

Oklahoma to consider new 50-year water plan

robby.short@news-star.com

Posted Jun 18, 2011 @ 06:21 PM

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.



SHAWNEE, Okla. —

For the past several years the Oklahoma Water Resources Board has been meeting with the public to determine a course of action for a new, 50-year water plan. The previous plan expires at the end of this year leaving the state with no direction moving forward.

“Responsible allocation of water, our most precious natural resource, is among the greatest responsibilities we have today to the citizens of tomorrow,” Oklahoma House Speaker Kris Steele said. “The state’s last 50-year water plan is about to expire. We need a new one, and we need it now. With the updated comprehensive water plan nearly complete, we must no longer defer action on this vital issue.”

The plan was developed by the Oklahoma Water Resource Board, and will now be handed off to a joint legislative committee for review for use in developing the state’s new policy.

“We simply cannot afford to waste time or play political games with our water policy. It is too important to the future of our state,” Steele said.

One pressing issue is the Ogallala aquifer, drought conditions and an ever increasing population is depleting the aquifer. The Ogallala provides water to 27 percent of the farmlands in the United States, and isn’t the only shrinking source of water threatening the human ecology. The aquifer is located in the central plains from South Dakota, to West Texas and Southern New Mexico.

“The tragedy of all of this is that a lot of our decisions have been made based off history,” Dr. Joe Taron said. “Before we had widespread electricity the average person would use 70 to 80 gallons of water a day, now it’s closer to 140 to 150 gallons a day.”

Taron said increased usage, along with the effects of concentrated pollution has further reduced the state’s water supply.

“The solution to pollution is dilution,” Taron said. “Education is key, it’s our responsibility to protect and conserve our water sources.”

Taron said the same amount of pollutants were seeping into the water table, while the amount of water has decreased enough that pollution levels are becoming harmful.

“All of the water that has ever been made has already been made,” Taron, who is a member of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board member said. “There is no way to make any more of it.”

The OWRB came up with a plan that includes 38 proposed sites around the state for water reservoirs, ranging in size from 1,550 acres to 53,000 acres. One near Asher is the only proposed site located in Pottawatomie County.

“We have three sources of water,” Taron said. “Surface water, with the reservoir, shallow water, with rivers and streams, and the bedrock aquifers like the Ogallala.”

Taron said that most surface water would run off into rivers and streams and eventually the ocean, before it was able to seep into the water table.

“I believe that impounding water as it falls to the earth is the best option,” Taron said. “Water has to seep into the bedrock to replenish the aquifers, and reservoirs hold the water in place instead of allowing it to flow down the rivers and out into the Gulf.”

Taron was instrumental in the state’s acquisition of funding for the Wes Watkins Reservoir.

“It is estimated to cost the state \$86 billion to restore the water infrastructure around the state,” Taron said.

This number would not include any new reservoirs. One proposed reservoir, near Ada, has already been approved but has yet to be funded.

There is also a plan in place for a reservoir near Seminole, although it was not one of the 38 locations to make the OWRB list.

“The Scissor tail site near Seminole is a preliminary plan,” Taron said. “It was probably the result of someone’s pipe dream.”

Taron said the Wes Watkins provided a dependable supply of 4.1 million gallons of water a day, while to build a reservoir today that was capable of 5 million gallons a day would cost \$126 million.

“This will all come down to money,” Taron said. “The main thrust behind this comprehensive water plan is to determine supply and demand.”

“I predict that more reservoirs will be built,” Taron said. “My gut feeling is that a lake will be built near Ada to provide an alternative source in case of an emergency. Plans for a reservoir north of Ada have already been approved, but it was never funded.”

Taron said that even if construction was to start today, it would be 10 years before a new lake could open in the state.

“We have been the beneficiary of good cheap water, and those days are over,” Taron stated. “We have a responsibility to a person, to protect and conserve our water.”

“I’m 80 years old,” Taron said. “None of this stuff will ever effect me. I have 21 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren, and I have a responsibility to make sure they have water.”

Officials from Texas have been pushing for federal funding in order to desalinate the Red River for several years along with several failed attempts to purchase large quantities of water from Oklahoma.

“Texoma is too salty for human consumption,” Taron said. “They are still trying to get funding for that. I have had coffee made from desalinated water, and it will cure you of drinking coffee.”

Taron said that 95 percent of Earth’s water is salty, and more than a one of all fresh water is located in glaciers.

“With drought and other conditions we have to figure out how to retain and distribute what water we do get,” Taron said.

“Some communities will collect rainwater and use it to water their crops.”

“The United States Congress has control over all of the water in the U.S.,” Taron said. “And if they aren’t informed they can make some boondoggle decisions.”

“I hope we never get to a point in this state where we treat water as a commodity,” Taron said. “Because if we do, then we

will have people that can't afford to drink water.”
“We have a God given right to clean air and water,” Taron said. “We as a society have to honor that.”

Robby Short may be contacted by calling 214-3934.

Copyright 2011 The Shawnee News-Star. Some rights reserved

Popular Videos



**Casey Anthony
Breaks Down in
Court**



**Raw Video: Pilot
Dies in Poland Air
Show Crash**



**New testimony in
Knox case**



**Phil Campbells
Help Ala. Town of
Phil Campbell**



**Insect expert
testifies at Casey
Anthony trial**



**Raw Video:
Obama, Boehner
on the Golf Course**

Comments (0)

Login or register to post a comment:

Login

Username:

Password:

Forgot password

Register

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

I agree to the terms of use

I am over 13 years of age

NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"

YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS

BOOK NOW

LAQUINTA INNS & SUITES

[Contact us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [About our Ads](#)

The Shawnee News-Star | 215 North Bell Shawnee, OK 74801

Copyright © 2006-2011 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons](#) license, except where noted.

SEO by [eLocalListing](#) | [Advertiser profiles](#) | [RadarFrog Merchant Directory](#)