

OKLAHOMA Water News

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board

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From the Director



*Duane A. Smith
Executive Director*

As the State Legislature formally adjourns for the year, I am again encouraged by the spirit of cooperation between the Water Board and legislative members that has culminated in another successful session. Our appropriations bill will be funded at a level that ensures the OWRB's continued excellent service to the citizens of Oklahoma.

In particular, the Legislature has again renewed their confidence in our Beneficial Use Monitoring Program, created in 1998, with a \$1.2 million dollar appropriation, a 20 percent increase from last year. The program, a vital component of the state's water quality management effort, has so far resulted in the evaluation and assessment of some 4,500 stream miles and 573,000 lake surface acres throughout Oklahoma. The additional funds will allow us to initiate a pilot project of biological assessments and integrate the collection of streamflow data along with water quality samples.

See Director, Page 2

Board Asks Court to Enforce Knight Lake Order Repairs

At its May meeting, the nine-member Water Board voted to seek relief in Oklahoma County District Court to compel repair of dilapidated Knight Lake dam, in Oklahoma City. To date, owners of the deteriorated structure have failed to comply



Knight Lake's crumbling spillway is indicative of numerous deficiencies in the west Oklahoma City dam.

with an April 10 order to initiate repairs, including immediate lowering of the impoundment as a safety precaution, or complete removal of the dam. Owners include Oklahoma County --

See Knight Lake, Page 6

Grandstaff Elected Board Chairman

Grady Grandstaff, of Newcastle, was elected Chairman of the Water Board at the OWRB's annual election of officers in June. Grandstaff is co-owner and operator of an independent energy production company and wholesale grocery distribution firm. A member of the Oklahoma County Election Board, he serves as vice chair of the Fifth Congressional District Republican Party and is past chairman of the Oklahoma County Republican Party.



*Grady Grandstaff,
Chairman, OWRB*

"I'm pleased to have this opportunity to serve the Board and State of Oklahoma in this capacity. I look forward to the coming year," Grandstaff said. He was appointed to the Board by Governor Frank Keating in 1997 and represents the Fifth Congressional District and industry interests.

Also at the June meeting, Ervin Mitchell (Balko) was elected Secretary and Richard Sevenoaks (Tulsa) was re-elected Vice Chairman.

Director . . . Continued

Aside from BUMP funding, a \$250,000 agency appropriation, especially supported by Gov. Keating, will fund various agency duties related to water planning and drought preparedness. We also received funding to participate with the Corps of Engineers in studies related to an offstream storage site on the Barren Fork River and potential construction of Mangum Reservoir. We remain hopeful that, during the special session in September, the Legislature will identify fiscal year 2002 funding for the state's innovative weather modification program, directed by the OWRB. We continue to support implementation of a multi-year research program to determine the effectiveness and applicability of cloud seeding technology in mitigating severe weather events, especially hail damage, and as a drought/water resource management tool.

A final look at some of the most significant legislation pertinent to our duties at the Water Board begins with House Bill 1480, which concerns the waste by pollution issue. Specifically, HB 1480 precludes the OWRB from making waste by pollution determinations on groundwater use applications related to activities under jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture and/or Department of Environmental Quality. Although this measure appears to limit OWRB involvement in the waste by pollution matter, ODA, DEQ and this agency will continue to work in close partnership to ensure that any proposed or ongoing water use activity is conducted in a manner that sufficiently protects the waters of the state. A related bill, HB 1237, which sought to clarify Board efforts in determining sites applied to the state's three-mile setback requirement, was vetoed by Gov. Keating. The legislation would have established five factors for the OWRB to consider in determining whether a facility is a camp or recreation site.

The Governor also vetoed SB 627, creating the Credible Data Act. The bill would have established guidelines for all state environmental agencies when collecting and analyzing water quality and related data beyond the extent already required by our Use Support Assessment Protocol Rules. In particular, SB 627 would have impacted decisions related to the addition and removal of waterbodies from the Clean Water Act 303(d) list of state waters whose beneficial uses are currently impaired.

Through Senate Concurrent Resolution 18, the OWRB is directed to pursue U.S. Supreme Court action against the State of Texas for violating terms of the Canadian River Compact. As you know, Texas' development of Palo Duro

Reservoir (on Palo Duro Creek, a tributary of the Beaver-North Canadian River) in 1991, approximately 12 miles upstream from the Texas/Oklahoma state line, precludes water releases sufficient to satisfy Oklahoma's apportionment under terms of the 51-year-old Compact. Of specific concern are reduced flows for Canton Lake, a primary source of water for Oklahoma City on the North Canadian River, which could be further impacted by a second proposed reservoir on a separate tributary of the North Canadian in Texas. Following 10 years of talks to resolve this issue and after exhausting all possible remedies, I believe the State of Oklahoma is compelled to take this legal action.

In conclusion, HCR 1008 directs the OWRB to initiate dialogue with the states of Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico and Texas, as well as appropriate federal agencies, regarding formation of a High Plains Ogallala Aquifer Compact. This Compact would represent a first-ever interstate agreement to preserve this vitally important, shared groundwater resource.

Over the coming weeks and months, the Water Board's Management Team will mull over action taken during the recent legislative session and plan our course of action for this next fiscal year. Concurrently, we will also revisit the OWRB's Strategic Plan and adjust, as necessary, our tasks and deadlines to reflect ever-evolving agency goals.

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State Hosts Cloud Seeding Conference

Cloud seeding professionals from across the world provided unique perspectives on the technology's present and future status, as the OWRB and Oklahoma Weather Modification Advisory Board hosted the annual meeting of the Weather Modification Association (WMA) on April 26-27. The event was held at the Westin Hotel in Oklahoma City.

Although the conference included customary updates on many of the more than 100 cloud seeding programs currently underway throughout the world, including 24 countries, discussion centered around recent trends in weather modification and what is required to establish the technology as a long-range water management and weather damage mitigation tool. According to Roelof Brintjes, outgoing WMA president and a lead researcher with the National Center for Atmospheric Research, recent improvements in seeding techniques, remote sensing, radar capabilities, weather forecasting and related factors have resulted in encouraging results from ongoing programs in Thailand, South Africa, Argentina and, especially, Mexico. In Mexico, a three-year randomized experiment duplicated results from the South African project half-way around the world – a first in the history of weather modification research.

“Recent observational and technological advancements have greatly enhanced our ability to understand cloud microphysics and the complex processes involved in the development of clouds and storm systems,” Dr. Brintjes said. “Still, continued research is needed to more clearly demonstrate weather modification technology and improve its effectiveness.” He added that Oklahoma, due to its often robust atmospheric conditions and proximity to incomparable weather research facilities, could be an ideal location for a multi-year research program. OWRB and Advisory Board officials, supported by Congressman J.C. Watts, are cur-

rently pursuing several state and federal funding sources to finance the ambitious project.

Conferees at the WMA meeting were also addressed by Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner Carol Fisher, a vocal advocate of weather modification and its involvement with the state's insurance industry. At the conclusion of the meeting, interested participants visited the National Severe Storms Laboratory, at the University of Oklahoma, and Oklahoma cloud seeding facilities at Sundance Airpark, in west Oklahoma City.

WMA was organized in 1950 to foster improved understanding of weather modification techniques, impacts, and expectations among program sponsors, program operators and the scientific community, as well as to promote ethical, professional conduct and the free exchange of ideas and information.



Roelof Brintjes, National Center for Atmospheric Research

State Weather Modification Activities Suspended

Effective June 14, the Oklahoma Weather Modification Program has been suspended due to insufficient funds. However, the Legislature plans to study the program and investigate potential funding for cloud seeding activities through an interim study this summer.

The 2001 program, initiated on March 1, was slated to continue operations uninterrupted through October 31.

U.S. Weather Modification Programs



Oklahoma Resident Relates Flood Experience

The following personal narration is from Jack Carden, past resident of Josseyville, just south of Apache in Caddo County. Mr. Carden and his neighbors were inundated by at least seven feet of floodwaters on October 23, 2000. Fortunately, no deaths or major injuries were reported as a result of this destructive flood.

Sure, we all know about floods. Some water gets in your home, everything at ground level gets wet, and probably some mud is left behind. Unfortunately, what most of us also “know” about flooding is that it happens to someone else. Don’t hide behind these “safe” generalizations... because floods can be much more.

I was asleep -- a deep, sound sleep. Well, maybe not so sound because some noise kept tugging at me. Tiredness would push it away and I would fall back into sleep. But, time after time, the dreamlike interruptions came back. Was it real or imagined? I ignored it, I was tired.

Like an alarm clock you’ve tried to sleep through, the noise finally registered and I shot up in bed. It had been raining hard for hours and that noise was the sound of water, gurgling, like maybe the roof leaking. I jumped out of bed and, to my complete confusion, I was in cold, dark water. When I hit the light, it certainly wasn’t a leak -- my house was over a foot high in water.

I yanked on a pair of shorts and a t-shirt as I yelled at the family -- evidently quite urgently as my wife, 15-year-old son and 13-year-old daughter were up as I went running for the garage to turn off the breakers (I heard this might save the appliances) and to get some boots on so I could gather up the valuables.

Across the wet house I ran. I pushed on the garage door and it was stuck. Thinking a broom or such was

blocking it, I gave a stout shove. Urgency turned to panic -- I realized the problem was that the water was much higher outside than inside. That gurgling noise that woke me -- it was water finding its way inside.

I wheeled. I yelled at the family “out NOW.” I grabbed my keys as I ran to the front door, barking instructions on the way... I don’t really remember checking heads in the dark, but I do recall telling them to watch out because the door opened inward towards us. The wall of water jerked the door out of my hand, knocked my girl down, and swept away the pants my son was trying to pull on. Things were happening quickly as we left home without even time for shoes nor pants for my son. We had to go.

Well, yes we made it. ...immediately the sadness overtook my wife and daughter. Pictures are all that remain of deceased fathers and grandfathers -- my father that the kids never got to meet. We can’t take anymore pictures of our boy’s first fish or our little girl’s precious baby face. And what about all those video tapes of our children?

...I refuse to be sad - we got the four most important things out already. I told them there will be tough days ahead, plenty of heartache, work and certainly financial worries, but we will simply have to be up to it.

I will always remember the inside of my home some 10 hours later as I got my first look. Nothing was safe. Water nearly seven feet high inside my house violently scattered and battered everything. What wasn’t broken or destroyed by water was eventually ruined by the thick mud or the mildew that set in... Fences, sheds, shop, pump house, and everything outside [was] gone.

A life’s work, a family’s needs, a father’s anguish. I had flood insurance, but that doesn’t pay for the fences, the pool, the pump house, etc. But worse, it does not cover buying a new lot and building, a new house, because common sense as well as floodplain management codes dictate not to rebuild in nature’s path. Insurance pays for the cost of repair only.

And so, time to turn to programs that we have always figured were for other people -- and the communities and their officials that administer the various programs and support. My neighbors nor I are looking for handouts. I realize and caution others to recognize that no one did this to us - it isn’t anyone’s fault. And I must confess, it is with shame that I determine that this time it is my family who will need the help.

I promised myself I would not be bitter. I promised God I would remain thankful for my family’s safety. I promised my family we would be “up to the Task.” These three things I will do. But I will also hope for the others that will someday endure the work and loss and hardship of another Oklahoma flood - I will hope that their town, county and officials have taken ownership and are ready to help when they are needed.

Breakfast Feast Recognizes OWRB Staff



Employees “belly up to the breakfast bar” to enjoy various delicacies prepared by Water Board management in observance of Public Service Recognition Week May 7-13. The morning event was held prior to the agency’s monthly staff meeting on May 7.

Northeast Oklahoma Students Honored For Water Quality Monitoring Efforts

On April 24, the Oklahoma State Legislature recognized students and teachers from Kansas Middle School for their outstanding water quality monitoring work at Eucha Lake and the surrounding vicinity.

Rep. Larry Adair and Sen. Rick Littlefield presented an Oklahoma Water Watch (OWW) Program Recognition Award to the group during a formal ceremony held at the State Capitol. The award, recognizing one year of volunteer service with OWW, consists of a metal sign that stakes claim to the water quality monitoring area for which they are responsible – in this case, Eucha Lake.

Other groups who have received similar awards for their work are the Grand Lake Association and Comanche High School (for their monitoring efforts at Waurika Lake). The Water Watch Program is coordinated by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

“We’re so impressed by the responsibility and dedication exhibited by these fine young people and their teachers,” said Rep. Adair. “Their efforts renew my faith in the leaders of tomorrow.”

Sen. Littlefield echoed those sentiments. “Considering the scope and nature of water quality concerns in the Eucha Lake watershed, it’s comforting to know that we have concerned citizens, young and old alike, who are so willing to donate their time to the betterment of the northeast Oklahoma community.”

Following the ceremony, the two legislators formally introduced the group to those present in the State Capitol chambers during the ongoing legislative session.

The Kansas Middle School team originally consisted of approximately 25 students and two teachers from the small southern Delaware County school, although 15 additional volunteers have since undergone training and joined the effort. The group monitors three sites in the Eucha/Spavinaw watershed, testing for basic parameters (air/water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, lake clarity and water color) and recording general site observations.



Angie Verbeck, Kansas Middle School teacher and coordinator of the KMS Oklahoma Water Watch organization, receives the OWRB's recognition award, on behalf of the school, from Sen. Rick Littlefield, Rep. Larry Adair, Speaker of the House, and Rep. Joe Hutchison at the State Capitol April 24.



An aerial view of construction on Montgomery Point Lock and Dam. (Photo courtesy Arkansas Basin Development Association, Inc.)

Montgomery Point Construction On Track

Despite recent setbacks due to damaging winter weather and structural/material problems, construction continues on Montgomery Point Lock and Dam, on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System in Arkansas.

The \$186 million project, scheduled for completion sometime next year, will alleviate periodic low-water problems in the system's White River Entrance Channel and reduce dredging needs by more than 90 percent.

Knight Lake . . . Continued

which acquired Knight Lake when the previous owner quit paying taxes -- and two apartment complexes adjoining the lake area.

“We are pursuing all necessary legal action to gain compliance with the Board’s order and prevent potential damage which could result in failure of the dam,” said Dean Couch, the water board’s general counsel. Couch filed the lawsuit against the owners in late May.

Knight Lake dam, which impounds approximately 42 acre-feet of water adjoining an apartment complex and neighborhood in west Oklahoma City, consists of an earthen structure 15 feet high and 300 feet long. According to OWRB dam inspections, the embankment has settled and eroded to such an extent that a heavy rain event could easily cause failure. In places, the crest of the dam has eroded to one-half its original width. The crumbling concrete emergency spillway, appurtenant to the 40-year-old structure, contains a 60-square-foot hole created by flowing water. Other deficiencies identified during inspections include seepage through the bottom of the dam that has created a permanent wetland; deep pedestrian and bike trails cut into the face of the dam and a utility pole mounted on the dam’s shoulder; and trees, bushes and other vegetation, potential conduits for erosion, which are common on the dam and spillway.

“The cumulative effect of these conditions causes the dam to be unsafe,” said Cecil Bearden, Water Board dam safety engineer, who conducted and supervised many of the Knight Lake dam inspections. While imminent collapse of the dam is unlikely, the Board’s

order recognized that its deficiencies “impermissibly increase the risk” of failure, Bearden pointed out.

In its April 10 mandate, the Board ordered the owners of Knight Lake to lower the water level to five feet below the crest of the emergency spillway by April 30 and maintain that depth until or unless an application for alteration and repair of the dam and spillway is approved. The OWRB also asked that plans and specifications for necessary work to repair or remove the dam be filed by June 29 and that completion of the improvements be made within a reasonable time. Cost of the repairs have been estimated at approximately \$70,000.

Knight Lake dam is classified as “high” hazard, a designation assigned to structures that impound water upstream of inhabited residences or businesses. High hazard dams require inspection every year. According to Bearden, inspections conducted during the 1990’s noted maintenance deficiencies that apparently were disregarded by previous owners.

Bearden testified at the Board’s March hearing that failure of the dam could cause loss of life. He also testified that failure would likely result in extensive property and economic loss, including flooding of an apartment complex approximately 1,000 feet downstream.

After the OWRB filed its lawsuit, Oklahoma County filed an appeal of the agency’s April order contending that state law exempts them from civil liability on the Knight Lake dam safety issue. A 1999 state statute exempts counties from civil liability from environmental conditions on lands the county acquires for failure to pay taxes.

BUMP Summer

Sampling in Full Swing

Michelle Scheuler and Crystal McLaren, of the OWRB’s Water Quality Programs Division, obtain water samples from Spring Creek (a tributary of the



Grand/Neosho River, near Murphy) in early June. Later, McLaren samples from a bridge spanning the Elk River (just across the state

line in Missouri), a tributary of Grand Lake. Data collected from these field studies will be utilized by the Board’s Beneficial Use Monitoring Program (BUMP), a comprehensive state water quality monitoring effort that seeks to document beneficial use impairments in state waters, identify impairment sources, detect water quality trends, contribute required information for use in the Oklahoma Water Quality Standards and facilitate the prioritization of state pollution control activities.



Water Resources Update

Reservoir Storage

Reservoir storage in Oklahoma has improved substantially during the past few weeks and remains good throughout the state. As of May 21, the combined normal conservation pools of 31 selected major federal reservoirs across Oklahoma (see below) are approximately 99.1 percent full, a 1.8 percent increase from that recorded on May 1, according to information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Tulsa District). No reservoirs have experienced lake level decreases since that time (except for Texoma and Broken Bow, where levels were raised to accommodate seasonal pool operations). Only five reservoirs are operating at less than full capacity (compared to 14 in early May); no reservoirs are below 80 percent capacity.

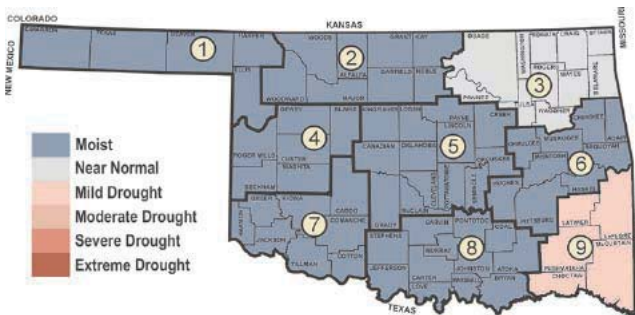
Storage in Selected Oklahoma Lakes & Reservoirs

As of May 21, 2001

Climate Division	Conservation Storage (acre-feet)	Present Storage (acre-feet)	Percent of Storage	
			Conservation	Flood
NORTH CENTRAL	451,860	451,860	100.0	2.24
NORTHEAST	3,484,317	3,435,771	98.6	3.28
WEST CENTRAL	276,790	276,790	100.0	4.07
CENTRAL	154,225	154,225	100.0	2.47
EAST CENTRAL	3,022,323	2,983,919	98.7	0.37
SOUTHWEST	301,810	297,985	98.7	27.69
SOUTH CENTRAL	3,005,444	3,005,444	100.0	5.97
SOUTHEAST	1,556,519	1,536,904	98.7	4.45
STATE TOTALS	12,253,288	12,142,898	99.1	5.86

Drought Indices

According to the latest Palmer Drought Severity Index (June 23, below), drought conditions are arising in some areas of Oklahoma, especially in the east. Seven of Oklahoma's nine climate divisions have undergone PDSI moisture increases since May 19; the South Central ("near normal") and Southwest ("moist spell") climate divisions experienced the greatest decreases during the period. While the Southeast region is the only region currently experiencing drought conditions ("mild drought"), the Northeast and East Central climate divisions are both in the "incipient drought" category.



The latest monthly Standardized Precipitation Index (through May, below) indicates that no climate divisions are experiencing long-term dryness among the selected time periods (3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month SPI's). The same is true among all other monthly time steps throughout the last six years, as all regions report normal or wet conditions.

Palmer Drought Severity Index

Climate Division (#)	Current Status 6/23/2001	Value		Change In Value
		6/23	5/19	
NORTHWEST (1)	VERY MOIST SPELL	3.29	3.71	-0.42
NORTH CENTRAL (2)	MOIST SPELL	1.60	2.10	-0.50
NORTHEAST (3)	INCIPIENT DROUGHT	-0.99	-1.12	0.13
WEST CENTRAL (4)	MOIST SPELL	1.76	3.20	-1.44
CENTRAL (5)	NEAR NORMAL	-0.14	0.88	-1.02
EAST CENTRAL (6)	INCIPIENT DROUGHT	-0.82	-1.39	0.57
SOUTHWEST (7)	MOIST SPELL	1.12	3.39	-2.27
SOUTH CENTRAL (8)	NEAR NORMAL	-0.33	2.04	-2.37
SOUTHEAST (9)	MILD DROUGHT	-1.16	-0.92	-0.24

Standardized Precipitation Index

Through May, 2001

Climate Division (#)	Standardized Precipitation Index Through May, 2001			
	3-Month	6-Month	9-Month	12-Month
NORTHWEST (1)	MODERATELY WET	VERY WET	VERY WET	MODERATELY WET
NORTH CENTRAL (2)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
NORTHEAST (3)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
WEST CENTRAL (4)	MODERATELY WET	MODERATELY WET	VERY WET	MODERATELY WET
CENTRAL (5)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY WET	MODERATELY WET
EAST CENTRAL (6)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY WET	MODERATELY WET
SOUTHWEST (7)	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY WET	VERY WET	VERY WET
SOUTH CENTRAL (8)	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY WET	VERY WET	MODERATELY WET
SOUTHEAST (9)	NEAR NORMAL	VERY WET	MODERATELY WET	MODERATELY WET

Financial Assistance Program Update

Approved at the April 10 & May 8, 2001 Board Meetings

			Financial Assistance Program Update	
			<i>Totals as of 5/8/2001</i>	
FAP Loans				
05/08/01	1 Durant City Utilities Authority, Bryan County	\$1,805,000.00	#Approved	236
	2 Owasso Public Works Authority, Tulsa County	1,810,000.00		
	3 Owasso Public Works Authority, Tulsa County	1,005,000.00		
	4 Perry Municipal Authority, Noble County	11,025,000.00		
	5 Rural Water District #2, Comanche County	1,045,000.00		
CWSRF Loans				
05/08/01	1 Foyil Economic Development Authority, Rogers County	\$269,520.00	Amount	\$359,010,000
	2 Glenpool Utility Services Authority, Tulsa County	1,361,388.45		
	3 Owasso Public Works Authority, Tulsa County	1,032,440.00		
DWSRF Loans				
05/08/01	1 Altus Municipal Authority, Jackson County	\$10,615,000.00	#Approved	109
	2 Bartlesville Municipal Authority, Washington County	2,150,000.00		
Hardship Grants - None				
Emergency Grants				
04/10/01	1 Town of Nash, Grant County	\$39,209.65	#Approved	2
	2 Milo-Woodford RWS&SWMD, Carter County	100,000.00		
	3 Rural Water District #4, Okmulgee County	54,357.50		
05/08/01	1 Foyil Economic Development Authority, Rogers County	100,000.00	Amount	\$1,038,752.30
Reap Grants				
04/10/01	1 Town of Jennings, Pawnee County	\$90,790.83	#Approved	472
	2 Rural Water District #8, Wagoner County	39,900.00		
	3 Kiefer Public Works Authority, Creek County	150,000.00		
	4 Rural Water District #2, Choctaw County	49,820.00		
	5 Town of Lehigh, Coal County	149,999.00		
	6 Olustee Public Works Authority, Jackson County	59,500.00		
05/08/01	1 Rural Water District #4, Payne County	59,990.00	Amount	\$23,357,598.01
	2 Foyil Economic Development Authority, Rogers County	94,540.00		
	3 Leedey Public Works Authority, Dewey County	99,999.00		

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