Local Input Meeting Report

#7

Weatherford, Oklahoma

Southwestern Oklahoma State University
Conference Center
May 17, 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 Recourses Board at www.owrb.ok.gov or 405.530.8800.

Meeting Agenda

Time	Topic	Speaker
6:35 pm	Welcome	Ron Wright, Educator Custer County Cooperative Extension Service
6:37 pm	Purpose of Meeting and Introduction of Staff	Mike Langston, Assistant Director Water Research Institute
6:40 pm	Water Challenges in Oklahoma	Dave Dillon, Director of Water Planning Oklahoma Water Resources Board
7:11 pm	Explanation of Meeting Process	Mike Langston
7:21 pm	Comments from the public	Public Participants
8:35 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
Ron Wright, Custer County Extension Educator
Radonna Sawatzky, Custer County Extension Educator

Public Participants
39 citizens

Comments

Thirty-seven 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

Conjunctive Management

- *Legislation*
  - **Wf4** I suggest the plan look at changes in legislation, for example the relationship between surface and groundwater. Any legislation may need to be looked at when new or updated science is made available – the science and the legislation should be compatible.

Conservation

- **Wf6** I am concerned about water quality, water quantity, and the interaction between surface and groundwater. In particular, conservation practices along streams such as riparian areas in Deer Creek and the destruction of riparian areas by flooding.
- Wf22 In the future, water will be more valuable than oil, if it isn't already. Protect what we have. Use it wisely.

- *Research*
  - **Wf14** The plan should consider looking at best management practices for water resources and conservation practices. The plan should recommend they be put in place.

- *Sustainability*
  - **Wf2** I am concerned about water quality, water availability, and the judicious use of it.

Economic Impacts

- *Regulation*
  - **Wf10d** Agriculture comes from renewable resources that continue to produce every year. If you take agricultural water rights away then you lose a tax base for those counties that depend on agriculture.

Infrastructure

- **Wf10c** We need to increase the number of dams, as well as, the care and maintenance of the dams we have in this State. If we let the dams erode away we will lose millions of dollars in flood damage.

- *Funding*
  - **Wf7** The flood control reservoirs/structures need to be maintained and there is no federal money available anymore. This lack of funding will cause more flooding in those watersheds.
  - **Wf11** We need the support of municipalities and the urban areas to get our legislators and county commissioners involved in securing funding from the federal government for the building and maintenance of flood control dams and other rural needs, including agricultural needs. This needs to be done nationally not just in the State.
  - **Wf15** Without immediate help from the federal government, we can not maintain the flood control structures we have and this will affect the quality and quantity of water supply. The loss of surface water is a bigger issue in the Rush Springs aquifer area than the loss of groundwater.

- *Maintenance*
  - **Wf16b** I suggest that when the lakes are down that sediment be removed so the lakes can hold more water.

Planning

- *Priorities*
  - **Wf13b** I am concerned the metropolitan areas will get priority over agriculture use of water.
  - **Wf19d** Public municipalities should have priority on stream and groundwater.
- *Regional Differences*
  - **Wf17** The water law is a political process that involves a number of people and the State is somewhat divided about water rights. Rural western Oklahoma's needs must be considered because they are different than the eastern part of the State.

Policy/Regulations

  - **Wf8** Will there be studies done to assess water supply and the population level it will support? At some point we may need to say no to additional development.

- *Federal Regulations*
  - **Wf13a** I am concerned the federal government will step in and take over the water allocation process and the plan should look at the federal law to see where it stands and make sure agricultural industry rights are maintained.
- *State Regulations*
  - **Wf10e** It is difficult to find licensed well-drillers because of the way the current system licenses them. We need more people who are educated about how to drill wells and the 5-year apprenticeship [for licensed well drillers] maybe too long; I suggest maybe reducing the apprenticeship.
  - **Wf1a** The Rush Springs aquifer should be protected by 1.) limiting and monitoring injection wells, 2.) create legislation to protect municipality's rights to the aquifer, and 3.) limiting private leasing for the purpose of profiteering at the consumers expense.
- *State Statutes*
  - **Wf10b** The stream water law works well for both people next to the stream and those downstream.

Sales and Transfers

- *Interstate*
  - **Wf19c** There should be no water sales to Texas or any other state.
  - **Wf1c** Absolutely NO water sales to Texas. If there is surplus water in eastern Oklahoma and it is to be transferred to another location, pipe it to western Oklahoma. Before the recent rains, most water impoundments in the western two-thirds of the state were seriously impaired, some of the lowest levels in a decades.
- *Intrastate*
  - **Wf3b** Will the plan allow other areas of the State to pull water from the Rush Springs aquifer? (concerned about water transfer intrastate)
  - **Wf18** I am concerned about people controlling a spring source that then effects downstream flows. I am also concerned about some people selling the water and its impact on the aquatic life and the downstream users.

Water Rights

  - **Wf19a** Water is as necessary for life as air. It should not be further privatized.

- **Wf23** We have taken our water and our water rights for granted. We need to do everything we can to protect our water.

- *Private Property Rights*
  - **Wf5** The plan should protect existing uses and rights. Protection of groundwater in the county should also be considered.
  - **Wf9** Water should be considered a private property right that goes with the land.
  - **Wf10a** The current water right laws are good laws. I would like the groundwater rights permanently tied to the surface area.
  - **Wf12** I am concerned the agriculturalist be able to maintain their rights to groundwater.
  - **Wf16a** I am concerned about losing my water rights.

Watershed Management

- **Wf20** Urban areas need to be educated about fertilization and pesticide use on lawns as they are probably causing a greater problem than agriculture on water quality.
- **Wf19b** Clean surface water is necessary for a clean environment. Riparian areas must be provided along edges of all waterways.

Water Sources

Groundwater

- *Quantity*
  - **Wf3a** I am concerned that too many wells are being put in the Rush Springs aquifer and this will limit the availability of water for the people in this area.

Water Uses

Public Domestic Use

- **Wf1b** Guarantee equal access to the water supplies in the State for municipal as well as rural water systems.

- *Municipalities*
  - **Wf21** There should be a process for cities to get technical assistance in dealing with groundwater contamination.
  - **Wf24** Protect municipality's rights to serve consumers that desire municipal services because they offer adequate supply and sufficient pressure, etc. [in contrast to some rural water systems].

Recreational Use

- **Wf19e** Recreational use of water should be taken into account in planning.

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