

OKLAHOMA Water News

Bimonthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board

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From the Director



*Duane A. Smith
OWRB Executive Director*

Much has been made lately of the OWRB Bond Loan Program's recent superior rating from Standard and Poor's. And rightfully so. Now even more communities will be able to take advantage of rock-bottom interest rates to upgrade their water and sewer infrastructure. Often, these savings are passed on to local customers through decreased utility bills, not to mention the overall ripple effect upon Oklahoma's general economy.

Too often overlooked as a financing mechanism for water and wastewater system improvements is the Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) Program, created by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1996. OWRB grants offered through the REAP Program have benefited hundreds of Oklahoma communities through enhance-

See From the Director, Page 2

November Water Conference Tackles "All Things Water"

An eclectic array of water subjects reflecting the diverse water and environmental issues facing Oklahoma will be addressed by state and national experts at the 24th Annual Governor's Water Conference on November 4-5. This year's two-day event, appropriately entitled "All Things Water," commences with a Tuesday afternoon session dedicated solely to issues surrounding the use and protection of water resources from the Arbuckle-Simpson region of south central Oklahoma. Registration for the event begins at 1:00 p.m. Tuesday and 8:00 a.m. Wednesday at the Cox Convention Center, One Myriad Gardens, in downtown Oklahoma City.

Grady Grandstaff, OWRB Chairman, will provide the welcome and opening comments at the Arbuckle-Simpson Symposium, which represents day one of the Water Conference program. Grandstaff will introduce John Keys, Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, who will discuss the Bureau's new Water 2025 initiative, an appeal for commitment of the nation's financial and technical resources to prevent and alleviate water supply conflicts in the western United States.

Gregory Ellis, General Manager of the Edwards Aquifer near San Antonio, will then contrast a situation in Texas similar to that currently being wrestled with in Oklahoma by state and federal agencies



*Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner
John Keys, slated to open the Arbuckle-
Simpson Symposium on Nov. 4*

See Water Conference, Page 2

ments to their water and sewer infrastructures. The Water Board administers the REAP without overhead expenses, which means that all grant money is applied directly to project costs. Also, through the state's 11 substate planning districts, REAP funds are utilized for a variety of community and economic development projects, such as road construction, utility system improvements, and fire protection. But the best feature of the REAP Program, as its name implies, is that it targets Oklahoma's smaller towns, many of which possess limited fiscal resources to meet the mounting needs of their populace. Although funds are available for cities or towns with a population of 7,000 or less, those with fewer than 1,750 citizens have a higher priority, as do rural water districts with less than 525 customers.



A recent \$70,000 REAP grant awarded to Buffalo Valley School in southeast Oklahoma will finance the replacement of its existing lagoon system with a hybrid system, including a total retention and land application system. Present at the grant ceremony in late August were, from left to right, Kelly Self (OWRB), School Board member Rob Martin, Duane Smith (OWRB), Rep. Mike Mass, Sen Richard LerBlance, School Superintendent Carroll Brookshire, Principle Shannon Vanderburg, Rep. Randall Erwin, and Kent Wilkins (OWRB).

REAP funds are provided through annual state appropriations as well as through proceeds from the state's gross production oil tax. REAP monies are also distributed through substate planning districts that identify needed projects in their respective regions.

The REAP Program is an enormous economic development tool for rural Oklahoma. To date, the OWRB has approved 382 REAP grants for more than \$33 million. In tandem with other state and federal funds, these monies have been the driving force behind almost \$60 million in water and sewer project construction in Oklahoma. Especially in regard to the construction of water/sewer lines and treatment facilities, acquisition of water supply, and related

projects vital to the state's rural citizens, the REAP Program may be Oklahoma's best 'bang for the buck' economic development strategy.

As with many state programs, REAP too has born the brunt of state budget cuts for a second straight year. After a minor reduction in Fiscal Year 2003, the OWRB's FY-04 REAP appropriation was cut in half. Rep. Danny Morgan has convened an interim study committee to investigate measures that could bring about more funding for the REAP program.

I encourage all Oklahomans with an interest in state and federal water issues to attend the Annual Governor's Water Conference in Oklahoma City on November 4-5. This year's event will feature a half-day symposium dedicated to exploration of issues surrounding the use of water from the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer region, including the OWRB's recently initiated comprehensive study of this vast and enormously important groundwater supply. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner John Keys will provide opening remarks. A Conference registration form is included in this issue of the *Oklahoma Water News*.

Water Conference . . . Continued from page 1

and beneficiaries of the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer. He will relate to conferees how increasing water demands have impacted ownership, control, and use of the Edwards Aquifer, one of the world's most prolific artesian groundwater basins that provides water supply for almost two million users in south central Texas.

University of Oklahoma law professor Drew Kershner will follow Ellis and dissect various legal aspects of Senate Bill 288, passed earlier this year, which could significantly change how groundwater rights are administered in Oklahoma. SB 288 was passed primarily in response to applications to withdraw large quantities of groundwater from the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer for municipal use in Canadian County. Through the bill, the Legislature has imposed a moratorium on such actions until the OWRB completes a maximum annual yield study of the aquifer. A separate component of the new law requires the Board to consider the impact of proposed uses on springs and streams emanating from "sole source groundwater basins." Although the Arbuckle-Simpson is currently the only sole source aquifer in Oklahoma, as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the bill effectively commingles stream water and groundwater law for the very first time in Oklahoma.

After the break, conferees will be treated to a panel discussion concerning the Board's technical study of the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer and regional water resources. OWRB Executive Director Duane Smith will moderate the group, which includes various

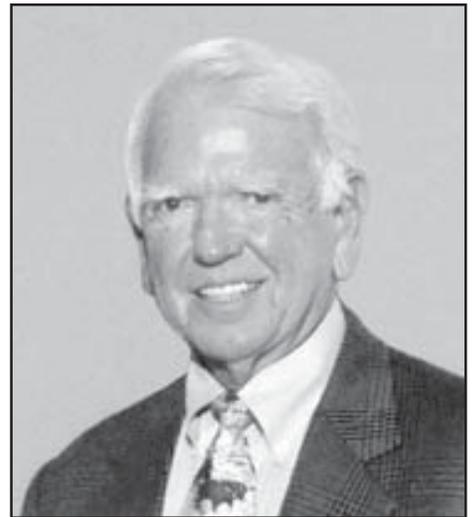
state and federal water experts involved in the Board's hydrologic investigation as well as representatives of local water groups and the State Legislature. Senator J. Paul Gumm, author of SB 288, will discuss the intent of the legislation.

Chairman Grandstaff will also initiate proceedings on the formal Conference agenda, Wednesday, November 5, by introducing Governor Brad Henry for the keynote address. Duane Smith will provide the "State of the State's Water," a summary of current and impending water issues facing Oklahoma. Chris Cochran, investment banker with Capital West Securities and a member of the financing team for the OWRB's Bond Loan Program, will then outline the current status of water and wastewater project financing in Oklahoma.

In a typically popular segment of the Water Conference, federal agency representatives will provide conferees with a national water perspective. Miguel Flores, Director of Water for EPA Region Six, and Col. Robert Suthard, Tulsa District Engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers, are scheduled to relate efforts to imple-

ment new federal initiatives throughout Oklahoma and their respective regions. Following the morning coffee break and an opportunity to visit Conference exhibits, the conference theme is truly embodied by a four-person panel of Oklahoma's cabinet secretaries who will address water issues in their respective areas of involvement. Providing comments are Miles Tolbert (Environment), Terry Peach (Agriculture), Kathryn Taylor (Commerce and Tourism), and Phil Thomlinson (Transportation).

Presentation of awards will kick off the luncheon program, highlighted by recognition of those individuals who were instrumental in assisting victims of the Memorial Day 2002 highway bridge collapse near Webbers Falls, Oklahoma. The U.S. Coast Guard will formally honor six citizens for their selfless and timely public service. This year's Water Pioneer awards will be conferred to former Congressman and long time state water advocate Wes Watkins, Mark Coleman, past (and first) director of the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, and Cliff Younger, Water Watch



Former Oklahoma Governor George Nigh, featured luncheon speaker at the 2003 Conference

Group Coordinator at Grand Lake. They will join the 94 other Oklahomans who have been honored for their lifetime contributions to the planning, development, management, and conservation of the state's water resources.

Adding flavor to the luncheon program is former Oklahoma Governor George Nigh followed by members of the state's Congressional delegation, who will offer a Washington D.C. viewpoint on pressing water issues. Culminating the Water Conference is a perspective from the State Legislature, featuring House Speaker Larry Adair, Rep. Jari Askins, Rep. Danny Hilliard, and Sen. Gumm.



The Little Niagara Swimming Area, along Travertine Creek in the Chickasaw National Recreation Area, is a popular recreation spot in the Arbuckle Mountains. The region's water resources will be the topic of a half-day-long seminar at the Governor's Water Conference on November 4.

All Things Water
**The 24th Annual
 Governor's Water Conference**

November							2003
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Agenda for the 24th Annual Governor's Water Conference "All Things Water"

Cox Convention Center, Oklahoma City

November 4th

Arbuckle Simpson Aquifer Symposium

- 1:00 Registration
- 1:30 Welcome and Introductions
Grady Grandstaff, Chairman
Oklahoma Water Resources Board
- 1:45 Water 2025 Initiative: Preventing Crises and Conflict
John Keys, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
- 2:05 Can Private Property Rights be Protected Without Strong Regulations?
Gregory Ellis, General Manager
Edwards Aquifer Authority (San Antonio)
- 2:25 Water Law Issues in Senate Bill 288
Drew L. Kershen, Earl Sneed Centennial Professor
University of Oklahoma
- 2:45 Coffee Break
- 3:00 Study Overview and Technical Challenges
Moderator: Duane Smith, OWRB Executive Director
Randall Ross, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Noel Osborn, OWRB
Neil Suneson, Oklahoma Geological Survey
Scott Christenson, U.S. Geological Survey
- 4:00 Local Water Management Issues
Dick Scalf, Ada Water Resources Board
Jim Crosby, Manager, City of Yukon
Senator Jay Paul Gumm
Representative Susan Winchester
- 5:00 Adjournment
- 6:00 Reception

November 5th

- 8:00 Registration
- 8:30 Welcome and Introductions
Grady Grandstaff, Chairman
Oklahoma Water Resources Board
- 8:50 Keynote Address
Governor Brad Henry
- 9:10 State of the State's Water
Duane Smith, Executive Director
Oklahoma Water Resources Board
- 9:30 Financing Water Infrastructure
Chris Cochran, Investment Banker
Capital West Securities
- 9:50 EPA Update
Miguel Flores, Director of Water
EPA Region 6
- 10:10 Corps of Engineers Activities
Col. Robert L. Suthard, Tulsa District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- 10:30 Coffee Break/Exhibits
- 10:45 Cabinet Secretary Panel - Water for the Environment, Agriculture, Tourism and Recreation, and Transportation
Miles Tolbert, Secretary of Environment
Terry Peach, Secretary of Agriculture
Kathryn Taylor, Secretary of Commerce & Tourism
Phil Tomlinson, Secretary of Transportation
- 12:00 Luncheon Program
U. S. Coast Guard Public Service Awards
Oklahoma Water Pioneer Awards
Featured Luncheon Speaker, George Nigh
Water Outlook from Washington DC
Oklahoma Congressional Delegation (invited)
State Legislative Water Perspective
Speaker Larry Adair
Representative Jari Askins
Representative Danny Hilliard
Senator Jay Paul Gumm

Clip and mail to:

Governor's Water Conference
3800 N. Classen Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73118

Please enclose \$45 check, money order, or purchase order payable to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

No refunds after October 29.

For more information,
call (405) 530-8800 or e-mail
mnbrueggen@owrb.state.ok.us

24th Annual Governor's Water Conference

REGISTRATION FORM

Check all that apply*:

- I will attend the Arbuckle-Simpson Symposium on November 4.
- I will attend the reception on November 4.
- I will attend the conference and luncheon on November 5.

* One price (\$45) includes any or all of the above.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip _____ Phone (_____) _____

Dobbs, Kirtley New Compact Commissioners

Charles Lynn Dobbs of Altus has been appointed by Governor Brad Henry to serve as Commissioner to the Red River Compact Commission. He replaces Ken Ferguson, an Altus banker, who was appointed to the Commission by Governor Henry Bellmon in December 1990. Appointed to the Kansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission is J. Ross Kirtley of Kingfisher. He replaces Earnest Gilder. Kirtley is a former member and chairman of the OWRB.

Representatives of compact states meet each year to discuss water-related activities in each state and common issues involving shared waters. Typically, each Compact Commission consists of two representatives from each of the member states (the director of the state water agency and a basin resident appointed by the governor) and a federal representative appointed by the President. Various state and federal agencies support the compact commissioners in administering the Compact agreements.

President Tabs New EPA Administrator

On August 11, President Bush announced his intention to nominate Utah Governor Michael Leavitt as Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"Mike Leavitt will come to the EPA with a strong environmental record, a strong desire to improve what has taken place in the last three decades," Bush said. He added that Leavitt understands the importance of clear standards in every environmental policy. "He respects the ability of state and local government to meet those standards, he rejects the old ways of command and control from above," the president emphasized. Leavitt was elected governor of Utah in 1992.

"To me, there is an inherent human responsibility to care for the earth," Leavitt said in responding to the president's decision. "But there's also an economic imperative that we're dealing with in a global economy to do it less expensively." He suggested that progress can be achieved by avoiding extremism. "There is no progress polarizing at the extremes, but there is great progress, there's great environmental progress when we collaborate in the productive middle."

Leavitt must be confirmed by the Senate. Current Acting EPA Administrator Marianne Horinko will remain in that office until the Senate approves a permanent replacement.

OWRB Renews LMFO Monitoring Program

On September 9, the OWRB approved a contract with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF) to continue the Board's program to monitor waste lagoons surrounding Oklahoma's licensed managed feeding operations (LMFOs). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will allocate \$125,000 to underwrite the program through August 31, 2004. During the groundwater monitoring program's previous two years, the two state agencies split operations costs.

With a current total stock of approximately 2.5 million pigs, Oklahoma is the eighth leading hog production state in the U.S. In 1991, Oklahoma farmers reported 190,000 head of swine, which ranked 28th in the nation.

A LMFO is a swine operation of more than 2,500 hogs that weigh more than 55 pounds each and/or 10,000 "nursery" hogs weighing less than 55 pounds each. Oklahoma has 229 licensed hog farms, of which 139 are classified as LMFOs.

--Information courtesy House Media Division and ODAFF

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about Oklahoma's
water resources.

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FAP Receives Accolades from Legislative Leaders

At the Water Board's July 8 meeting, state legislators, financing partners, and other supporters of the agency's financing program gathered to congratulate the OWRB on its milestone AA+ bond program rating, which was announced in June. The OWRB closed on its impending bond issue July 9.

The credit rating, computed by Standard & Poor's, makes the OWRB's program one of the highest rated, uninsured state bond programs in the nation. The Board's superior rating on bond issues is the chief reason that the agency is able to lend money at such low interest rates for water and sewer improvements.

At the Board's monthly meeting, House Speaker Larry Adair said rural Oklahoma had benefited from the "life-saving" program, which he said had generated a tremendous savings for many communities. Rep. Danny Hilliard pointed out that the City of Sulphur is saving its residents nearly three-quarters of a million dollars in interest charges by financing its wastewater collection line replacement project through the OWRB at below-market rates. Last December, Sulphur officials obtained a fixed interest rate of 2.3 percent, plus a one-half percent administrative fee.

Joe Freeman, Chief of the OWRB's Financial Assistance Division, said that by acquiring the loan through the state agency instead of through its own bond issue, Sulphur is saving about \$1.19 per month, or \$14 each year, for each of its utility customers throughout the 20-year life of the loan.

Rep. Jari Askins referred to similar savings incurred by the City of Duncan through the Board's Bond Loan Program, although officials could have issued their own tax-exempt bonds to finance much-needed water and sewer projects. She also thanked the board and the agency's employees for, "helping our communities be more water efficient and use water wisely so that more of it is left over for economic development as well as for recreational purposes."

Rep. Hilliard said issues that had concerned him regarding small communities and water have been noticeably reduced since the implementation of the program. He added that before he entered the Legislature in 1991, he remembered frequently seeing television newscast stories about towns under a "boil order" as a safety precaution against bacterial contamination. Hilliard recalled, "I thought that was really sad because in these days, when we can put a man on the moon and bring him back home, some Oklahomans still had to boil their water." Because of infrastructure projects financed in whole or in part by the Water Resources Board, Hilliard says he has

noticed fewer and fewer of those boil orders on the television news recently.

OWRB Executive Director Duane Smith pointed out that the drought-related water supply problems experienced by many of Oklahoma's cities and towns, which became a repeated occurrence during the 1980s, have become largely a thing of the past due to the many infrastructure projects financed through OWRB loans and grants.

Also attending the July Board meeting were Sen. Bruce Price and Rep. Jack Bonny who provided words of encouragement for the agency in its efforts to address the frequent water problems encountered by Oklahoma's cities and towns.

Chris Cochran, an investment banker from Capital West Securities and a member of the financing team for the bond program, told the Board that this was the single most important bond program in Oklahoma history. He said the water board's program offered interest rates that were far cheaper than those offered anywhere else. "The gap between what you can do for a municipality versus what they can do on their own has never been wider," he related.



OWRB Executive Director Duane Smith, flanked by several members of the State Legislature and other invited guests and visitors at the Board's July meeting, elaborates on the numerous infrastructure projects financed through the agency's enormously popular loans and grants programs.

Oklahoma Drought Monitor

Reservoir Storage

Despite recent rainfall and runoff, lakes in the southwest continue to suffer from critically low levels. As of September 2, the combined normal conservation pools of 31 selected major federal reservoirs across Oklahoma (see below) are approximately 89.7 percent full, a 2.5 percent decrease from that recorded on August 18, according to information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Tulsa District). Eighteen reservoirs have experienced lake level decreases since that time. Twenty-three reservoirs are currently operating at less than full capacity (compared to 29 two weeks ago). Two reservoirs—Lugert-Altus, a paltry 10 percent; and Tom Steed, only 62.8 percent—remain below 80 percent capacity.

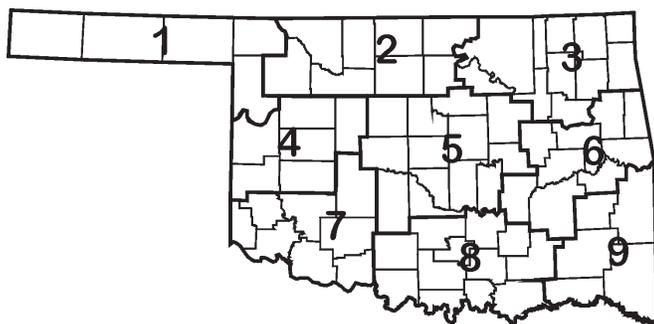
Storage in Selected Oklahoma Lakes & Reservoirs

As of September 2, 2003

Climate Division	Conservation Storage (acre-feet)	Present Storage (acre-feet)	Percent of Conservation Storage
North Central	420,480	417,775	99.4
Northeast	3,710,194	3,423,663	92.3
West Central	276,790	262,218	94.7
Central	154,225	146,057	94.7
East Central	2,915,043	2,530,148	86.8
Southwest	301,810	145,695	48.3
South Central	2,932,652	2,689,521	91.7
Southeast	1,512,859	1,353,641	89.5
State Totals	12,224,053	10,968,718	89.7

Drought Indices

According to the latest Palmer Drought Severity Index (August 30, below), conditions have improved significantly and only two regions in Oklahoma are currently experiencing drought conditions. The Southeast and South Central climate divisions are both in “mild drought.” All of Oklahoma’s nine climate divisions have undergone PDSI moisture in since August 16. The smallest increase occurred in the Southeast climate division.



The latest monthly Standardized Precipitation Index indicates both short- and long-term dryness in central, southern and eastern Oklahoma. Among the *selected* time periods (3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month SPIs), “very dry” conditions are indicated in the Southeast and East Central climate divisions throughout the last 9 and 12 months, respectively. Central, South Central, and West Central Oklahoma indicate “moderately dry” conditions at various times over the past 3, 6, and 9 months. Considering longer periods (through six years), East Central and Northeast Oklahoma are dry throughout the past 15-, 18-, 30-, and 36-month periods.

Palmer Drought Severity Index

Climate Division (#)	Current Status 8/30/2003	Value		Change In Value
		8/30	8/16	
NORTHWEST (1)	MOIST SPELL	1.41	0.60	0.81
NORTH CENTRAL (2)	NEAR NORMAL	1.62	2.14	-0.52
NORTHEAST (3)	MOIST SPELL	-0.41	0.53	-0.94
WEST CENTRAL (4)	NEAR NORMAL	0.49	0.63	-0.14
CENTRAL (5)	NEAR NORMAL	-0.67	-0.54	-0.13
EAST CENTRAL (6)	INCIPIENT DROUGHT	-1.06	-0.66	-0.40
SOUTHWEST (7)	NEAR NORMAL	0.71	0.54	0.17
SOUTH CENTRAL (8)	MILD DROUGHT	-0.68	-0.63	-0.05
SOUTHEAST (9)	MILD DROUGHT	-1.19	-1.45	0.26

Standardized Precipitation Index

Through July 2003

	3-Month	6-Month	9-Month	12-Month
NORTHWEST (1)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
NORTH CENTRAL (2)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
NORTHEAST (3)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
WEST CENTRAL (4)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	NEAR NORMAL
CENTRAL (5)	MODERATELY DRY	MODERATELY DRY	MODERATELY DRY	NEAR NORMAL
EAST CENTRAL (6)	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	MODERATELY DRY	VERY DRY
SOUTHWEST (7)	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL	NEAR NORMAL
SOUTH CENTRAL (8)	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	MODERATELY DRY	NEAR NORMAL
SOUTHEAST (9)	NEAR NORMAL	MODERATELY DRY	VERY DRY	MODERATELY DRY

Financial Assistance Program Update

Loans/Grants Approved as of September 9, 2003

FAP Loans—283 totaling \$481,890,000

The OWRB's Financial Assistance Program (FAP), created by the State Legislature in 1979, provides loans for water and wastewater system improvements in Oklahoma. The tremendous popularity of the bond loan program is due, in part, to extended payoff periods of up to 30 years at extremely competitive low-interest rates, averaging approximately 4.762 percent since 1986.

CWSRF Loans—148 totaling \$498,165,794

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loan program was created in 1988 to provide a renewable financing source for communities to draw upon for their wastewater infrastructure needs. The CWSRF program is Oklahoma's largest self-supporting wastewater financing effort, providing low-interest loans to communities in need.

DWSRF Loans—32 totaling \$86,026,324

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan program is an initiative of the OWRB and Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to assist municipalities and rural water districts in the construction and improvement of drinking water systems. These projects are often mandated for communities to obtain compliance with increasingly stringent federal standards related to the treatment of drinking water.

REAP Grants—382 totaling \$33,072,389

The Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) Program was created by the State Legislature in 1996. REAP grants, used for water/wastewater system improvements, target primarily rural communities with populations of 7,000 or less, but priority is afforded to those with fewer than 1,750 inhabitants.

Emergency Grants—500 totaling \$29,274,446

OWRB emergency grants, limited to \$100,000, are awarded to correct situations constituting a threat to life, health, and/or property and are an indispensable component of the agency's financial assistance strategy.

Total Loans/Grants—1,345 totaling \$1,128,507,953

Applicants eligible for water/wastewater project financial assistance vary according to the specific program's purpose and requirements, but include towns and other municipalities with proper legal authority, various districts established under Title 82 of Oklahoma Statutes (rural water, master/water conservancy, rural sewage, and irrigation districts), counties, public works authorities, and/or school districts. Applications for agency financial assistance programs are evaluated individually by agency staff. Those meeting specific program requirements are recommended by staff for approval at monthly meetings of the nine-member Water Board.

More information about the OWRB's Financial Assistance Program can be obtained by calling the OWRB at (405) 530-8800.

Grady Grandstaff, *Chairman*; Glenn A. Sharp, *Vice Chairman*; Ervin Mitchell, *Secretary*

Harry Currie, Lonnie L. Farmer, Jack W. Keeley, Richard McDonald, Bill Secrest, Richard C. Sevenoaks

Brian Vance, *Writer/Editor* • Darla Whitley, *Writer/Layout* • Barry Fogerty, *Photography*

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