake Campus in Oklahoma City. Each Workshop will be divided into two sessions, a morning session and an afternoon session. The morning session will be from 8 a.m. to noon, and the afternoon session will be from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Both sessions are open to the public; however, seating will be limited.

Water Plan Objectives

1. Characterize demands by water use sector.
2. Identify reliable supplies to meet forecasted demands.
3. Perform technical studies in support of the evaluation of emerging water management issues.
4. Engage comprehensive stakeholder involvement to make recommendations regarding the management of Oklahoma’s water resources.
5. Make “implementable” recommendations regarding the future of water management in Oklahoma based upon technical evaluations and stakeholder input.

Goals of the OCWP Update

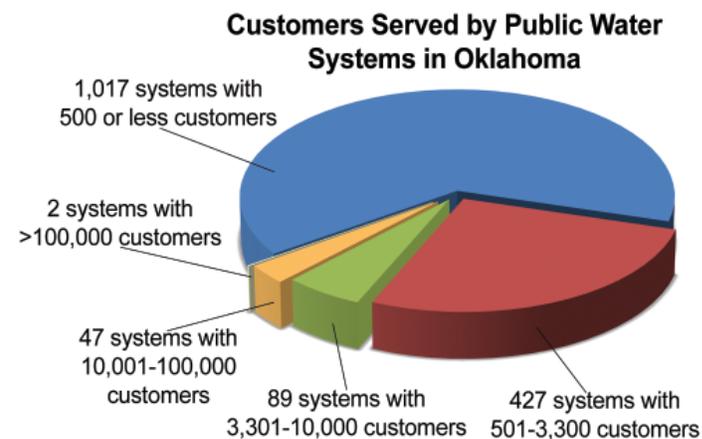
- To provide safe and dependable water supply for all Oklahomans while improving the economy and protecting the environment.
- To provide information so that water providers, policy-makers, and water users can make informed decisions concerning the use and management of Oklahoma’s water resources.

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>.

Small Systems Predominate Service

According to EPA, more than 94 percent of the nation's 156,000 public water systems serve fewer than 3,300 persons. An identical trend is also evident in Oklahoma where 1,444 (more than 91%) of the state's 1,582 public drinking water systems serve less than that number of customers. These relatively small facilities provide water to only 21 percent (751,216) of the total Oklahoma population served by a public system.

Often, small systems face considerable financial and operational challenges in providing drinking water that meets federal standards. Due to their limited customer base, many small water systems lack the expertise and/or required resources to address often complicated and expensive solutions to water treatment and delivery problems. 💧



Science Seminar Enlightens OCWP Participants

On May 14-15, the OWRB hosted a Basic Oklahoma Water Science Seminar for regional planning participants in the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan policy development (public input) process.

Dr. Garey Fox, OSU, presented the "Basics of Hydrology," which included discussion of the terminology used by scientists for classifying and describing the movement of surface water and groundwater through the hydrologic cycle.

Derek Smithee, OWRB, discussed the need for better groundwater quality monitoring, pointing out that groundwater accounts for more than 50% of all water consumed in the state. Stressing the importance of surface water monitoring, Dr. Kim Winton, USGS, discussed the multiple uses for data collected by the 180 stream gages currently operating in Oklahoma, including water quality sampling, flood prediction, drought status, recreation, climate trend analyses, and calculating loads and yields of contaminants.

Dr. Baxter View, OU, discussed the benefits of understanding evapotranspiration—the amount of water that is transported to the atmosphere from land surfaces—in accounting for water use and availability.

Water availability determination was discussed by Bob Fabian, OWRB. The legal differences between groundwater and stream water permitting requirements were outlined with emphasis on the fact that groundwater is considered private property while stream water is considered to be publicly-owned. The amount of groundwater apportioned to a landowner is based upon the amount of land owned and the equal proportionate share that has been determined for the aquifer based on a maximum annual yield determination.



The amount of stream water appropriated to an applicant is dependent upon whether the amount applied for is available for consumption. By infusing hydrologic data, including stream gage, lake evaporation, and lake level data, with permit information, stream water allocation modeling provides the most accurate means for determining available amounts of water. Currently, modeling has been completed on the Blue, Kiamichi, and Muddy Boggy basins through OCWP efforts.

Dr. Ken Crawford, Director of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey, discussed how Oklahoma's water supply is controlled by the natural variability of the state's climate system. With global temperatures on the rise, Oklahoma can expect more record hot weather and less frequent but more intense individual rainfall events, which may lead to more runoff (and pollution from runoff), more flooding, crop damage, increased erosion, and less available fresh water.

An OCWP technical studies update was presented by Camp Dresser McKee, lead engineering firm for the Water Plan. The major technical work elements currently underway include demand projections, supply and gap analysis, and the evaluation and development of supply alternatives. The integration of information regarding physical supply availability, demand forecasts, and public water supplier surveys is allowing water supply gaps to be identified and the development of basin and provider supply plans to be developed.

Other speakers for the day included Dr. Barney Austin, Texas Water Development Board; Dr. Mke Smolen, OSU; Dr. Damian Adams, OSU; Noel Osborn, OWRB; Ben Harding, AMEC Earth & Environmental; and Mike Sughru, OWRB. Presentations can be downloaded at <http://www.owrb.ok.gov/news/news2/waterscienceseminar.php>. 💧

Drought Update

Reservoir Storage

As of June 24, three 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); 27 reservoirs have experienced lake level decreases since May 27.

Palmer Drought Severity Index

According to the latest Palmer Drought Severity Index (June 20, bottom), only one climate division (the Central, "mild drought") is currently experiencing drought conditions. However, four additional regions are classified in "incipient drought."

Standardized Precipitation Index

The latest monthly Standardized Precipitation Index (through May, bottom) indicates near long-term dryness in five climate divisions. Of particular concern is the Northwest region, which is "very dry" over the past six months.



Storage in Selected Oklahoma Lakes & Reservoirs (June 24, 2009)

LAKE	Change in Elevation (feet) 5/27/09-6/24/09	Current Flood Control Storage (acre-feet)
North Central (2)		
Fort Supply	-0.06	75
Great Salt Plains	0.82	13,144
Kaw	-3.57	69,833
Northeast (3)		
Birch	0.09	504
Copan	-9.05	3,632
Fort Gibson	-8.47	23,300
Grand	-1.16	77,019
Hudson	-1.38	41,947
Hulah	-16.18	678
Keystone	-5.07	84,718
Oologah	-9.91	62,830
Skiatook	-0.25	7,002
West Central (4)		
Canton	0.07	79
Foss	-0.50	-1,403
Central (5)		
Arcadia	-0.31	-107
Heyburn	-0.27	20
Thunderbird	-0.42	1,281
East Central (6)		
Eufaula	-1.76	69,151
Tenkiller	-5.17	6,026
Southwest (7)		
Fort Cobb	-0.28	1,557
Lugert-Altus	0.58	-20,832
Tom Steed	-0.53	18,196
South Central (8)		
Arbuckle	-2.44	2,647
McGee Creek	-2.58	4,162
Texoma	-6.93	25,993
Waurika	-2.09	6,608
Southeast (9)		
Broken Bow	15.47	4,825
Hugo	19.55	43,265
Pine Creek	25.43	474
Sardis	2.34	3,468
Wister	18.19	3,038

CLIMATE DIVISION	Standardized Precipitation Index (through May 2009)				Palmer Drought Severity Index
	3-month	6-month	9-month	12-month	June 20, 2009
Northwest (1)	Moderately Dry	Very Dry	Near Normal	Near Normal	Incipient Drought
North Central (2)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Moderately Wet	Moderately Wet	Moist Spell
Northeast (3)	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Near Normal	Moderately Wet	Moist Spell
West Central (4)	Near Normal	Moderately Dry	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal
Central (5)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Moderately Dry	Near Normal	Mild Drought
East Central (6)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal	Incipient Drought
Southwest (7)	Near Normal	Near Normal	Moderately Dry	Near Normal	Incipient Drought
South Central (8)	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Moderately Dry	Near Normal	Near Normal
Southeast (9)	Moderately Wet	Near Normal	Near Normal	Near Normal	Incipient 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.

www.owrb.ok.gov

*Rudy Herrmann, Chairman • Mark Nichols, Vice Chairman • Linda Lambert, Secretary
Ford Drummond • 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 2009

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FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE

Loans & Grants Approved as of June 9, 2009

FAP Loans—321 totaling \$629,750,000

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—196 totaling \$753,740,352

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—86 totaling \$447,560,042

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—525 totaling \$46,394,287

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—548 totaling \$32,469,729

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—2 totaling \$200,000

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: 1,678 totaling \$1,910,114,410

Estimated Savings: \$612,739,492

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.**