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2001 Water Quality Report Available

A comprehensive report of 2001 water quality data from throughout Oklahoma is now available on the Web site of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) at www.owrb.state.ok.us. The report, an annual disclosure of detailed physical, chemical, and biological information from 246 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).

"We are again pleased to present this vital water quality data, which is extremely valuable to local, state, and federal decision-makers. The BUMP effort, in tandem with Oklahoma's Water Quality Standards, is the cornerstone of the state's overall water quality management program," says Derek Smithee, Chief of the OWRB's Water Quality Division.

Oklahoma's BUMP, created in 1999, is directed by the Water Quality Division of the OWRB. A primary goal of the program is to identify waters of the state that are experiencing impairments to their prescribed beneficial uses as well as the cause and source of the declining quality of individual waters. Beneficial uses for state waters—including public and private water supply, fish and wildlife propagation, agriculture, recreation, and navigation—are assigned to streams and stream segments in the Water Quality Standards (also available on the OWRB Web site), based upon the primary benefits derived from those waters by the public.

According to Bill Cauthron, manager of the Board's Monitoring Section, BUMP data gathered during 2001 indicates that the major quality concerns of Oklahoma lakes are dissolved oxygen, pH, and turbidity. Data also indicate that only nine percent of sampled lakes were "hyper-eutrophic," which means they contain an excessive amount of nutrients that could lead to taste and odor problems. Forty-five percent of sampled lakes were considered eutrophic, 40 percent were mesotrophic, and six percent were oligotrophic (waters relatively low in nutrients).

Data indicate that essentially all streams sampled in 2001 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.

Specific information about sampling results for each lake and stream can be found in the online version of the report. Starting this year, to increase data accuracy, BUMP staff will sample all 99 rivers in the ambient site network annually and all lakes biannually. Each year, BUMP staff also monitor 30 to 60 additional sites specifically to assist other state agencies, providing valuable data for decisions related to uses and protection of waters throughout the state.

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