

Cannaday learns more about Water Plan

The Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute along with representatives of the Oklahoma Water Resource Board (OWRB) had scheduled a meeting at Stigler Campus of Kiamichi Career Tech whose purpose was to present the results of the COMPREHENSIVE Water Plan that was funded by the legislature in 2007.

This plan was to include information on supply, demand, management, planning, conservation, inter-governmental relations and more.

Representative Cannaday said, "Let me share a very shocking revelation I experienced while attending this meeting. It seems there has been a total disregard for – or ignoring of – the major economic impact of the non-consumptive uses of water, specifically those relative to the state's tourism and recreation sectors."

Tourism brings in an estimated \$6 billion to the state. Since much of Oklahoma's recreation and tourism centers on our lakes, rivers and streams, it is clear that a large portion of that \$6 billion depends on the availability and prudent management of water.

To ignore this by stating that the OWRB only considered the economic impact of water that could be identified as that which is allowed to be used through the permit sys-

tem is both simplistic and bogus.

The value of water-based recreation to Oklahoma is not something easily overlooked. This is not simply about having fun on our lakes and rivers; it is about economic survival for a major portion of our state's tourism industry.

Rep. Cannaday said he was surprised when one of the speakers said that, throughout all their meetings, this was the first time he had heard this issue raised. The Corps of Engineers, through federal statutes, identifies recreation as a core function of many of our lakes, including Lake Eufaula.

What have those in charge of this study been doing with the state's money during the last four years while allegedly assessing Oklahoma's "comprehensive" water needs?

Another major oversight in their study was factoring in the role of the Native American tribes, who have raised serious questions about the scientific validity of the state's "Comprehensive" plan.

On May 17 at the Southeast Expo Center in McAlester you will have another chance to remind the OWRB that their work is incomplete and does not reflect the true water needs of Oklahomans. Please make time to attend that meeting and express your concerns about this plan.

Ideas flow at water plan feedback session

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By Donna Pearce
Managing Editor

In one of 13 regional sessions concerning feedback and implementation of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan, folks attending the Lower Arkansas regional meeting at Stigler last Thursday shared ideas with Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) and Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute (OWRRI).

The meeting at Stigler (Lower Arkansas Region) marked the seventh of the thirteen regional sessions held.

"This is the first one that we've had this much input at," said Kyle Arthur, OWRB Director of Planning.



Photo by Donna Pearce

Save Our Water Lake Eufaula members, President Rick Smenner (left) and Pennie Embry (center), along with State Rep. Ed Cannaday (right), share their ideas.

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He was talking with Rick Smenner, President of Save Our Water Lake Eufaula; Pennie Embry, Save Our Water and Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy; and State Rep. Ed Cannaday.

"Our concern is with the non-consumptive use which drives our economy," said Smenner.

The group discussed that the focus of the Comprehensive Water Plan only addresses consumptive use of the state's water.

Recreation, a non-consumptive use, is critical to the economy in the Lake Eufaula region.

Arthur said it hard for the OWRB to define the value of the non-consumptive use because no definitive study has been done.

The Save Our Water Lake Eufaula members said they would research how such a study might be funded.

Thursday night's regional

meeting opened with a review of Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan recommendations by Jeri Fleming of OWRRI.

"We have a total of 79 recommendations; however, we won't be able to do them all. So, we've recognized 17 for a priority list," said Fleming.

Guests at the session were provided with a Water Policy & Related Recommendations for Oklahoma booklet.

However, the 79 recommendations were organized into quarter-folds which focused on five different areas—Conservation & Land Management, Water Management, Government Relations, Water Supply and Planning.

An interim draft of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan is what is now being reviewed at the regional meetings.

Fleming said after the 13 meetings are complete at the end of May, all of the information will be turned over to the OWRB, who will then create the final draft

to be presented at its Aug. 2011 meeting. OWRB members will vote to approve, or not, the final draft at the Oct. 2011 meeting.

Once the final draft is approved by the OWRB, it will be turned over to the State Legislature for implementation.

The 13 watershed planning regions include: Panhandle, Southwest, West Central, Upper Arkansas, Middle Arkansas, Grand Lower Arkansas, Eufaula Southeast, Blue Boggy, Lower Washita, Beaver-Cache and Central.

The next regional meeting (the Eufaula Region) is scheduled for Tuesday, May 17, at the Southeast Expo Center in McAlester.

The feedback and implementation meeting will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

A technical meeting designed for water suppliers, but that is also open to the public, will be held the same day from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, visit: okwaterplan.info