



## **INPUT FROM ILLINOIS RIVER INSTREAM FLOW**

## **PILOT STUDY PUBLIC/STAKEHOLDER MEETING**

### **Armory Municipal Center — Tahlequah, OK**

**January 22, 2015**

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB), working in partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers under their Planning Assistance to States program, held the first of a series of public meetings to share information and obtain feedback on an Instream Flow Pilot Study being conducted on the Upper Illinois River (including Baron Fork and Flint Creeks) above Lake Tenkiller in northeastern Oklahoma. The pilot study is based on the recommendations of a 25-member Instream Flow Advisory Group and the 2012 Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan (OCWP). The OCWP set forth a process to “ascertain the suitability and structure of an instream flow program for Oklahoma.” This pilot study is a key element of that process, as it will be used to assess the potential benefits and challenges that would be associated with an instream flow program, if Oklahoma were to implement such a program. As the pilot study progresses, the OWRB and technical workgroup will host future stakeholder forums and provide updates.

An extensive overview of initiatives leading to the pilot study as well as presentation materials discussed at the meeting is posted to the OWRB Instream Flow Advisory Group webpage: <http://www.owrb.ok.gov/ISF>. Information presented below summarizes the feedback received at the meeting, but is not indicative of meeting attendees’ consensus, nor does it represent any form of endorsement by the OWRB or its technical or facilitation partners.

The meeting included presentations by J.D. Strong (Executive Director, OWRB, and Chair of the Instream Flow Advisory Group), John Rehring (Carollo Engineers), and Forrest Olson (CH2MHILL). The presentation materials are attached to this summary and also posted to the Instream Flow Advisory Group webpage. A summary of comments provided by meeting participants is presented below.

#### **TAHLEQUAH ARMORY MUNICIPAL CENTER – 6:30 pm, January 22, 2015**

- Quantify non-fish recreational needs (boating/rafting).
- Assess public water use and efficiencies.
- Consider hydrogeology and stream/groundwater interaction.
- Include assessment of wetlands, oxbows, etc.
- Assessment should address not just minimum flows—flow patterns.

- Address variabilities beyond study period data.
- Consider water quality as well as quantity (especially metals).
- Is there a maximum flow we want to stay under? Discharges upstream change the river.
- Cherokee Nation involvement encouraged.
- Will (or how will) Arkansas/Oklahoma litigation outcomes affect this study?
- How will the study/data collection affect river users and neighbors?
- Include critical low-flow summer months in study data.
- Consider implications relative to Lake Tenkiller water use allocations.
- Consider what happens if instream flow recommended values conflict with interstate stream compact requirements.
- Process should apply to diverse types of watersheds.
- Please post slides to Instream Flow website (complete).
- Consider erosion in pilot study.
- River is getting wider and shallower; changing flow dynamics.
- Trout Unlimited study looked at over 18,000 man-days of recreation in the study area; recreation groups are willing to conduct additional surveys.
- Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has conducted small-mouth bass studies.
- Plant gathering is another use and other cultural resources and uses.
- Dive shops may have information on Lake Tenkiller water quality trends.
- Quantify actual use by consumptive users, including impacts to groundwater and impacts to individual wells.
- Recreation can impact landowners along the river.
- Should there be a system for prioritizing uses?
- Other watersheds will have much higher public and industrial uses than the upper Illinois River— consider how that works with this method.
- Forms/mailings could be used to solicit more input and data.
- Recreation opportunities such as hunting, camping, and birding are also linked to the river and its flow.
- Add Oklahoma Department of Tourism to workgroup to help provide data.
- Will the ongoing Red River Basin study look at instream flows?
- Some development has been talked about on both sides of Arkansas/Oklahoma border.