

Local Input Meeting Report



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Sallisaw, Oklahoma
Sequoyah County Fairgrounds
Community Building
October 2, 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
6:30 pm	Welcome	Tony Yates, Educator Sequoyah County Cooperative Extension Service
6:32 pm	Purpose of Meeting and Introduction of Staff	Mike Langston, Assistant Director Water Research Institute
6:43 pm	Water Challenges in Oklahoma	Dave Dillon, Director of Water Planning Oklahoma Water Resources Board
7:21 pm	Comments from the public	Public Participants
8:08 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
Kyle Arthur, Environmental Program Manager with the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Staff

Tony Yates, Sequoyah County Extension Educator

Public Participants

26 citizens

Comments

Twenty 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

Economic Impacts

- *Regulation*
 - **SI1b** I am concerned that when the federal government does a reallocation study they will revise the cost of storing water. This will make it difficult for communities to afford the water.

Infrastructure

- *Funding*
 - **SI2a** The banks in this area work closely with the smaller water suppliers to fund their needs, but the cost of meeting constant changes in EPA water quality regulations makes it difficult for water suppliers. There needs to be some administrative and financial help from the federal government to meet these regulations.
 - **SI2b** There needs to be more funding to maintain the infrastructure and to build a larger transmission facility to help drive the economic growth in this area.
 - **SI7b** We need to balance out the investment in water infrastructure like we do with education and roads [some private and some government money]. It is an investment and the State needs to look at it that way. It is not a temporary fix.
 - **SI7c** The city of Sallisaw is taking care of its water treatment issues but the supply infrastructure still needs to be worked out. This could be as much \$40 - \$50 million and that is more than a community like Sallisaw can afford.
 - **SI9** Cooperation between rural water districts and communities is important and funding for this is the key. If we are going to do a plan, we have to fund future needs. Current federal financing for rural water districts is limited to current users. This limits growth for these rural water districts. If we don't do something we are handicapping rural areas. We want cooperation with State and local agencies and there should be incentives for cooperation in our funding programs.
- *Needs*
 - **SI5** You talk about water supply systems but what about sewer and trash systems? The Arkansas River is used basically as a wastewater lagoon. Why not have the federal government invest in improving wastewater treatment lagoons or oil refining plants to keep waste out of the rivers in the first place, especially the Arkansas. You don't see this same thing happening on Lee Creek, the Illinois or the Baron Fork.

Planning

- **SI6c** The plan needs to look further ahead in the planning process to 2100 for the future growth of our state. We need to look at the very long-term affect of water needs. Our first goal should be to supply for ourselves.
- *Public Participation Process*
 - **SI4b** The plan should clearly reflect that we [as citizens] participate [in this process] on the issues of need and problems we have in being able to develop and utilize water. We are not participating regarding who owns the water.
- *Regional Differences*
 - **SI3** The interest of the government seems to be focused more on population centers. There are a lot of intelligent people in eastern Oklahoma, we are patriotic, and we recognize we have to share but the originating county of the resource needs to have

representation [when decisions are made]. We do not want to be abused when decisions are being made. Our resources and our population needs to be taken into consideration.

Policy/Regulations

- *Federal Regulations*
 - **SI1c** One of the things you also have to look at is the original purpose of the Corps' reservoirs; however, now the needs may have changed and I think the plan should look at re-prioritizing the uses of reservoirs.
- *State Statutes*
 - **SI1a** In Sequoyah County we have a lot of water available, but we have a difficult time affording all the infrastructure needs. The loans and grants are helpful but the engineering studies needed and dealing with all the agencies can take a long time. Our water allocation might expire before the infrastructure is built. Thus, I think the "use it or lose it" rule needs to be reevaluated.
 - **SI4a** The "first in time, first in right" system seems to favor the larger metropolitan areas who have the financial resources to develop infrastructure and get water supply. The plan should give priority to areas without financial resources to give them funding to build the necessary storage and transfer facilities within the county.

Regionalization

- *Funding*
 - **SI7a** Oklahoma as a state needs to look at water infrastructure. In eastern Oklahoma, we have the water but not the infrastructure, especially along the transportation corridors (I-40). Statewide, the plan needs to encourage regionalization of infrastructure. This will also help to pay for it. We can work with others in this area to develop a regional system but we are going to need help from the State and some of that help needs to be in the form of grant money. If the State wants to grow they are going to have to provide the money for it.

Sales and Transfers

- *Compensation*
 - **SI8** I believe that water is a commodity that is going to have significant growth and appreciation. Credit is going to have to be given to the area from which that water is drawn. The law should allow for contracts from a metropolitan area for the water rights in this area and we should receive economic benefits from that water. We should be able to form a coalition so we can maintain control of our resources so no one metropolitan area can come in and take all our resources. They have not made the same sacrifices we have made. We could make it an economic gain for the region.
- *Control*
 - **SI2c** Many of us lost our land to the reservoirs in this area [when they were constructed] and we deserve to be heard regarding re-allocation. This area needs to benefit financially from the water resources we have, because this is the natural resource we have the most of. Water is just as valuable as other resources across the U.S. If the federal government is going to take away land from us, they should be considerate of that and allow us to have some control.

Water Rights

- *Native American*
 - **SI1d** Tribal claims to water rights in Oklahoma is an area of concern. Dealing with the Tribes can make it difficult for a community to plan for the future because the ownership of the water is at issue. I am also concerned this issue will be drug out in the courts.
 - **SI4c** The state of Oklahoma needs to take active steps to resolve who owns the water in Oklahoma before we get too far into the planning process.

Water Sources

Surface Water

- *Quality*
 - **SI6a** My biggest concern is not the quantity of water in eastern Oklahoma but the quality of water. We must monitor the quality first before we monitor the quantity.

Water Uses

Conservation Use

- *Reuse*
 - **SI6b** Sallisaw Creek was losing about 32,000 gallons a minute into the Arkansas River and we need to find someway to recycle the water back into the system.

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