

Municipal Water Plan

By Diane Pedicord, OML General Counsel

The OML Municipal Water Plan was unanimously approved by the OML Board of Directors. This plan was worked on by the OMUP Steering Committee for the past year and was discussed in detail by working groups at our recent Water Summit.

The Plan finds that the OWRB Water Plans of 1980 and 1995 show a reliable supply of water that is sustainable beyond the current 50-year planning period. However, given the limited water capability for periods of drought and abundant rainfall, the state needs to make an adequate commitment to development, capture, storage and distribution of water for all parts of the state.

A comprehensive water plan must be based on verifiable data for water availability into the future, in addition to financing options to pay for needed infrastructure and water plan development for each public and private water system.

The State should maintain the basic elements of its current statutory system of water rights to allow beneficial use of water. This is needed to protect current investments in water development.

To implement these principles, hydrologic studies must be completed which will be the basis for permit allocations in recognition of the unique characteristics of the aquifer; all non-domestic wells shall be permitted and metered, and there should not be a new policy on in-stream flows as a priority over other beneficial uses.

In addition, there should be no new moratoriums or water use priorities; conjunctive use should be implemented on a region-by-region or basin-by-basin basis only after a hydrological study is completed for the basin. If water use is determined to deplete or diminish water for reasonable uses, delivery of water from other sources would mitigate the adverse impact. Any loss of water use due to the application of these principles should be compensated for by the State.

The state should create a fund to finance new water storage, reserves and pipelines for distribution. There should be incentives for regional cooperation controlled at the local level and incentives to adopt water conservation methods and programs. Beneficial use should remain the standard for a permit and the state should not adopt a "public interest" standard which builds in delay and controversy to water use. Surplus water should only be sold out-of-state after all long-term in-state needs have been met. Any funds produced by out-of-state sales should fund storage and water transportation.

OML wishes to thank the city and town officials who have given their time and expertise over the past year to this effort. Members of the 2007 OMUP Steering Committee are Owasso City Manager Rodney Ray (Chair), Woodward City Manager Alan Riffel (Vice-Chair), Okmulgee City Manager Bob Baxter, Hobart City Manager Wilt Brown, Marlow Administrator Janice Cain, Stillwater City Manager Dan Galloway, Elk City City Manager Guy Hylton, Norman Capital Project Engineer Bryan Mitchell, Nichols Hills City Manager David Poole, Poteau Mayor Jeff Shockley, Sayre City Manager Steve Tomberlin, Okmulgee City Attorney Mike Vanderburg, Lawton City Attorney John Vincent and Ada Councilman Darrell Nemecek.