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Danny Ewbank, Chairman
Water Well Drillers and Pump
Installers Advisory Council



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Ground Water Association Resurrected

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On behalf of the Water Well Drillers and Pump Installers Advisory Council, I want to take this opportunity to update you on some recent activities. Probably the most exciting news I can offer is reformation of the Oklahoma Ground Water Association. As most of you know, the Association has been defunct for many years and, as a result, Oklahoma is currently one of only three states without a g r o u n d w a t e r organization. I believe that all of the men and women working in the industry are stewards

of our precious water resources. That said, we must have a strong group of professionals who are united in their desire to promote and protect our groundwaters and encourage pride in being a part of an industry that impacts each and every citizen.

The Oklahoma Ground Water Association will promote unity, stewardship, professionalism, and pride. We must place emphasis on education related to groundwater issues, construction practices, and current regulations to achieve and maintain the degree of expertise that should be the norm, not the exception, in our industry. Our practices and professional integrity should be above reproach. Through unity, we will have strength in numbers. As a group, we can be in a position of strength to affect proposed legislation and existing rules which impacts everyone in this industry.

The Advisory Council has been meeting monthly to gather information on how other state groundwater associations are organized, what their goals are, and to determine what benefits they offer to members. We

have also solicited advice from key individuals within some of these groups. In particular, the National Ground Water Association has been most helpful in assisting with resources, training, and expertise. I must also mention the tremendous contributions of our friend, Oklahoma Representative Thad Balkman. Rep. Balkman has taken time from his demanding schedule to be present at some of our meetings and has assisted with invaluable legal and legislative expertise. Also, I can't leave out our partners at the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Kent Wilkins and Theda Adkisson, who have rolled up their sleeves and provided valuable support to early development of the Oklahoma Ground Water Association.

As a result of these efforts, the by-laws of the Oklahoma Groundwater Association have been approved and we are currently pursuing recognition as a non-profit organization. The first official meeting will be held August 9 at the OWRB in Oklahoma City; the meeting will begin at 2 p.m. As the saying goes, "We Want You." Whether you are a supplier, contractor, consultant, scientist, manufacturer, or just have an interest, I encourage each of you to join us. Our decisions and actions can benefit generations to come. Think about it!

Regarding other business, we are actively reviewing current rules and regulations governing our industry and the committee plans to submit suggested changes to legislative members during the next session, beginning in February 2003. Two areas of concern are rules governing geothermal wells and geoprobes holes. We strongly encourage your input and suggestions.

On behalf of the Committee--Kari Sever, Cheryl Cohenour, Robert Keyes, Mike Ritter, Larry Hudgens, and myself--we look forward to working with each of you.

Well Plugging Demonstration Exhibits Ideal Procedures

On April 30, the OWRB and Texas County Conservation District conducted an abandoned well plugging demonstration northwest of Guymon. The well, on the property of J.R. McCaull, was an abandoned oil field supply well located adjacent to an active oil well. Board staff Jason Shiever and Kent Wilkins provided technical assistance during the demonstration to illustrate the proper plugging of an abandoned water well.



J.R. McCaull, Mike Ritter, Kent Wilkins, and members of the Texas County Conservation District demonstrate proper plugging of an abandoned water well northwest of Guymon

According to Wilkins, abandoned, uncapped wells can provide a conduit for contamination to easily reach groundwater supplies. While contamination at the surface may take years, it can reach groundwater in a matter of seconds through an unplugged well bore. "Abandoned wells can also be a physical hazard," Wilkins points out. "Animals or humans can fall into unplugged wells, even through a relatively small borehole."

Proper plugging procedure for an abandoned, uncontaminated well generally consists of filling the well bore with clay, bentonite or other impervious material to within 14 feet of the surface. Cement grout should then be installed from 14 to four feet. The casing should then be cut off four feet below ground and soil/fill placed from four feet to the surface.

"I want to thank everyone who participated in and attended the demonstration, especially Mike Ritter for donating his time, manpower, and equipment," Wilkins said. For more information on plugging abandoned water wells, contact Wilkins at (405) 530-8800.

New Rule Changes Effective July 1

Rules changes proposed for Chapter 35 during the past legislative session were passed, signed by the Governor, and became effective July 1, 2002. The new rules, prepared in conjunction with the Well Drillers and Pump Installer Advisory Council, were implemented primarily to reduce the paperwork burden on licensed firms, reduce licensing costs, and to clarify several existing ambiguous rules while maintaining protection of Oklahoma's groundwater.

Highlights of the new rules include:

- The number of licensed activities has been reduced from six to four by combining geotechnical borings with monitoring wells and observation wells with water wells. This change will simplify the application system and reduce costs associated with licensing.
- The distances that water wells may be drilled from certain pollution sources, such as waste lagoons and confined animal feeding operations, have been clarified.
- 20 percent bentonite by dry weight may be added to grout in the annular seal for monitoring well construction.
- Casing may remain in place when plugging contaminated monitoring wells if the well meets current minimum standards and if the top of the screen is below 20 feet.
- A maximum of 50 percent aggregate may be added to the cement to form the cement grout surface seal.

This article addresses only major rule changes, so please review the current rules and regulations for complete coverage. The rules are available upon request from OWRB staff or from the agency's Web site at www.owrb.state.ok.us.

DPC Renewal and Tax Commission Information

In accordance with Oklahoma law, effective July 1, Oklahoma state agencies that issue professional, occupational, or business licenses are required to submit social security information of applicants to the Oklahoma Tax Commission. Renewal of your well driller/pump installer license is contingent upon the Oklahoma Water Resources Board receiving notification from the Oklahoma Tax Commission that you are tax compliant.

Renewal for 2003 licensing must be forwarded to the Oklahoma Tax Commission by mid-October. The

Commission has allowed six months for licensees to be notified and become compliant. If your renewal period is June 30, 2003, please submit the social security number of each certified operator employed by your drilling company to the Water Board as soon as possible. The information will be kept in strict confidence.

Please mail this information to the OWRB at 3800 North Classen Blvd, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 73118, or fax to 405-530-8900 by September 30, 2002. If you have any questions, please call Theda Adkisson at 405-530-8800.
