

September 29, 2003

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:

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Canton Lake Water Release Scheduled

At the request of Oklahoma City officials, fellow members of the Canton Lake Advisory Committee have consented to the release of 10,000 acre-feet of water to supplement supply in the City's central Oklahoma lakes.

Marsha Slaughter, Director of Oklahoma City's Water and Wastewater Utilities Department, requested that the water release occur this week, depending upon the timing and amount of regional precipitation; the release will likely continue for 8 to 10 days. The request was considered at a September 29 meeting of the Canton Lake Advisory Committee where members agreed that the proposal was consistent with existing lake policy. Oklahoma City serves on the organization along with representatives of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and recreational interests, including the Canton Lake Association and Oklahoma City Boat Club.

According to Slaughter, the transfer of water from Canton, in which the City owns storage, is necessary to help replenish downstream Lakes Overholser and Hefner, two of Oklahoma City's most important water supplies.

"Recent dry conditions have really taken their toll on our local sources of supply," she pointed out. Slaughter emphasized that, as always, City officials gave serious consideration to the potential impact on Canton Lake recreation prior to making the decision and added that the release could be interrupted should the North Canadian River watershed receive heavy runoff during the 8- to 10-day period. The ongoing release originates from the bottom of Canton dam to preserve dissolved oxygen levels that are so critical to the lake's fishery resources.

The Canton Lake Advisory Committee was originally formed to address the various impacts that future releases could have on recreational and wildlife interests vital to the area's economy in northwest Oklahoma. The Advisory Committee provides Canton-area business owners and citizens who depend upon the lake with a voice in how the lake is managed. A major result of the Committee's efforts was formation of a fair and comprehensive water release plan in 1995 and establishment of a "seasonal pool" operating level to mitigate fluctuations.

"While the existing plan addresses many of the issues and impacts involving the release of Canton waters for use by Oklahoma City, we are constantly striving to improve the plan so that it absolutely minimizes impacts to fishing, waterfowl habitat, boating and other recreational interests, even under the most difficult of circumstances," said Duane Smith, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

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