

Region Needs to Address Water Concerns

In January, when a rash of wildfires blanketed the region, destroying thousands of acres and claiming lives and property, Gov. Brad Henry set aside a day of prayer for the state. He asked Oklahomans to think about the victims and responders, and then he asked them to pray for rain.

The rain has been scant since and coming off the warmest December in recorded history, along with a mild winter, municipalities in Central Oklahoma have begun addressing water capacity and usage concerns. To rub salt into the wound, experts at the National Climate Prediction Center are forecasting a continued drought for the Southern Plains through April.

La Nina, a "southern oscillation" of wind and pressure in the tropical Pacific has a cyclical tendency to bring dry windy conditions to the south central region of the United States, which may mean that Central Oklahoma could be in the midst of a prolonged dry spell. A study of 100 years of rainfall history also points to a potential dry trend that may last several years.

Last month, drought indicators had Central Oklahoma resting uncomfortably

between "extreme" and "exceptional" drought conditions. The dry weather affects foliage, trees and green space and with spring-like temperatures looming, people will soon be watering their lawns in a frenzy. The resulting effect on municipal water plant capacities and water quantity may be dramatic. Already, some municipalities are seeing summer-like readings in usage, and most surface water sources are visibly below average storage capacity.

ACOG is offering advance information on this issue, to avoid confusion that occurred around the region in the summer of 1998, when there was trace precipitation over a 91-day period, while the state staggered through record consecutive triple digit heat.

"Water conservation needs to start now, not when we need it most," said John Harrington, Water Resources Director for ACOG. "Public awareness of this issue will be a coordinated effort among all Central Oklahoma communities."

Without a coordinated regional effort, the public remains largely confused because each municipality has different

guidelines and programs that vary based on capacity, usage and water source. Conservation efforts, such as rationing, can actually be counterproductive in initial stages, as citizens tend to over-consume on their requisite "odd-even" days after a rationing order is declared.

Public and Media Relations

There are other issues that become apparent when municipalities call for rationing. Due to different rationing schemes, the public becomes bemused as to when they can use water outdoors, and when a decree affects them.

Neighbors turn on neighbors during these times, while heat and usage can cripple water systems. Further misunderstanding arises between neighbors when one utilizes a private water well, and another uses water provided by a municipality. Most Central Oklahoma communities fall under five different tiers:

- No rationing plan is implemented
- Voluntary odd-even (address coincides with calendar date)

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OK-FIRST Providing Weather Details

The Oklahoma Climatological Survey (OCS) and the Oklahoma Mesonet system offer a variety of training courses to municipal public safety officials needing training and weather data.

An award-winning program, OK-FIRST is an outreach project that provides training and real-time weather data to qualified applicants. The program's Web site, okfirst.ocs.ou.edu, also provides grant information on its news page. OK-

FIRST training and data are provided at no cost to qualified applicants in Oklahoma. As of December 2005, more than 185 agencies in and around Oklahoma were participating in the program. OK-FIRST operates with substantial funding support from the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety.

Enrollment in the latest class has already wrapped up for this spring, but ...See "Weather" on page four.

LifeCheck Program Provides Healthcare Snapshots

With health insurance rates consistently escalating, it is becoming more and more difficult for businesses and municipal governments to provide comprehensive health care coverage for their employees. Insurance professionals stress that preventative maintenance is key to reducing health insurance premiums. Health awareness, knowing one's body, and cutting out excessive lifestyle habits are also positive measures.

For businesses and city governments, encouraging employees may not be enough. Sometimes, a person needs to see something on paper before they initiate making a lifestyle change.

LifeCheck Laboratory is a new Oklahoma City-based service that provides onsite health checks for employees,

and a risk assessment that can help detect health problems before they arise. By preventing health issues before they happen, employers are less likely to be affected by huge emergency medical bills and lost productivity when their employees do become seriously ill. LifeCheck provides a profile that recommends health improvements. Screenings performed with local employers so far have yielded extraordinary results.

A review of 42 studies show that worksite health disease and stroke prevention programs can lead to more than 25 percent in reductions in absenteeism, health care costs and disability and worker's compensation costs.

"We view LifeCheck as a wellness program for employers no matter what size the company," said Mike McAuliffe, president of LifeCheck Laboratory.

LifeCheck includes an assessment that employees can fill out online. Medical professionals come out and do physical screening on each participating employee at the worksite, which includes minor lab

tests, and a comprehensive physical analysis. Employers receive the results confidentially by mail, and receive recommendations to help improve problems of concern, or to point out medical issues that the participant may not have been aware.

"We strive to improve health through early detection," said Karl Nigg, LifeCheck Laboratory CEO and managing partner.

Employers with 25 or more participating members can attain a group profile of basic data points to see how their employees rank on key health indicators.

In Central Oklahoma, companies such as Chesapeake Energy, Devon Energy and BancFirst have enlisted in the program. City governments with members in the Oklahoma Municipal Assurance Group (OMAG) have also participated. The cost of LifeCheck's services is \$99 per employee.

For more information on the service, visit www.lifechecklab.com or call Mike McAuliffe at 917-1896.



Central Oklahoma *Perspective*

Offering Regional Leaders News and Information

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Association of Central Oklahoma Governments

*"Providing Regional Leadership in
Central Oklahoma Since 1966"*

Established in 1966, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) is a voluntary association of cities, towns and counties. ACOG helps member governments plan for common needs, cooperate for mutual benefit and coordinate for sound regional development.

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National Memorial Institute Names New Executive Director

Donald R. Hamilton was recently named Executive Director of the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT). Hamilton has served as Deputy and Interim Director of MIPT for five years.

C. Michael Carolina, Chairman of the Search Committee, said the organization conducted a nationwide search in conjunction with Joy Reed Belt Search Consultants in Oklahoma City.

"Don was a strong candidate from the beginning. Our exhaustive search confirms the right person for the job was already in our organization," said Carolina.

Hamilton has a broad background in terrorism and foreign affairs. On two occasions, he served in the State Department's Counter-terrorism Office and as a senior advisor to the National Commission on Terrorism. Additionally, Hamilton took a

year's leave of absence from MIPT to serve as a Senior Counselor to L. Paul Bremer, Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq.

Hamilton said his immediate goal for MIPT is to make the Institute better known in Oklahoma, around the country and around the world. "MIPT has created the world's best specialized library on terrorism. Our Terrorism Knowledge Base is unquestionably the broadest and deepest source of public information on terrorist attacks, terrorist organizations and the history of judicial proceedings against accused terrorists. We need to make sure that people know these resources are there and how easy it is to take advantage of them. This information can be of great value to students and scholars," said Hamilton.



ACOG MEMBER IN PERSPECTIVE:

Moore

By Jerry Church

It's a long, thin office that houses a large family. When you walk into a real estate office, you generally don't expect a window display of beautiful, original glass art. But it's here, catching the afternoon sun and throwing disparate beams of colors across the lobby. Mom and dad work up front, and past a long row of offices, in the back, is a glass artist's studio housing one of the state's largest kilns. Adjacent to it is a top-notch plastics shop, where intricate signs and Plexiglas art are created.

Kathy McMillan works here, selling homes. Her brothers are both artisans and they work in the back. Her brother Rick Bewley and his wife are glass artists, and they make glass plates, bowls and jewelry. McMillan's brother Phil works the plastic factory. Her parents are there every day, and the whole building resonates like one happy family.

McMillan is a woman who based her life and happiness on family. With four children and a couple of grandchildren, it's only fitting that she surrounds herself with a familial atmosphere. She's in her first full term as a councilmember for the city of Moore, a town that she grew up in, when long ago there were but simple town amenities.

"My grandchildren are seventh generation Moore residents, and my children are third generation Moore High School graduates. I remember when Moore had one stop light, and 12th Street was a dirt road, and I'm not 100 years old!" she said. "It's changed that much, that fast and I wanted to make sure that it changes in the right direction."

"I guess I wanted to be part of a *positive* change," McMillan said.

Positive Change

Before she started selling real estate seven years ago, McMillan worked as a substitute teacher for the Moore-Norman school district, traveled the globe be-

cause of military obligations and raised her family. She finally came home a few years ago.

"Moore has always been known for having an exceptional school system," McMillan said, "And I'm passionate about retaining that." "I want Moore to fit into the metro region as a community, but I also want it to retain its distinct identity as a place where people can live and shop, and enjoy entertainment and dining."

"It seems like people have always lived in Moore, and gone to school in Moore, but have gone elsewhere to do everything else."

The city of Moore comprises 22 square miles. City leaders have the opportunity to be selective with develop-

ing retail and housing and finding a good balance between the two.

"We want a nice diversity, and a nice culture to develop. Basically, a whole lifestyle that's inclusive of the things that people want the most," she said.

Finding Balance

With a new movie theater being constructed, and more restaurants on the way, McMillan is also pleased with the family events and fairs that the city has been sponsoring.

"Instead of traveling half-way across town to be able to shop, I really think that we can do it all here. You bump into people that you know, and you get more of a community feeling when you see people that you know and recognize," she said.

"I feel like if you're not part of the solution; you're part of the problem. I don't want to be one of these people that sits back and complains," said McMillan. "You can't stop progress, and why would you want to? I remember it then, and I remember it now, and I think we can enhance the amenities in our community and improve our quality of life."



Kathy McMillan

Almost There

The city of Moore offers great schools, nice neighborhoods and friendly people. Thanks to the city's leadership and keen foresight, the community has been able to positively adjust and overcome storm damage it received during tornado outbreaks in 1999 and 2003. Damaged houses have been rebuilt, stronger and with stricter building codes. A school now doubles as a community safe room.

"There are a few vacant lots, but no bare slabs. We have some "Dr. Seuss" looking trees, but that's something that Mother Nature is going to have to fix over time. I feel like we recovered as a community, and we're likely stronger now than we were then."

Still learning about the process of municipal government, McMillan is excited at the prospects of her council term and serving her community. Her historical perspective offers her a positive outlook.

"When you compare the before and after of Moore, everything that has come back, has come back better. I'm excited and proud of Moore."

Coming Regional Events

Municipal Government Week

• March 6-10

Municipal Government Week offers cities and towns around the region a chance to bring citizens and students closer to a community's government. Contact the Oklahoma Municipal League at 528-7515 for helpful planning information.

“Weather Details”

...Continued from page one.
would-be applicants should consider applying for the next certification class offered in the fall. The class is recommended for emergency personnel, such as dispatchers that require current weather data to perform their jobs.

OK-FIRST participants also are required to take re-certification training every 18 months to keep them up to date on latest models and technology.

Some of the products offered through the program include fire danger models and direction on reading wind patterns and precipitation indicators. The fire danger models were updated this winter to address the rash of wildfires that occurred in the region in December and January.

For more information, visit the OK-FIRST Web site.

“Water Concerns”

...Continued from page one.

- Mandatory odd-even
- Mandatory odd-even night only
- No outside watering allowed

ACOG plans to provide a centralized media source for all communities in Central Oklahoma. A weekly update will be produced for media indicating the status of municipal water rationing plans. A page

on the ACOG Web site, at www.acogok.org will be dedicated to include a regional map of rationing status, capacities and conservation tips.

Now is the time to plan for a long-term regional conservation mindset. ACOG staff will be contacting all communities in coming weeks. Consumers should be encouraged to do their part. There are

many online resources that provide great information on this subject. One Web site, www.wateruseitwisely.com, provides 100 useful tips for consumers on how to save water indoors and externally.

For more information on water conservation, contact John Harrington or Jerry Church, ACOG.

ACOG Calendar

March

- 9th Areawide Planning Technical Advisory Committee, 9 a.m.
Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 14th 9-1-1 Technical Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- 21st Operation FireSAFE, 10 a.m.
Central Oklahoma Clean Cities Stakeholders, 1:30 p.m.
- 30th 9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m.
Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m.
ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m.
Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.

April

- 13th Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 27th 9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m.
Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m.
ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m.
Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.

Central Oklahoma Perspective

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