

## Update on OWRB Regional Water Meetings

The eleven 2008 OWRB regional meetings will be concluding on November 13. It has been an interesting process so far. Under the meeting format, participants do not decide on the merits whether issues such as in-stream flows, water transfers or priorities for recreational users should be part of the water law.

If a discussion group rates a topic high this means the issue should be discussed next year in the 2009 meetings. A low ranking means this issue should not be discussed further. Also, once each group reports their findings to the entire gathering, any individual can disagree with the group decision and that issue can be advanced even if the group discussion resulted in the decision to rank the issue low. As a consequence many of the 54 topics are viable in the next round.

Overall municipal officials are doing an excellent job explaining municipal water issues, the importance to measure the actual amounts of available water, the high costs of water development and the resulting need to carefully decide any statutory changes due to the need for certainty in water rights. At the Elk City meeting, one of the four groups determined if they liked existing law, then they voted not to advance that particular issue. Their philosophy was further discussion at the 2009 meetings would increase the likelihood of statutory changes. Their stated philosophy was: if it ain't broke – don't fix it.

Future meetings are set for **Muskogee** on October 23; **OKC** on November 6 and **Seminole** on November 13. OML will be sending municipal participants background materials and talking points prior to the scheduled meetings.