

Local Input Meeting Report



#40

Hugo, Oklahoma

**Kiamichi Technology Center
Hugo Campus Seminar Center
November 6, 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	Marty Montague, Educator Choctaw County Cooperative Extension Service
6:32 pm	Welcome	Representative R.C. Pruett
6:33 pm	Welcome	Senator Jeff Rabon
6:37 pm	Purpose of Meeting and Introduction of Staff	Mike Langston, Assistant Director Water Research Institute
6:50 pm	Water Challenges in Oklahoma	Kyle Arthur, Environmental Program Manager with the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan Oklahoma Water Resources Board
7:12 pm	Comments from the public	Public Participants
8:46 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

Marty Montague, Choctaw County Extension Educator

Public Participants

49 citizens

Comments

Thirty-three 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

Conservation

- *Education*
 - **Hg4** We need to educate our children, especially in junior high because they will be making decisions about water use by the time the plan is done. Educating them will help limit the amount of pollution specifically from dumping and, in turn, will help with water conservation.
 - **Hg5** The education process needs to start with the young kids, those in kindergarten. You can still talk to them at this age and they will listen. This will help form their opinions.

Economic Impacts

- **Hg10c** We should come up with some projects to utilize the water we have in the State, whether it is wastewater or storm water, for economic benefit.
- *Sales*
 - **Hg28** Let Hugo contract to sell what they have a right to sell [water], for the benefit of the people of this area to create jobs and educate our children. I hope the study reflects what is truly being wasted.

Health

- *Ecological*
 - **Hg2** This summer during the floods, the water flowing over the dam was muddy, and had a lot of suds and smelled horrible in the Sawyer area. There is something wrong there. I am concerned that the septic tanks in the area may have been flooded and this could cause the pollution problems. Someone needs to look into this.

Infrastructure

- *Needs*
 - **Hg9** Are there more plans for additional hydroelectric dams in the State? This could be a way to sell/use some of the water we have without losing it.
 - **Hg10a** We should build as many dams and hydroelectric dams as we can.

Planning

- **Hg7** I want to encourage the OWRB to continue doing what they are doing (the planning process and their educational efforts). I think they should emphasize educational matters. We have to work on the educational component especially about water law and other issues in our diverse State. Education is the most void component in the plan. You should work with the press to disseminate information as it becomes available and emphasize education. There is more that unites us in Oklahoma than divides us.
- **Hg10b** We should also include all the [water used by] cooling towers in the planning process.
- **Hg14** Surface water by its very nature moves, so we can not keep it all in Oklahoma. By the time the water study is done the economic benefit of four years of water flow will be lost. The entire value of the water that is lost during those four years could power the economy of Oklahoma for just one year. We need to take that into consideration for ourselves and for our children.
- **Hg27s** My concern is outside interests manipulate the rules of sales and distribution of water that the city of Hugo has legal rights to. Senator Rabon said a committee to

discuss this important issue [water] never met one time. Why would you trust them [legislators] to do it again? When they get the report [water plan], whose interest will they serve, theirs or southeastern Oklahoma's? I hope the results are not an urban vs. rural battle.

- *Public Participation Process*

- **Hg6** Why do we not have anyone from television or larger State papers here? I hope by the time we get to the regional meetings radio and television will be more involved. I would like to see more people from the local areas participate.
- **Hg13** How do we take rank amateurs and educate them enough to mix them with a bunch of scientists and make any decisions? We wonder if this [planning process] is not just a political time killer. There are already professionals out there who have studied these issues forever. How are the professors at OU, OSU and other universities being involved?
- **Hg15** The city of Hugo has done a complete study on Hugo Lake to protect its integrity for the future (the focus was on wildlife to protect tourism) and determine how much water would be available to sell or use otherwise. The city of Hugo used vision to include citizens in their planning process.

Policy/Regulations

- *Federal Regulations*

- **Hg20a** The EPA mandates that 90,000,000 gallons a day flow out of the pipe at Hugo dam downstream to dilute the pollution in the Red River. If water is diverted out of the Red River, then it will increase the amount of salt in the Red River and will have a detrimental effect on those downstream especially during times of floods and will limit irrigation.

- *State Regulations*

- *Water Rights*

- **Hg18** The Oklahoma Appropriation Water Right Law, as presently designed, is not workable. It claims to protect the inhabitants of the area of origin and permit only surplus water of the area to be appropriated outside the area. However, the "first in time first in right" provision defeats those premises. In brief, any out-of-area appropriation is superior to any later appropriation within the area and the out-of-area appropriator can take water to the bottom of the stream during drought periods and deprive subsequent local users of water. We should only allow water to be taken out of a stream during times of plenty and not during the summer dry periods. To move the Oklahoma Water Rights System closer to its stated purpose, I recommend: 1.) The water plan establish minimum stream flow to protect fish, wildlife, and the ecology of the stream system and establish specific criteria and technique to prevent any water from being withdrawn below that minimum level. 2.) The water plan provide for the set-aside or provisional reservation of the amount of water needed by the area of origin for the foreseeable future. 3.) The water plan provide for the future applications for water used in the area of origin be allocated from the reserved amount and given the reservation priority date. 4.) The plan specifically provide for in-stream beneficial use of stream water for boating, floating, and environmental benefits. 5.) The issue of water ownership, i.e. Tribal/State, should be resolved. 6.) Soil conservation districts can help mediate issues in the planning and management process and they should be strengthened. 7.) The technical process is being driven by an out-of-state firm and we should be given interim studies so we can evaluate what they are doing and their assumptions as well as their strategies for delivery of water and if we can't see those then we are not part of the process.

- *State Statutes*

- **Hg11** I would like to see the state of Oklahoma pay the Corps of Engineers for Sardis Lake, so that it can be included in the water planning process.
- **Hg20b** I would like to see the Kiamichi River designated as a scenic river.

Regionalization

- **Hg22** For those of us in Choctaw County, Texas is important to our economy and many of us either work in Texas or live there and work here. I would like to see the rest of the State understand that the state line is not the Great Wall of China. People in northeast Texas are having to ration water. The demonization of Texas is not appropriate and does not represent the consensus of opinion in Choctaw County. There should be more focus on regionalization of water use irrespective of state or county boundaries.

Sales and Transfers

- *Compensation*

- **Hg1** During the spring, I have witnessed the huge amount of water that runs down the Kiamichi River into the Gulf of Mexico. Water that just runs down the river should have some economic benefit to the citizens in the area. The proceeds of any sale of storm water runoff should benefit the citizens of the drainage area.

- *Control*

- **Hg8** A lot of people are nervous about the water issues (sales, conservation, aquifers) in our State. I would like to see us sell some to have money for infrastructure. We, the people need to be the ones to do something. We need to quit asking who do we call; we need to do something ourselves. Conserve the water and protect what we have. If we work together, we will end up okay.
- **Hg19** The dam here [Hugo Lake] releases hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water per year. If the Jones & Stokes study is to be believed then we have excess water, because all that water is going somewhere. There has been a proposal that if water is to be sold out-of-state, then the entire State should vote on it. We are the ones with the water and therefore should be the ones to vote. No one asked us to vote about oil.

- *Interstate*

- **Hg16** I don't want Oklahoma to sell water to any other state. Other states such as Colorado and New Mexico have sold water and this has caused a lot of legal problems and cost the states a lot of money.
- **Hg17** When we talk about selling water we are talking about selling water to Texas. If you are concerned about it read the editorials out of the Albuquerque newspapers 30 – 40 years ago. If you make a contract with them for 1,000,000 acre feet for one year, the next year they will want more and will take the State to court to get it. Downstream water users, such as Arkansas and Louisiana, also have a claim on water flowing down the rivers out of our State. The folks downstream have a need for that water. Both New Mexico and Colorado have regretted selling water to Texas and the cost of litigation will outweigh the money we receive.
- **Hg20c** Who is selling the water? There are already three Texas permit applications for the Kiamichi River and one from OKC. There are three Oklahoma applications for Sardis Lake.
- **Hg21** I don't see a problem with taking some of the water that flows out of Hugo Lake and selling it. It ends up in the Gulf of Mexico anyway. We need to be talking to our elected officials because they do what we tell them and if they don't that is our problem.

- **Hg23** Tarrant County is already suing the state of Oklahoma and that is already costing us money. I think they can use the water out of Lake Texoma for bathing and drinking it is not too salty for anything like that, it's just too salty to water their lawns with. Tarrant County should conserve water also.
- **Hg25** Let's assume there is excess water – who else is willing to pay for it other than Texas?
- **Hg26** What is wrong with just giving the water to Texas? If we have a surplus why not just give it to Texas.

Water Rights

- *Native American*

- **Hg12** Has the issue about who owns the water, the State or the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, been settled? If we sell it, then we could be selling someone else's water. I would like to see this issue resolved.

Watershed Management

- **Hg3** Part of the pollution problem in the Hugo Lake is from people dumping their trash and dead animals in the creeks in the area. Someone needs to look into that. All the little creeks come together and run into the lakes. They don't realize that what they dump, they are drinking a week later.

Water Sources

Surface Water

- *Quality*

- **Hg24** I don't think the public understands the enormity of the amount of water we are talking about. There should be a way to communicate this such that it is easier to understand how much excess water there is in southeast Oklahoma. There is more water here than the entire State can use in several years. Even if you consider the projected population and industrial growth.

Water Uses

Industrial Use

- **Hg10d** The coal plants in Oklahoma should be encouraged to take all the water they need because it would be a beneficial use.

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