

OKLAHOMA WATER NEWS

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board



*from
the desk
of Gary
Sherrer*

Governor's Conference Honors Five with Water Pioneer Awards

*Water leaders recognized at November 20 meeting
emphasizing cooperation in water management*

Governor Frank Keating and Senator Don Nickles presented Water Pioneer awards to five Oklahomans with distinguished careers in the development and management of the state's water resources. They were honored at the luncheon session of the Seventeenth Annual Governor's Water Conference at the Oklahoma City Marriott.

Former Senator and Governor Henry Bellmon, Red Rock; former Tulsa Mayor James M. Hewgley, Jr.; and Phillip Klutts, Okemah, received the award, and Ladd Hitch of Guymon and Donald R. Vandersypen of Stillwater were honored posthumously. Paul Hitch and Chris Vandersypen, accepted awards on behalf of their fathers, both of whom died in 1996.

Honoree Henry Bellmon is a two-term governor and U.S. senator who served on the Senate Agriculture Committee and was a ranking minority



Connie Ziegelgruber of the Board's Planning and Management staff registers Chairman Ross Kirtley at the Conference

Grant applications to the Water Resources Board attest to the great need in small communities for funding for sewer and water infrastructure projects. Assistance targeting such projects was made available by the Oklahoma Legislature last session through HB 1434 which authorized the Rural Economic Action Plan, or REAP. The fine reputation of the Board's Financial Assistance Program caused legislators to designate the OWRB as administrator of the \$4.5 million fund.

With that charge came the task of prioritizing a flood of applications from throughout the state. Although applications could be accepted as early as July 1, no money could be disbursed until January 1, an effort to ensure fairness.

None of us expected such a deluge of applications. As of mid-January, Water Board staff had examined and prioritized 227 applications detailing project plans, community finances, engineering plans, EPA consent orders and other information. On January 14, the Board approved 24 of these grant requests totaling \$1.63 million.

Under REAP guidelines, smaller amounts of grant funding will be available every month, until the \$4.5 million appropriated by the Legislature is expended.

The REAP has been a boon to cities, towns and unincorporated areas with populations of 7,000 or less -- and especially advantageous for those communities of 1,500 or less. It was insightful of members of the Oklahoma Legislature to target the neediest communities -- those stressed by declining populations, limited access to services and diminishing quality of life.



Senator Don Nickles and Governor Keating present Water Pioneer Award to Henry Bellmon, former U.S. Senator and Governor of Oklahoma.

Conference, continued from page 1

member of the Senate Budget Committee, where he devoted much of his time to water resources issues. He championed water quality in the Illinois River and Tenkiller Reservoir.

Hewgley was recognized for his long-time support of the Kerr-McClellan Arkansas River Navigation System and Montgomery Joint Lock & Dam. A member of the Tulsa-Rogers County Port Authority since 1973, he served four terms as chairman of its board.



Guymon rancher Paul Hitch accepted the Water Pioneer Award on behalf of his father, the late Ladd Hitch.

Klutts assisted in developing Rural Water & Gas District #2 in Okfuskee County and served as board chairman for 22 years. He was president of the Oklahoma Rural Water Association for 10 years and served five years as president of the National Rural Water Association.

The late Ladd Hitch pioneered irrigation from deep wells and the reuse of irrigation water captured in tail-water pits. He was a strong advocate for cloud seeding as a means to increase rainfall in the arid Panhandle.

Vandersypen, 37-year veteran of the Soil Conservation Service, was instrumental in the development of 872 Oklahoma watershed flood control structures. He worked tirelessly to make the SCS watershed program a success.

The Governor's Oklahoma Water Pioneer Award was introduced at the 1985 water conference and continues to recognize lifelong achievements in the planning, development, conservation and protection of Oklahoma's water resources. A bronze plaque in OWRB offices displays names of honorees.

Earlier, OWRB Chairman Ross Kirtley made brief opening remarks and in-

roduced keynoter, J.D. Williams, Washington, D.C. attorney and authority on political and legal affairs. Williams recalled his association with the late Senator Robert S. Kerr during the critical days of securing appropriations for the Arkansas River Navigation System. He pointed out that, "We have a great advantage in the waterway. I hope we keep alive that spirit of commitment and dedication to the navigation system because it's very good for the country. It's a bright, shining star among government projects," Williams declared.

Following Williams' address, four experts on infrastructure financing discussed options and opportunities available to cities, towns and rural water districts in the construction of water and sewer facilities. OWRB Executive Director Gary Sherrer introduced panelists James Fulmer, president, Oklahoma Finance Authorities; Charles Rainbolt, state director, Rural Development; Joe Freeman, OWRB Financial Assistance division chief; and Leo Presley, director, Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

The morning agenda also included remarks by Bill Hathaway, director of the Water Quality Protection Division, EPA Region 6, who described EPA's new partnership with the states



Dr. Don Wilhite told conferees that drought is a normal part of climate.

in regulatory missions.

Dr. Don Wilhite of the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln was next to the podium. He reminded conferees that it is important to put more emphasis on the ability to predict drought and plan for it. He pointed out that drought is a normal part of climate. Wilhite said, "Any drought

plan must be a long-term effort to successfully reduce vulnerability to drought. He emphasized that crisis management is ineffective in dealing with drought.

"Our vulnerability is increasing as more and more people are depending upon finite natural resources, including our water resources. It is necessary to work as a team in addressing these issues," he continued.

He said, "I believe there are options in mitigating drought and we can be successful in employing those options in reducing risk."

Cloudseeding for rainfall enhancement and hail suppression was explained as another water management tool by Patrick H. Sweeney, president of Weather Modification, Inc., Fargo, N.D. Sweeney pointed out that 50 years of cloud seeding in 43 countries has demonstrated that properly designed programs operated by competent persons can increase rainfall beneficially. He added that the American Meteorological Society and the World Meteorological Organization have issued policy statements attesting to the efficiency of existing technologies to enhance precipitation.

"With advancements in technology, electronics and lasers, we actually put laboratories in the sky so we can see what's happening before, during and after seeding," he said. "For example, the aircraft are up; they're measuring crystals, temperature, liquid water and dewpoint. Data are transmitted back to the radar site in real time, so the meteorologist on the ground, along with the pilot, can make decisions. It improves targeting and optimizes the use of materials," he explained. "However, cloud seeding is predicated upon the availability of convective clouds.

"There is no evidence that cloud seeding contributes to less rainfall anywhere else, or that it produces unwanted effects. On the contrary, timely and accurate seeding contributes to more gentle, long lasting, widespread rains," Sweeney noted.

At the luncheon program, Governor Keating said he hopes to continue economic development efforts in rural areas. He said, "We will continue those programs started in the last session of the legislature, including the Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP.) We will focus on good water supplies, wastewater facilities, technology and good schools. We will work to remove those barriers in rural Oklahoma that prevent us from being prosperous."



Upper left: Mary Schooley, center, of the OWRB visits with Board member Lonnie Farmer and wife, Rene.

Upper right: Speaker-elect Loyd Bensen of the Oklahoma House of Representatives outlined prospects for the upcoming legislative session.

Above: Scott Canfield and C.K. "Red" White of Rogers RWD #4 visit with Reese Daugherty of the Financial Assistance division.

Right center: Patrick Sweeney of Weather Modification, Inc., describes the strategy that will be used in Oklahoma's spring cloud seeding program.

Right: Governor Keating introduced Enid High School students who have assisted in the OWRB "Water Watch" program at Meadow Lake. He congratulated them on their innovative work and told them the project is a model for the nation.

Lower right: Jeffrey Carnahan, Laura Loucks, Juli Watterson of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Devon Patterson, EHS teacher Adrienne Nixon, LaTaisha Tillis, Robin Carlton, Jessica Free and Carrie Novak.

THE FLOOD CURRENT

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1997

OWRB Reminds Oklahomans Of Floodwater Driving Dangers

Almost one-half of flood-related deaths occur in vehicles, primarily when people drive into flooded highway dips or low-drainage areas at night, reminds Ken Morris, state NFIP coordinator.

"It's a case of what you can't see, can hurt you as well as create a false sense of confidence," he pointed out. "Often, drivers familiar with the road ahead of them, assume conditions are safe to cross, even though floodwaters hide roadbed erosion which has occurred during the flood.

"Another major contributor to these avoidable fatalities is overconfidence by the driver in a vehicle's ability to withstand the force exerted by floodwaters," he added. "Most people don't know that as little as six inches of water can cause drivers to lose control of their vehicles, and two feet of water will sweep most cars off the road."

Take these driving tips:

- Be especially careful at night. Darkness greatly increases the vulnerability of a driver to hidden dangers.
- Don't drive too fast through low-water crossings. It may cause a vehicle to hydroplane and lose contact with the road surface.
- Heed all flood and flash flood watches and warnings.
- Keep informed through the news media concerning road conditions.

To promote awareness, the National Weather Service Office of Hydrology has produced an excellent video featuring a 30-second public service announcement and an eight-minute documentary on the hidden dangers of low-water crossings. The video, which has been selected by the

American Automobile Association as the centerpiece of its spring 1997 safety campaign, is an excellent tool for use in presentations to local civic groups, high schools and beginning drivers.

For more information, call Larry Wenzel at (301) 713-0006, Extension 147. The video may be ordered by mailing a check or money order for \$3.50 (which covers postage and handling) payable to NOAA/NWS at the following address:

Larry Wenzel
NWS Office of Hydrology
SSMC-2, Room 8115
1325 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

NFIP Coordinator Ken Morris, right, discusses important program issues with Hank Elling of the Lawton Office. They are standing in front of the Oklahoma Floodplain Management Association exhibit at the Governor's Water Conference in Oklahoma City in November.

Managers' Meeting Set

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) will hold its annual meeting in Little Rock April 28 - May 2, 1997.

The agenda will focus on floodplain management in a multifaceted world. Plenary sessions will include discussions by national and international authorities of relationships between the elements of floodplain management and potential directions for relevant state and federal programs and policies. Concurrent sessions will provide an opportunity for attendees to interact with speakers and fellow conferees on important floodplain management issues.

Alison Nicholson, with the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission, who is coordinating the event, has asked members of the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association (OFMA) to assist with break-out sessions and audio/visual needs.

For more information on the conference, contact Diane Watson, of the ASFPM, at (608) 274-0123.



Don't Drive into Floodwaters and Other NFIP Coordinator's Notes

Report from Ken Morris, Oklahoma NFIP Coordinator

Since the last Flood Current (September-October, 1996), several events of importance have occurred

The Oklahoma Floodplain Management Association Annual Conference on September 11-13 was a huge success. The highlight was the first step in development of a state floodplain manager's certification program.

The primary goal of this program is to increase the effectiveness of local officials in community floodplain management. Pat Hoggard, City of Tulsa, was appointed to chair the committee charged with study and implementation of the program. Pat pledged to have the program up and running by the next OFMA conference, September 10-13, 1997 at Roman Nose State Lodge.

September flooding claimed 5 lives; 4 of them on flooded roads

On September 26 and 27, isolated flooding events in northeast Oklahoma resulted in the tragic drowning deaths of five citizens, four of these related to driving through flooded road crossings. This brings me to a point that the OWRB and other state, federal and local floodplain management officials cannot stress enough -- Don't drive into floodwaters! We ask local officials to publicize this growing problem and to prevent future flooding deaths by placing permanent warning signs at all low-water crossings. The OWRB and FEMA feel so strongly about this that we have cooperated to place 18 billboards warning of the dangers of floodwaters in flood-prone areas in the Oklahoma City area. Our New Year's resolution for 1997 is to prevent all such fatalities. However, it will require all of us to be conscientious in our efforts to warn citizens of this frequent and widespread problem. The accompanying article in this issue of the Flood Current contains valuable information for you.

In November, Donnetta Blanlot and I hosted a floodplain management information booth at the Southwest Construction Code Council Conference in Oklahoma City. The conference,

which was attended by members of the NFIP and Oklahoma Floodplain Management Association, allowed us to recruit new members and pass on flood-related information to our building code enforcement colleagues. At the SWCCC's business meeting, we discussed development of a standing cadre of inspectors to determine "substantial damage" to structures in flooding and other disasters. To date, Florida is the only state to have an organization of this type in place. Dedicated funding for the group (travel, food, lodging, etc.) would likely be enabled with a memorandum of understanding between FEMA and the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management. We are working on the first draft of this MOU.

The First Quarter meeting of FEMA Region VI representatives December 5-6 in Denton, Texas, focused on another significant issue. Currently, the purchase of flood insurance is allowed, even though a builder or developer fails to obtain the floodplain permit from the NFIP participating community. Because there has been widespread support in the region to require a copy of the permit upon request for insurance, Region VI staff have proposed this new requirement to FEMA and FIA officials in Washington, D.C. The five states will first ratify the critical amendment.

Workshops Scheduled in April

The OWRB and FEMA announce dates of annual workshops for Oklahoma floodplain administrators.

The goal of the one-day workshops is to educate local officials on floodplain management. Specifically, sessions will focus on determining base flood elevations and administering the permitting system and Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

Workshop dates and locations are:
April 8 - Checotah Fountainhead Lodge

April 10 - Norman Public Library

April 15 - Bartlesville - TBA

April 17 - Altus - TBA

For information or to register, please call the OWRB at (405) 530-8800.

Rules Hearings Scheduled

Executive Director Gary Sherrer invited citizens throughout the state to join the OWRB in its rulemaking process by attending meetings and commenting on proposals. All meetings are scheduled at 7 p.m. in the following locations:

Guymon - January 23, Texas Co. Activity Center, 5th & Sunset

Oklahoma City - January 27, OWRB Offices, 3800 N. Classen Blvd.

Woodward - February 3, Northwest Electric Co-Op, 2925 Williams Avenue
Lawton - February 4, Great Plains Area Vo-Tech, Rm. 301A, 4500 SW Lee Blvd.

McAlester - February 5, First National Bank Conference Center, 3rd & Choctaw

Tulsa - February 6, University Center at Tulsa, Rm. 153, 700 N. Greenwood

The OWRB and FEMA have cooperated in placing highly visible billboard warnings at low-water zones throughout the Oklahoma City area.



At the January 14 Board Meeting:

The Board approved 24 grants totaling \$1.63 million as the first grants in the Rural Economic Action Plan created by the 1996 Legislature to assist small communities usually overlooked by traditional funding programs. The Legislature allocated \$17 million to REAP funding, \$4.5 million specifically targeting water and wastewater improvements. Mike Melton, assistant to the director who has overseen the prioritization of the applications, said the Board has received 227 REAP applications to date. Grant recipients were:

Coyle Public Works Authority	\$ 100,000.00
Indiahoma Public Works Authority	\$ 57,858.00
Town of Eakly	\$ 84,705.00
Town of Terral	\$ 77,931.45
Town of Depew	\$ 59,000.00
Inola Public Works Authority	\$ 100,000.00
Town of Braggs	\$ 36,995.00
Canadian Public Works Authority	\$ 99,000.00
Okfuskee Co. Rural Water District #1 ..	\$ 35,000.00
Moyers Public Schools	\$ 78,000.00
Beckham Co. Rural Water District #2	\$ 99,000.00
Town of Taloga	\$ 54,000.00
Stringtown Public Works Authority	\$ 97,200.00
Town of Bromide	\$ 50,000.00
Rogers Co. Rural Water District #1	\$ 99,000.00
Town of Cleo Springs	\$ 79,700.00
Town of Nash	\$ 25,800.00
Seminole Co. Rural Water District #1	\$ 70,500.00
Dewey RWSSWM District #3	\$ 44,403.00
Town of Hunter	\$ 60,000.00
Woods Co. Rural Water District #1	\$ 72,343.00
Okay Public Works Authority	\$ 58,700.00
Town of Wanette	\$ 39,999.00
Town of Canute	\$ 53,909.00

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE			
Approved at November/December 1996 and January 1997 Board Meetings			
FAP Loans			
4.372% 1995 Bonds; 28 year maximum term			
4.422% 1994; 28 year maximum term			
Mayes RWD #2	\$	825,000.00	
Tuttle PWA	\$	200,000.00	
Tulsa MUA	\$	6,725,000.00	
Checotah PWA	\$	655,000.00	
Ponca City UA	\$	3,895,000.00	
Okmulgee RWD #6	\$	750,000.00	
FAP Grants			
Pushmataha RWD #1	\$	35,000.00	
City of Geary	\$	50,000.00	
Grady RWD #3	\$	13,870.00	
SRF Loans			
Tulsa MUA	\$	4,035,000.00	
Locust Grove MA	\$	1,835,000.00	
Vinita UA	\$	1,900,000.00	
Ponca City UA	\$	2,272,400.00	
Inola PWA	\$	625,000.00	
TOTALS			
	FAP Loans	FAP Grants	SRF Loans
APPROVED	178	399	51
Amount	\$233,460,000.00	\$22,430,677.00	\$195,108,984.23
FUNDED	167	368	48
Amount	\$207,215,000.00	\$20,120,895.14	\$188,348,984.23

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This bimonthly newsletter, printed by the Department of Central Services, Central Printing Division, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma is published by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board as authorized by Gary L. Sherrer, executive director. Ten thousand copies are printed and mailed bimonthly at an approximate cost of 28 cents each. Copies have been deposited at the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.



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OKLAHOMA WATER NEWS
 Bimonthly Newsletter of the
 Oklahoma Water Resources Board
 3800 N. Classen Boulevard
 Oklahoma City, OK 73118