

Local Input Meeting Report



#30

Okmulgee, Oklahoma

**Okmulgee County Fairgrounds
Exhibit Hall**

September 18, 2007

Project Description

The Water Research Institute, at Oklahoma State University, is working under contract with the Oklahoma Water Resources Board to update Oklahoma's Comprehensive Water Plan. The Institute has designed an innovative process that combines citizens' ideas with the assistance of water experts in formulating policy recommendations. This process seeks to rely on the citizens' values for guidance in making tough choices about management of our State's water resources.

The first phase of this process consisted of 42 Local Input Meetings held throughout the State beginning in April 2007, at Beaver and ending on Nov. 15, 2007, at Idabel. The purpose of the meetings was to gather citizens' ideas, questions, suggestions and concerns about Oklahoma's water resources. This report is a comprehensive list of the comments received at this meeting.

In addition to the Local Input Meetings the public participation process consists of four other components. During the second phase, beginning in 2008, the Institute will conduct 11 regional meetings where selected participants will review the comments, consolidate similar issues, and prioritize them. Planning workshop, where participants will work to development management alternatives, is scheduled to begin in 2009. The Oklahoma Academy for State Goals will hold a special Town Hall meeting, in the spring of 2010, where citizens will develop consensus recommendations. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board for consideration/inclusion in a draft updated Comprehensive Water Plan. In the final phase the Institute will again conduct 11 regional meetings. At these meetings, the Institute will receive feedback and implementation suggestions on the draft Water Plan. Comments received at these meetings will be forwarded to the Water Board who will finalize the Plan and submit it to the legislature and the governor.

For more information visit the Institute's website at <http://okwaterplan.info>, email them at waterplan@okstate.edu, or by phone at 405.744.9994. You may also contact the Oklahoma Water Resources Board at www.owrb.ok.gov or 405.530.8800.



Meeting Agenda

Time	Topic	Speaker
6:36 pm	Welcome	Doug Maxey, Educator Okmulgee County Cooperative Extension Service
6:38 pm	Purpose of Meeting and Introduction of Staff	Mike Langston, Assistant Director Water Research Institute
6:49 pm	Water Challenges in Oklahoma	Dave Dillon, Director of Water Planning Oklahoma Water Resources Board
7:20 pm	Comments from the public	Public Participants
8:11 pm	Meeting adjourned	

Attendees

Water Research Institute Staff

Mike Langston, Assistant Director
 Jeri Fleming, Communications Manager
 Alison Stone, Administration Specialist

Oklahoma Water Resources Board Staff

Dave Dillon, Director of Water Planning

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Staff

Doug Maxey, Okmulgee County Extension Educator

Public Participants

26 citizens

Comments

Nineteen comments were received from the meeting participants. Comments were submitted both orally and by comment card. The comments are organized alphabetically by topic. Each comment is preceded by a unique identification number that will remain with the comment throughout the process. *Additional comments were submitted online to the website and are not included below; however, there is a separate report that lists all comments received through the website, by fax, mail and phone.*

Water Management

Agencies

- *Funding*
 - **Om13** I would like to see individuals in rural areas given the same access to grants and financial assistance for water lines as municipalities have. [They should not be discriminated against because they are isolated and not living in a community.]
- *Jurisdiction*
 - **Om6** How many state of Oklahoma entities [agencies] regulate water quality? There are different entities regulating water quality and it is hard to know who is responsible for water quality overall. For example, in Okemah we had an oil and gas spill in Lake Okemah, and it was complicated to get direct action. When DEQ was notified they said they did not regulate that particular issue and said you had to call the Corporation Commission.
- *State*
 - **Om7** There should be a central hotline to help direct inquiries like this [regarding which agency handles a specific water issue].
 - **Om15** How can OWRB educate the public entities about water issues within their county?

Economic Impacts

- *Regulation*
 - **Om9b** Rural water districts fall under the DEQ water quality regulations and so have to do considerable testing. They have problems with financing because of the EPA testing requirements and their costs. I would like to see tests developed that don't cost as much as the current ones do.

Health

- *Human*
 - **Om5** What is the state of Oklahoma doing about the quality of bottled water and water from rural water districts? Water coming from a rural water district that has poor quality or contains bacteria means people have to buy bottled water. And so, in essence, they are paying twice for their water [drinking water and tap water].

Infrastructure

- *Funding*
 - **Om2a** The cost of planning and storage for a drought can be prohibitive. I would like to see funding assistance for municipalities to build reservoirs.
 - **Om4** Municipalities are able to get grants for their water supplies; however, private resort owners, located too far away to access a rural water system, can not get these funds. Furthermore, the DEQ requires that resorts with more than 25 people must have a community water system, which can cost in the millions of dollars. It's almost like they are telling us we can't grow because we can't get grants or funding. There should be some funding assistance available for these private entities.
 - **Om12** How would the funding for infrastructure improvements come to rural water districts and municipalities? Would it come through the sub-state planning districts?

- *Needs*

- **Om2a** Is there any plan to encourage water supply entities to build more and larger lakes for providing water during times of drought? What protection would be in place to protect those entities' rights to that water? It's hard to plan for a drought during a drought, but right now (when we have plenty of water) would be a good time to plan for droughts.
- **Om8** I don't see places where we could build large reservoirs in this county. I don't think there are many places left. The State, county and cities need to start looking for new sites to build reservoirs within Okmulgee County, especially in the rural areas because they are the areas that are growing. The way I see it, within ten years, the County is going to be hurting for water, especially in the rural areas.
- **Om9a** Rural water districts are now having trouble with infrastructure. Many started with small numbers of customers and now have grown, but don't necessarily have the size pipe and other infrastructure in place to meet future growth.
- **Om11** Does the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have any authority, or interest in water being shifted from one area or another by new reservoirs being built?
- **Om17** Okmulgee County, the rural water districts, cities, and towns need to figure out how to construct one or more lakes.

Planning

- **Om16** Municipalities across Oklahoma provide 85% of the drinking water. Those entities and individuals who have invested in the construction and maintenance of water resources in the past deserve additional consideration now.

Policy/Regulations

- **Om10** There should be some consistency in State and county regulations regarding water pipe sizes especially regarding the requirements for fire protection.
- **Om14** There is a lot of vagueness regarding "future need" on the application for a groundwater permit. I would like to see the permit modified to include descriptions of future plans, such as putting in condominiums or expansion. It should not be so specific as to future well locations. How do I know where they will be located?

- *State Statutes*

- **Om3** What is the definition of "surplus water?" The problem is you don't know when you have surplus water until you run out. The State should more clearly define "surplus water."

Water Rights

- **Om1** Why does water in ponds on private property come under the jurisdiction of the State? I am concerned about private property rights. This is very important to me. If we ever separate the water rights from the landownership it would create problems. I don't think the State should govern water in ponds on private property when the landowner paid to build the entire pond. It doesn't matter how it is built so long as it on your land.

ADDENDUM

Category Descriptions

- **Water Management**

- Agencies – Includes, but is not limited to, federal, state, and local agencies. Also includes rural water districts, jurisdictional issues, and additional funding needs by individual agencies
 - Federal – Comments regarding federal agencies that are not necessarily related to a law or regulation
 - Funding – Additional federal, state, or local funding opportunities for various projects
 - Jurisdiction – Limiting, expanding, or consolidating agency jurisdiction
 - Local – Includes cities, conservation districts, and other locally led authorities
 - Rural Water Districts – Suggestions that would affect rural water districts
 - State – Comments regarding State agencies
- Conjunctive Use/Management – Consideration of the interaction between ground and surface water
 - Legislation – Changes in Oklahoma law to recognize/not recognize the interaction of ground and surface water
 - Research – Identification of additional research needs concerning conjunctive use
- Conservation – Decreasing use and preservation of Oklahoma’s water resources
 - Education – Conservation education and educational resources
 - Incentives – State or local incentives to encourage water conservation
 - Research – Directed at water conservation measures
 - Sustainability – The continuous long-term availability of water resources
 - Technology – Equipment or other innovations intended to help conserve water
- Economic Impacts – The effects water has on the State’s economy
 - Development – Increased housing, industry, tourism, or other types of development requiring water resources
 - Population Change – The effect population change has on local and State economies
 - Recreation & Tourism – The impact recreation and tourism have on the State’s economy as well as the effect water management has on recreation and tourism
 - Regulations – The effect both federal and State regulation has on water districts
 - Sales – Concerns regarding the effect the sale of water will have on the State’s or basin of origin’s economy
- Health – The effect water quality and water quantity have on both human health and the environment
 - Ecological – The environmental impacts of water quality and water quantity
 - Health – The health effects resulting from a lack of available good quality potable water
- Infrastructure – Includes, but is not limited to, drinking water and waste water treatment facilities, pipelines, dams and other associated structures
 - Needs – New infrastructure needs
 - Maintenance – Maintenance of existing infrastructure

- Funding – Additional, continued or increased State or federal funding opportunities
- Planning – Comments regarding the planning process for the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan
 - Interstate Cooperation – Working with surrounding states to avoid conflicts regarding water flowing into and out of Oklahoma
 - Priorities – The prioritization of water usage during times of shortage to avoid later conflicts
 - Public Participation Process – Comments regarding issues with the public participation process
 - Regional Difference – Recognizing water availability, uses, and rainfall variations across the State
 - Research – Identification of possible research needs during the planning process
 - Revision – The need for updating the plan more frequently than once every 10 years or so
- Policy/Regulations – Comments regarding various State and federal statutes (laws) and regulations (rules)
 - Adjudication – Court involvement in the management of Oklahoma’s water resources
 - Enforcement – Enforcement of current laws and regulations by the appropriate agency
 - Federal Regulations – Comments about federal laws and regulations
 - Incentives – Federal and State incentive programs to promote compliance with laws and regulations
 - State Regulations – Comments about State regulations or rules
 - Permits – Comments about the permitting process
 - Water Rights – Comments about regulations concerning water rights
 - Taxes – The levying of taxes to collect money for various reasons
 - State Statutes – Comments regarding Oklahoma’s water law
- Regionalization – the consolidation of water treatment facilities or other infrastructure by municipal and/or rural water districts
 - Funding – Federal or State funds available to help facilitate regionalization
 - Incentives – To help encourage regionalization of water treatment facilities
- Sales & Transfers – The artificial movement of water either in-state (intrastate) or out-of-state (interstate)
 - Compensation – Who should be compensated, how should they be compensated, and how much should they be compensated if water is sold or transferred
 - Control – Concerns about who would control the water and land if water is sold or transferred
 - Interstate – Out-of-state water sale or transfer
 - Intrastate – In-state water sale or transfer
- Water Rights – Who has the right to control or use ground or surface water
 - Private Property Rights – Rights to groundwater on private property
 - Permitted Water Rights – Both surface and groundwater permitted water rights
 - Native American Rights – Tribal claims to both surface and groundwater

- Water Security – Natural and man-made threats affecting water supplies
 - Disasters – Natural or man-made disasters affecting either water infrastructure or supply
 - Terrorism – Terrorist attack on water infrastructure or supply
- Water Treatment – Includes both natural and man-made water treatment suggestions
 - Artificial – Technologies for treating both drinking and waste water
 - Natural – Ecological (environmental) ways of treating both drinking, and waste water i.e. wetlands
- Watershed Management – The management of land, including development that affects water quality and water quantity
- **Water Uses**
 - Agriculture Use – The way water is used in the agriculture industry
 - Biofuels Growth – Suggestions and concerns regarding the increased growth of crops for biofuels
 - Commercial Use – The use of water by commercial enterprises such as small businesses, etc.
 - Conservation Use – Suggestions and concerns regarding various ways to use water in a way that will conserve it
 - Reuse – The reuse of various water supplies such as treated wastewater, gray water, and storm water run-off
 - Ecological Use – Maintaining sufficient water levels to ensure the health of wildlife and ecosystems e.g. in-stream flows
 - Habitat – Water uses to protect wildlife habitat
 - Research – Identification of additional research needs regarding the ecological use of water
 - Hydropower Use – The use of dams to produce electricity
 - Industrial Use – The use of water by factories, power plants and other industrial uses
 - Biofuels Processing – The use of water in processing biofuels in the State
 - Mining Use – The use of water in the mining industry
 - Oil & Gas Use – The use of water by the oil and gas industry
 - Private Domestic Use – Household water that is not supplied by a municipality or rural water district and includes both ground and surface water
 - Wells – The use of private domestic wells
 - Public Domestic Use – Household water that is supplied by a municipality or rural water district
 - Municipality – Household water supplied by a town or city
 - Rural Water District – Household water supplied by a Rural Water District
 - Recreational Use – The use of water for recreation and to promote tourism
 - Aesthetics – Concerns about the aesthetic beauty of Oklahoma’s water resources
 - Boating – The use of water for water recreation such as boating
 - Fishing – The use of water for fishing in the State’s water resources
 - Golf Courses – The use of water in maintaining the State’s golf courses
 - Storage – The storage of water in reservoirs, or in aquifers either naturally or artificially; may also include other storage methods such as cisterns
 - Transportation Use – The use of water to maintain Oklahoma’s navigation channels, i.e. McClellan-Kerr Navigation System

- **Water Sources**

- *Both* Ground and Surface Water – Comments referring to *both* surface and groundwater concerns
 - Quantity – The quantity of *both* surface and groundwater
 - Quality – The quality of *both* surface and groundwater
 - Both – *Both* the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater
- Climate – The effect climate has on water sources including global warming and rain
- Groundwater – Concerns about the State's groundwater
 - Quantity – The quantity of groundwater
 - Quality – The quality of groundwater
 - Both – *Both* the quality and quantity groundwater
- Recycled Water – Non-traditional sources of water
 - Waste Water – Treated waste water as a water source
 - Gray Water – Gray water (water that comes usually from washing machines, showers, bathtubs, etc.) as a water source
- Surface Water – Concerns about the State's surface water
 - Quantity – The quantity of surface water
 - Quality – The quality of surface water
 - Both – *Both* the quality and quantity of surface water