



WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL

Project ID: 2003OK28B

Title: Facilitating the Tenkiller Utilities Authority Public Water Decision Project

Project Type: Research

Focus Categories: Water Quality, Water Quantity, Water Supply

Keywords: stakeholder decision-making, public education and outreach, water treatment, water distribution, management of natural resources

Start Date: 03/01/2003

End Date: 02/28/2004

Federal Funds: \$23001.00

Matching Funds: \$50000.00

Congressional District: 1st and 2nd

Principal Investigators: McCrory, Mac; Schieffer, Weldon

Abstract: From the perspectives of quality of life and economic development, nothing is more critical to a region than its future water supply. The \$60 million dollar water centralization project which generated the necessity of the TUA has nearly failed due to difficulties associated with linking stakeholders to the scope and magnitude of project goals. Water quality and quantity, environmental justice, compliance with federal water laws, and homeland security are among the issues in this project to be linked to stakeholder populations within the region.

As stated in a recent U.S. Corps of Engineers' report, the region currently does not have sufficient drinking water, adequate raw water storage, or wastewater distribution capacity for its current population. An additional 1,780 acre feet of raw water storage is needed to meet current demand, and an additional 4,100 acre feet of raw water storage capacity will be required to meet the needs of the next few decades. In daily operation, municipal and rural water service systems have failed to keep pace with an increased growth rate in both the demand for residential and industrial development, further adding to the deterioration of other basic infrastructure. Consequently, a lack of adequate water and wastewater capacity coupled with current limitations in public water distribution, in conjunction with an ever growing sensitivity to environmental degradation, has resulted in a very immediate need to publicly

address water issues in this part of Oklahoma.

These issues are not associated with a lack of availability of water, but rather with a regional need to adequately decide and manage future usage of existing water resources. This project will bring focus and collaboration to the multiple issues related to both immediate and future sources of drinking water, wastewater and natural resource management, homeland security, and environmental justice for issues within the scope of the TUA.

The Institute for Issue Management (IIMADR) will neutrally link information to stakeholders in TUA's water project by convening and facilitating informational exchanges and public education on the topical issues associated with its project, and further serve as a neutral clearinghouse for public access and involvement in the TUA project.

Procedurally, IIMADR will: (1) assemble and maintain project data integrating geographical considerations, political boundaries, population densities, natural resource availability, census data projections and other published information, and develop a computer database of such information for use by all stakeholders, (2) centralize, assemble and neutrally disseminate information and specific project data within TUA's project, (3) plan, organize, market, publicize, and neutrally convene stakeholder meetings regarding all phases of the TUA project, (4) survey and document consumer preferences and other stakeholder dynamics within TUA's project, and (5) neutrally engage stakeholders in the direction and scope they choose to take within the TUA project as a whole, providing a neutral link between stakeholders, ratepayers, consumers, and decisionmakers.

Topics of water conservation, preservation of natural resources, and the appropriate use of sensitive land and water resources, water rights, legal matters involving land and utility development, environmental justice, and economic development will be afforded high levels of interaction in the TUA project.

This project is consistent with the third objective of the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute in that it generates cooperation with other institutes and other organizations in the region, increasing both their effectiveness and the implementation of regional activities regarding water. As currently designed, this project will impact approximately 95,000 people distributed over a land area of approximately 1,350 square miles in east central Oklahoma. The populations receiving water from the TUA water project will have an adequate supply of clean, safe drinking water, and an enhanced distribution and management system of potable water for an estimated 45 years. Environmental justice, land rights and land use decisions, and best management practices will be optimized during the planning and construction phases of the project by way of stakeholder inclusion in decision making. The result will be the appropriate use and protection of vital water habitat and related natural resources, the implementation and use of appropriate construction techniques within a major, centralizing effort in a water project, and an improved, regional economic benefit for communities, small towns, and cities.

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Last Modified: Tue June 10, 2003 4:44 PM

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