

Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy

P.O. Box 1061 · Antlers, OK 74523 · www.orwp.org

Board of Directors

Charlette Hearne
President

Rebecca S. Arnold
Vice President
Children's Advocate

Dr. Harvey Arnold
Secretary/Treasurer
Retired
Lawyer/Veterinarian

Jim Cox
Rancher/Educator

Stephanie Quick
Rancher

Jim Robinson
Rancher/Contractor

Dusty Smallwood
Rancher/Educator

Judge Richard E. Branam
Retired District Judge*

Dale Turner
Retired State
Representative

John Medders
County Commissioner
Latimer County*

Monte Montgomery
County Commissioner
Bryan County*

Wayne Sexton
Chairman, Pittsburgh
County Soil Conservation
District*

Don Faulkner
Business Owner

Jimmy George
Business Owner

Chuck Hutchinson
Retired/Landowner

**Titles and organizations'
names for identification
purposes only*

August 19th, 2014

County Board Members,

In 2002, Oklahoma Farm Bureau (OKFB) represented rural interest when it supported SB 1410, the moratorium on interstate water sales. However, OKFB President Tom Buchanan and OKFB lobbyist John Collison have back-tracked on this policy by advocating for the sale of waters in Southeast Oklahoma and this is a matter of great concern to Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy (ORWP).

In an April 4th legislative update posted on OKFB's website, Mr. Collison not only outlines support for the sale of Oklahoma water to Texas, but attacks Oklahomans for holding on to what he calls a 'right to waste' water by saying, "This absolute obsession to waste or hold onto some theory that you own the water and therefore it is your right to waste it is inexcusable."

What Mr. Collison refers to as 'waste' water is, in fact, the "lifeblood" of Southeast Oklahoma's culture. It is WRONG to take away one part of the state's natural landscape, cultural values, and economic resources for the financial gain of another area.

Mr. Collison's 'pipeline-or-waste' approach is an outdated and overly narrow view of water management; it is an approach that is rejected by both common sense and modern science. All of Oklahoma would be better served if he would join us in the 21st Century, where more sustainable approaches to water resource management considers all stakeholders, economies, and cultures that could be affected by any decision.

Further, Mr. Collison's presumption that one set of Oklahoma communities can assert an ownership interest over the resources of other Oklahoma communities, and demand the 'sale' of those resources to Texas to the detriment of our own local future, is as short-sighted as it is inexcusable. No gain can be won by purposeful divisiveness, the cynical attack on one set of Oklahoma communities by a group that appears to represent another set of interests.

Unfortunately, these attacks appear to be the approach of current OKFB administration. For example, in an audio transcript from the August 15th, 2013, Altus City Council Meeting, current OKFB President Tom Buchanan sought support for his agenda stating:

“Now let me step off any more than neck deep which is, we have a willing buyer south of us. They want water. They need water. They are desperate for water. They have money. But I think it’s the right thing to do to pursue that. Now Altus can’t do that, but I think that the state needs to pursue that. I hope that you’d support doing that.” See <http://youtu.be/08BSnNjw4eo>.

This betrayal by OKFB of its members’ interest serves only to divide the OKFB and impede progress on forming realistic, sustainable strategies for our water resource challenges. We applaud the OKFB County Offices and agents that have voiced their concern to OKFB administration.

More recently, ORWP is concerned with OKFB’s stance on SB288 and the Arbuckle-Simpson maximum annual yield (MAY) determination. We support the state’s recognition that the surface and ground waters of the Arbuckle-Simpson area are linked, and that these waters should be managed collectively to ensure a sustainable water supply for future generations of central Oklahomans.

ORWP vehemently opposes the interbasin and out of state water transfers advocated by the OKFB, and their attacks on the scientific determination of yield from the Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer.

Speaking with one voice, we are farmers, we are ranchers, we are educators with a desire to provide Oklahoma’s future generations with sustainable infrastructure so that they, too, can chase their dreams.

Water is life,

Charlette Hearne
President

15,000+ members strong and growing



Preserve and protect our water