()KV IIMES A PUBLICATION OF OKLAHOMANS FOR RESPONSIBLE WATER POLICY

Who are Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy?

By Pennie Embry

They are the people you pass everyday on the street. They might live down the road, or come from nearby towns and farms, from neighboring counties or from across the state. Some are country people; some live in Oklahoma City, others in Tulsa. Ranchers, farmers, lawmakers, tribal leaders, attorneys, teachers, loggers, nurses, office workers and more. They are you.

And those like you — those who work the fields and those who work in high-rise buildings, people from all walks of life - have joined forces to preserve and protect the waters of Oklahoma. They are Oklahoman's for Responsible Water Policy.

How did ORWP begin?

A historical view



ORWP members gathered first in March of 2010 ORWP President Charlette Hearne at a May 6, 2010, water rally.

to halt the sale of the Sardis Lake water storage contract rights to Oklahoma City, and then at a water rally in Durant on May 6. On June 11, many ORWP members drove to Oklahoma City in an attempt to stop the approval of the Sardis contract between the state and Oklahoma City. On July 31, they came together at the Choctaw community center in Antlers to share their stories and push for positive change. Because despite the fact it is said that change comes from the margins, it often also comes from the center, from the diverse cross-section of people that make up the heart of grass-roots groups.

And that diverse cross-section is Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy: a grassroots citizens' group created to protect Oklahoma's water resources, environment and way of life. The group has more

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Mission statement

Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy (ORWP) is a grassroots citizens' organization created to protect Oklahoma's water resources, environment and way of life.

ORWP recognizes the necessity of prudent and reasonable water policy; as such, it is ORWP's mission to preserve and protect economic, agricultural, environmental and other local beneficial uses of all of Oklahoma's pristine water resources

We consider it our obligation to defend the water resources within Oklahoma boundaries-resources that are truly the lifeblood of Oklahoma. In less than a year, ORWP has grown to more than 7,800 members, indicating just how important this issue is to fellow Oklahomans. ORWP embraces the task at hand and urges all citizens concerned with protecting Oklahoma's pristine water resources to join our organization.

State legislators talk water on Lake Eufaula

By Pennie Embry

There was talk of retirement, roads and redistricting, but water issues were also a hot button topic in Eufaula on Feb. 25. Sen. Richard Lerblance and Reps. Ed Cannaday, Brian Renegar and Donnie Condit spoke during a legislative luncheon sponsored by the Eufaula Chamber of Commerce, the Lake Eufaula Association and Save Our Water Lake Eufaula, and both lawmakers and locals voiced concern about the future of Oklahoma's water.

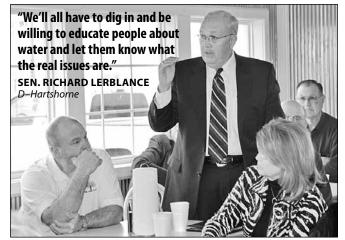
When Dist. 17 Rep. Renegar took the floor, it was to discuss legislative oversight of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. This session, Renegar sponsored HB 1336, a bill requiring the OWRB to have legislative approval before issuing any water permits for more than 25,000 acre-feet. Renegar was told by Agricultur-

al Committee Chair Phil Richardson that it was unlikely the bill would even be heard in front of committee.

"His explanation was, 'No, we're going to wait and see what that comprehensive water study does and what the Governor wants to do," Renegar said.

"I told him this bill is nothing more than giving us some oversight over the water resources board

because right now they have a free hand. They could come down to Lake Eufaula or any other lake and they could permit as much water as they wanted to. And guess what? We don't have anybody from the



Southeastern part of the state that sits on the board and helps protect us."

Another water issue that concerns



Surface water and ground water in Oklahoma

By Debbie Leo

Oklahoma's waters are many and varied throughout the state. Remember learning about the "Dust Bowl" years? Those years have since come and gone from Oklahoma because of the due diligence and forward thinking of the Federal Government and Army Corps of Engineers.

Surface waters and ground waters differ in two ways. **Surface waters** are "run-off" waters that are collected from rain or snow from the mountains, streams and creeks and remain on the surface of the earth. Ground waters are the waters trapped underground by rock formations; there are layers of varying rock strata that hold the waters deep underground in lake, pool or stream formations. These formations were created millions of years ago and were filled throughout the ages by ice and rains from above. They are ancient waters and much more difficult to reclaim.

The state of Oklahoma has been a shining example of what can be done to conserve and store water throughout the state for its people and wildlife. The surface waters of Oklahoma have been collected and preserved through the years because of thoughtful management. The flows of surface rivers and streams into large, numerous reservoirs across the state provide us with our water resources. These surface waters help to keep the state's recreation, municipal, and industrial prosperity alive and well. This system of water storage has helped to alleviate the "dust bowl" scenario in Oklahoma.

The ground water is "reclaimed" or "mined" water , obtained by drilling into the rock strata to withdraw the water and bring it to the surface. These waters, drawn out from wells drilled into the naturally stored underground reservoirs, might or *might not* be recharged or refilled over time. Underground waters can, theoretically, recharge through underground streams or by *percolation* from surface waters back through the sub soils at the surface. Ground water recharge is determined by soil sampling and testing the surrounding soils for percolation rates. This type of water reclamation or "mining" is the most widely used form of water distribution throughout the Great Plains.

Southwestern, Northwestern, and parts of Central Oklahoma rely mostly on the ground water reserves for drinking, municipal and industrial use, whereas Southeastern and Northeastern Oklahoma have access to surface water reservoirs for the majority of their water usage. If you have a well, then you use the ground water that lies under your property. The State of Oklahoma decides how the waters of Oklahoma are to be used and how we, as individuals, are permitted to use the water for our daily use. It is up to all of us, through our election process, to ensure that all Oklahomans maintain our rights to use these waters, first and foremost. We all have a vested interest in how we care for, maintain and enjoy the waters of Oklahoma. Through education and actively participating in the decisionmaking process at the state and national levels, we can ensure that we, our children and their children will have enough water for our futures. The future of Oklahoma is in our hands.

LEGISLATORS

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Renegar is the fact that so much emphasis is being given to the state's comprehensive water plan, several years and millions of dollars in the making. And why does this bother him?

"Because this is not a comprehensive water study, that's a misnomer," Renegar said. "It's a political water study. We have spent maybe six or seven million dollars on this plan. But just because you spent a massive amount of money on it doesn't give it credibility.

Not only does the multi-year and multimillion dollar plan not place current or future dollar amounts on the value of water, Renegar said, it also places little or no emphasis on the relation between water and recreational dollars, a vital part of the economy of Southeastern Oklahoma.

"When these meetings to present this plan start being held in the different areas, folks need to show up," Renegar said. "Those that live around lakes and care anything about lake levels need to keep hammering them and asking them why they didn't include recreational use in the plan, why they don't even know the value of an acre-foot of water."

Water questions, water answers

When it came time for constituents to have their say, two water questions seemed to be at the tip of everyone's tongue:

When will Southeastern Oklahoma get a representative on the state water board? One member of the water

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"All the water groups in the state should start sending letters quote to the legislature telling them we want more control over our water." **REP. BRIAN RENEGAR** D-McAlester

board will be leaving this year, Renegar said. He urged those present to write letters to Gov. Fallin, who appoints OWRB members, asking for the new representative to be selected from Southeastern Oklahoma.

Since no substantial water bills even made it through committee this session, what can the average person do to make sure water bills are heard

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and even passed next year? "You who live in McIntosh County or Pittsburg County or any county where water needs to be protected, you need to call everyone you know across the entire state and get their senators and their representatives to see what the issues are," said District 7 Sen. Lerblance. There will be some people in Oklahoma who don't understand water issues and want to move water from one part of the state to another, and education will play a key role in solving that problem, Lerblance said. "So it'll be push comes to shove, and we'll all have to dig in and be willing to educate people about water and let them know what the real issues are."

"All the water groups in the state should start sending letters to the legislature telling them we want more control over our water," Renegar added. "All the bills that weren't heard this year will be alive for next year." Renegar said he was willing to ask someone in leadership to take up HB 1336his bill giving the legislature some oversight of the OWRB-and file it under their own name.

"I don't care who gets credit for it, it just needs to be passed," Renegar said. "We need to be able to control our water, folks."

UPDATE FROM THE CAPITOL

By Rep. Brian Renegar

Fellow ORWP members: Neither one of my water bills have been heard in committee. The deadline was March 4 for bills to make it out of committee. I approached Rep. Phil Richardson, the chair of Aq-Environment and Wildlife, and asked him if my bills would be heard. He stated that he wasn't going to hear any water bills until we receive the comprehensive water plan (CWP), and he also wanted to see what Gov. Mary Fallin wanted to do on water.

The CWP won't be given to the legislature until this fall.

Last week in caucus, Jeri

Fleming, project manager for the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute, told us the CWP is on schedule. She informed

us of the feedback and implementation meetings, dates and locations. I urge all members to attend those meetings and ask questions about what the plan does and does not do.

J. D. Strong, the Director of

the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, followed me to my office after Fleming spoke because he knew I had numerous questions about the water plan that

I didn't have time to ask in the meeting — and I did. I asked him what value the water plan had placed

on an acre/foot of water, and his response was that was not ad-

dressed in the water plan study. He also stated the value of water is so wide ranging because it is based on what a group is willing to pay. I also asked Director Strong if the CWP did an

ecological study of the removal of a large amount of water flowing into Red River from the Kiamichi Basin, and the effect of the salinity of the river. He said the CWP

didn't do an ecological study and that the OWRB would do that study before permitting water from the Kiamichi Basin. We need to hold his feet to the fire on that explanation.

I urge all members to ask the same questions and more at these area meetings so that the responses of those in charge of the plan will be public record. Also, I urge members to ask this: if large volumes of water are removed from a particular basin, will any revenue come back to those basins?

I am fearful that everyone up here at the Capitol, including the Governor, is going to "hang their hat" on the state's comprehensive water study. Big Mistake!



WHO ARE WE?

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than 7,800 registered members representing every zip code in Oklahoma. Currently, ORWP's primary focus is on Sardis Lake, located in Southeastern Oklahoma. Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board have contracted for the transfer of almost 90 percent of the annually available water from Sardis Lake to Oklahoma City, a transfer that could effectively destroy the local environment and economy.

Although the group is relatively new — it was formed last spring as the state water board and Oklahoma City moved to acquire control of Sardis Lake — many of its members have been involved in Oklahoma's water wars for decades.

Meet ORWP President Charlette Hearne

One of those members is McCurtain County resident Charlette Hearne, president of Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy. Her history of working long hours to protect the waters of Oklahoma stretches across multiple counties, watersheds and years.

"It started when my husband and I would come down here skiing in Broken Bow Lake," Hearne said. "The lake was totally pristine, so clear you could read the fine print on your skis. And that lake water was wonderful, almost drinkable water."

The land around Broken Bow Lake is fragile, Hearne said, with no homes or business along its shores. Those shores are protected by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers zoning restrictions. Twenty years ago, a commercial group wanting to build a water park on Broken Bow Lake challenged the Corps zoning restrictions. Hearne and other water activists took on that commercial group.

"Had those Corps zoning laws been changed for Broken Bow Lake, it would have been precedent setting and could have changed Corps zoning of protected shorelines all across the United States," she said.

But through a court hearing, water activists were able to stop the changes. Shortly afterwards, Hearne joined the Southern Oklahoma Water Alliance, a group developed to stop the out of state sale of water to Texas. Last spring, she became one of the founding members of Oklahoman's for Responsible Water Policy. Hearne was initially chosen as a board member and later was selected by the board to serve as the group's president.

More than anything else, Hearne said, ORWP is about proper water management. "The state and the Water Resources Board need to stop making decisions

about moving water, or taking water, especially when they keep saying they won't need that water for 20 or 30 years. We need — and clearly by the state's own admission, we have the time - to create a scientific comprehensive water plan. We need true scientific studies of the environment along the Kiamichi River. Where are the environmental impact studies? What

we have now is a politi-

cal study, lots of talk, talk, talk without the science. Scientific studies benefit all Oklahomans. Political studies benefit those in charge of the study."

Hearne and other ORWP members are frustrated that the state is not listening to the citizens of Southeastern Oklahoma when it comes to making water policy that affects the region. Not a single representative from Southeastern Oklahoma, the area with most of the state's water, sits on the state water board. "This is not just about Sardis," Hearne pointed out. "What's happening at Sardis can happen to any lake in Oklahoma. Citizens who live in the Kiamichi River basin, who understand the importance of proper water

TIMES

management, have no say in what happens to our water."

ORWP board member Chuck Hutchinson

In 2007, OU President and former Gov. David Boren selected Danney Goble's "Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State" as a book that inspired him. He said the book had been important to his understating of Oklahoma. Oklahoma's laws were the product of the Progressive era that coincided with the pioneering period of the state, Boren said, adding, "That is why Oklahoma's government, perhaps more than any other state, reflects unbounded confidence in the wisdom of the average person. It gives

> an unusual amount of the power to the people themselves ..."

Chuck Hutchinson, an ORWP board member and former rancher who lives in Clayton, has a long history with the government's protecting and not protecting the power of the people. He sees no evidence that the state or the Water Resources Board has any confidence in his wisdom, or the wisdom of those

who live near the water.

Hutchinson has been fighting various government entities over Sardis Lake since 1974, when federal officials first began buying up land in Pushmataha County to create the reservoir. It was during that time he and his father were forced to sell their ranches.

"My father had owned his ranch, a small ranch of 340 acres, since 1943," Hutchinson said. "He was in his 70s. He didn't want to leave." Chuck Hutchinson added that he had owned his 240 acres since 1960. Many landowners who conceded the necessity of the lake didn't realize they had the legal power to negotiate the price of their land with the government, and, under fear of being taken to court, sold their land for far less than what it was worth. Hutchinson hired a lawyer and appraisers and was able to get the government to pay him 40 percent more than he was initially offered for his land.

But the trouble did not end when the land was sold. Many of those who lost farms to the lake couldn't find land for sale near family and friends in Clayton. Those lucky enough to find land near the reservoir had to drill wells for water because all the water permits for Sardis Lake, which filled up in 1983, were tied up until 1990.

"I don't mind telling you my father died a bitter man," Hutchinson said. "One hundred and seventeen families were forced off their land. Some of them wound up living close enough to see the lake that took their land, but they weren't allowed to get their drinking water from that lake."

Hutchinson says that if necessary, he will spend the rest of his life fighting to protect the waters of Oklahoma. He will fight the Water Resources board and the state government, the government that is supposed to have confidence in the wisdom of its average citizens.

"The government took 27,000 acres off the tax rolls of a poor county. It was the most productive land in the valley, and they covered it up with water. We couldn't be an agricultural-based economy anymore, so we learned to become a lakebased economy. Now the government and Oklahoma City want to take the lake away from us."

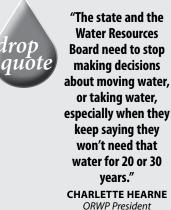
Hutchinson said he believes that Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy will be successful in their fight for a proper scientific water management plan for all of Oklahoma. He believes one day he and ORWP will win the battle to protect Sardis Lake from Oklahoma City, the battle to preserve and protect the future of Southeast Oklahoma.

"On that day, I can go to my father's grave and look to the heavens and say, 'We finally got some justice.""

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Where is Sardis Lake?

Sardis Lake is located five miles north of Clayton along state Highway 2.

How did Oklahoma wind up owing the federal government for Sardis Lake?

In 1974, Oklahoma entered into a contract with the federal government, agreeing to pay 100 percent of the water supply storage costs associated with the construction of Sardis Reservoir. The water was to provide economic development opportunities to the area, and costs would be recovered by selling some surplus waters to future customers. The Corps of Engineers constructed the dam and lake between 1977 and 1982, but water permits for Sardis Lake were tied up for almost a decade. Oklahoma only made a handful of payments.

Over the last 20 years, Sardis Lake has been at the center of multiple lawsuits, not only over Oklahoma's failure to pay the Corps of Engineers back for building the reservoir, but also over who controls the water in the reservoir. In September 2009, a federal court ordered Oklahoma to make a lump sum payment of more than \$27.8 million dollars by July 1, 2010 or make the first of five annual payments of at least \$5.2 million by that date toward the debt it owes for the lake.

Sardis is the only water supply lake in Oklahoma for which the state holds a contract to repay storage costs.

on Sardis Lake

Currently, Sardis Lake, located in Southeastern Oklahoma, is under attack. Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board have contracted for the transfer of almost 90 percent of the water from Sardis Lake to Oklahoma City – a transfer which could effectively destroy the local environment and economy.

Water is the critical ingredient to sustainable development. ORWP recognizes the necessity of prudent and reasonable water policy; as such, it is ORWP's mission to preserve and protect economic, agricultural, environmental and other local beneficial uses of all of Oklahoma's pristine water resources. By joining together, ORWP seeks to protect Southeastern Oklahoma's invaluable water resources from exploitation by outside entities.

The actions of Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board have been both reckless and rushed. Both parties willfully ignored pleas for completion of comprehensive, scientifically based studies to determine what impact moving such vast quantities of water from the basin of origin would have on the area.

Did legislators from Southeastern Oklahoma ever attempt to honor the Sardis debt?

Yes. In 2010, Sen. Jerry Ellis, Valliant, filed a bill to charge 5 cents per plastic or glass bottle sold in Oklahoma. According to Ellis, that would have raised \$40 million, which would have been more than enough to pay off the debt on the lake and still give millions to the senior nutrition fund. That bill was never heard in committee. In 2008, Rep. Brian Renegar, McAlester and Rep. Ed Cannaday, Porum, attempted to have the Sardis Lake debt included in a \$475 million state bond package. Chris Benge, then Speaker of the House, refused the request and told Rep. Renegar that "Sardis is already taken care of."

Were there other offers on the table to help with Oklahoma's debt to the government for Sardis Lake?

Yes. In April 2010, the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations contacted state leaders and offered to make the \$5.2 million payment due July 1 in order to buy the state 12 months to consider other options.

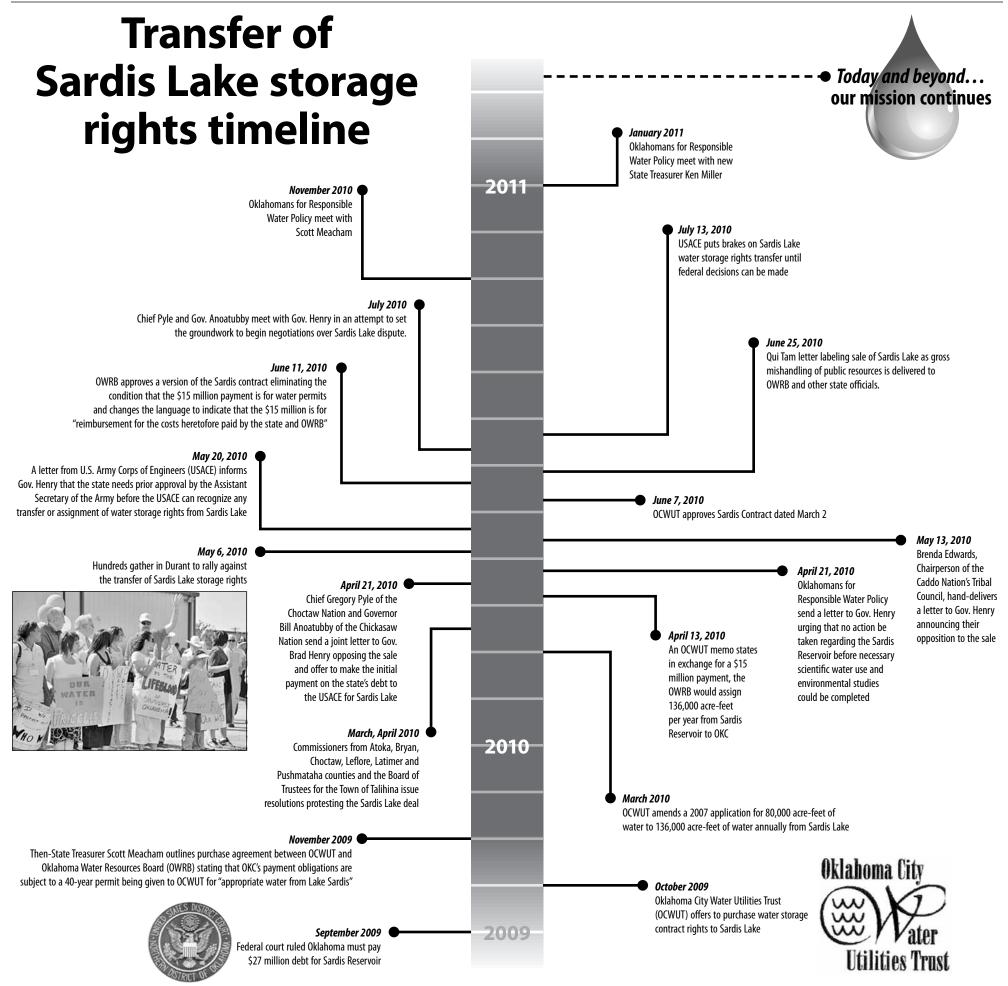
In June 2010, Assistant Chief of the Choctaw Nation Gary Batton hand carried a letter to the Water Resources Board making the same offer. On June 11, 2010, Chief Pyle of the Choctaw Nation repeated the offer in person to the OWRB. The state water board did not act on the tribes' offer and instead signed the contract with Oklahoma City.

Why does ORWP point to Atoka Lake [pictured below] as an example of what could happen to Sardis Lake if Oklahoma City were able to take control of the Sardis water storage contract rights?

Lake Atoka is owned by Oklahoma City. It was built in the late '50s to supply drinking water to OKC and several other communities in the metro area.

Oklahoma City has not been a good steward of the lake. Photographs taken over the last decade show a dry lakebed, a shoreline littered with trash and dead animals, and rusted fish habitats standing on the shore, yards from any water.





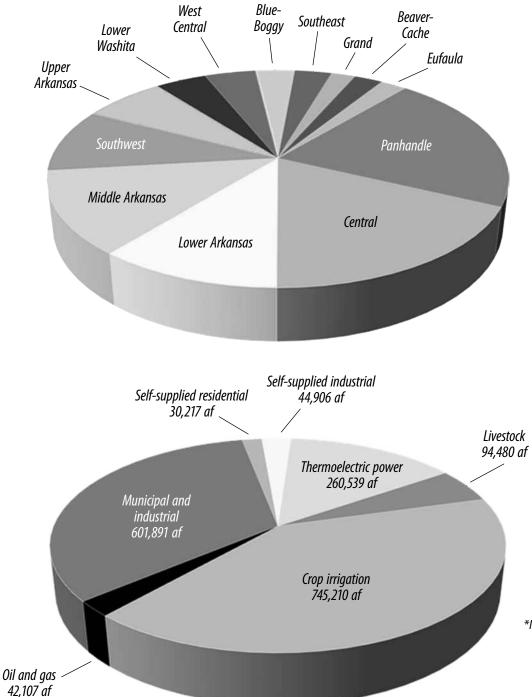
Eight questions you should ask about the Comprehensive Water Plan

- Does the water plan define available surplus water and specifically where such surplus water is located and when it is available?
- Does the water plan address "Inter-basin transfers" in terms of the long term environmental and social/cultural impacts on both the receiving and transferring basins?
- Does the water plan suggest alternatives to Inter-basin transfers?
- Does the plan have independent economic and hydrological studies that show what is best for water recreation and tourism communities, weighted statewide?
- Does the plan take into consideration when defining demand the amount of water needed for future economic development for communities that have water but currently have little or no industry?
- All Midwest and Southwest states base their state wide water plans' supplies on their 'Drought[s] of Record,' Was this done with Oklahoma's water plan?
- How can a state wide comprehensive water plan be successful without having independent peer review (outside inspectors) on supply side's hydro-science studies?
- Are the entities conducting the water plan free from personal/ geographical bias/influence? Are there any related political contributions or contracts that could constitute conflict of interest?

oklahoma comprehensive water plan Statewide water supply and demand

TOTAL 2010 DEMAND 1,819,350 acre-feet per year

2010 statewide water demand by water use sector and region



Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy is concerned about the representations of water demands and supplies in the state water plan. Some regions in the state that have large supplies of water depend on part of that water to support recreation and tourism, which can be a major part of the economy in some counties. Poorer areas rich in water also look to water for future economic development. Water can bring much needed jobs to economically deprived areas.

According to these charts, recreation and future economic development are not part of the state water plan's definition of demand. This exclusion pushes many areas of the state that are high on the supply side to the bottom of the ladder on the demand side.

*No allowances for recreational uses or future economic development

oklahoma comprehensive water plan Watershed planning regions

Panhandle

OCWP Feedback and Implementation Meetings scheduled

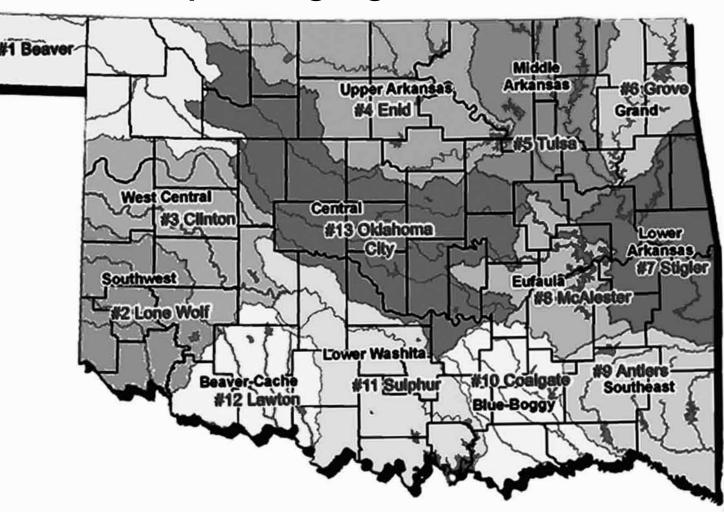
The draft of the state water plan should be available for review in late March. Beginning in April, the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute (OWRRI) will host a series of meetings to gather final public feedback and comments on the plan. It is important that everyone interested in the future of Oklahoma's water attend one or more of these meetings.

One meeting will be held in each of the 13 OCWP watershed planning regions. The regions are not divided by counties, so a single county may be in more than one region. Use the map to determine your region. All meetings are open to everyone, so if the date or location of a meeting conflicts with your schedule, please find one in another region that is convenient for you to attend.

All Feedback and Implementation Meetings will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. This will be a come-and-go format, but not a public forum. Comments must be submitted in writing. Staff from OWRB and CDM (the engineering firm contracted to perform the bulk of the OCWP's technical work) will be on hand to answer questions. OWRRI staff will also be there to receive comments.

Comments will also be accepted online at http://environ.okstate.edu/owrri/ waterplan once the plan is available.

Meetings covering technical studies will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. and will be specific to the region. While the OWRB and the OWRRI state that the technical level of these meetings is geared chiefly to water suppliers, members of Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy will be attending the Technical Studies Meetings and urge others to do so.



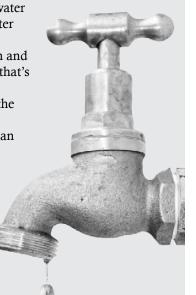
Map courtesy CWP/OWRRI website

MTG NO.	REGION	COMMUNITY	DATE	SITE
1	Panhandle	Beaver	Tuesday, April 19	Beaver County Fairgrounds, Pavilion
2	Southwest	Lone Wolf	Tuesday, April 26	Quartz Mountain State Park
3	West Central	Clinton	Wednesday, April 27	Custer County Fairgrounds
4	Upper Ark.	Enid	Thursday, April 28	Garfield County Fairgrounds, Hoover Building
5	Middle Arkansas	Tulsa	Tuesday, May 3	OSU–Tulsa, B.S. Roberts Room
6	Grand	Grove	Wednesday, May 4	Grove City Hall, Community Room
7	Lower Ark.	Stigler	Thursday, May 5	Kiamichhi Technology Center, Stigler Campus
8	Eufaula	McAlester	Tuesday, May 17	Southeast Expo Center
9	Southeast	Antlers	Wednesday, May 18	Antlers Community Building
10	Blue Boggy	Coalgate	Thursday, May 19	Coal County Fairgrounds
11	Lower Washita	Sulpher	Tuesday, May 24	Murray County Fairgrounds
12	Beaver-Cache	Lawton	Wednesday, May 25	Comanche County Fairgrounds
13	Central	OKC	Thursday, May 26	OSU-OKC Student Center Conference Room North and South

Don't be a drip: Know these water-saving tips

Many of us run water down the drain without even thinking of it, waste water cooking or use appliances inefficiently. Use these tips to save thousands of gallons of water each year:

- When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run while rinsing. Fill one sink with wash water and the other with rinse water.
- Turn off the water while you brush your teeth and save 4 gallons a minute. For a family of four, that's 200 gallons a week.
- When you are washing your hands, don't let the water run while you lather.
- Turn off the water while you shave and you can save more than 100 gallons a week
- Wash your produce in the sink or a pan that is partially filled with water instead of running water from the tap. Collect that water and reuse to water houseplants.
- Select the proper size pans for cooking. Large pans require more cooking water than may be necessary.
- Run your washing machine and dishwasher only when they are full and you could save 1,000 gallons a month.



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