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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:

Derek Smithee, Chief
Water Quality Division
Oklahoma Water Resources Board
(405) 530-8800

2002 Water Quality Report Available

A comprehensive report of 2002 water quality data from throughout Oklahoma is now available from the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB). The report, an annual disclosure of detailed physical, chemical, and biological information from 155 lakes and streams collected at approximately 600 sites, is a compilation of data obtained by Water Board staff through the agency's Beneficial Use Monitoring Program (BUMP).

Created in 1998 and directed by the Board's Water Quality Division, the BUMP is Oklahoma's first truly comprehensive water quality monitoring effort. Data provided by the program plays an essential role in the state's water quality management decision-making process by helping to identify waters experiencing impairments as well as the cause of declining water quality. The BUMP is also invaluable to the development and refinement of Oklahoma's Water Quality Standards (also available on the OWRB Web site). Beneficial uses, the backbone of the Water Quality Standards, are assigned to individual lakes, streams, and stream segments based upon the primary benefits derived from those waters by the public.

Water Board monitoring staff sample 99 rivers in the ambient site network annually and all lakes biannually. Each year, 30 to 60 additional sites are monitored specifically to assist other state agencies, providing water use and protection data that is invaluable to decision-makers.

According to Bill Cauthron, manager of the Board's Monitoring Section, BUMP data gathered during 2002 indicate that the major water quality concerns of Oklahoma lakes are dissolved oxygen, pH, and turbidity. Data also indicate that 16 percent of sampled lakes were "hyper-eutrophic," which means they contain an excessive amount of nutrients that could lead to taste and odor problems. In improving order of quality, about 50 percent of sampled lakes were considered eutrophic, 32 percent were mesotrophic, and two percent were oligotrophic (waters relatively low in nutrients). Cauthron adds that all streams sampled within the past two years were suitable for uses related to public and private water supply. Inorganic turbidity, through sediments from runoff, was the primary detriment to fish and wildlife propagation, and bacteria were the major concern for recreation that involves primary body contact with the water. A small number of sampled streams had minor problems associated with dissolved solids and chlorides, thereby limiting irrigation uses.

Interested citizens may obtain a copy of the BUMP report on compact disc, including sampling results for each lake and stream, by contacting the OWRB at 405-530-8800. During the first week of March, the online version of the report will be available on the agency's Web site at www.owrb.state.ok.us

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