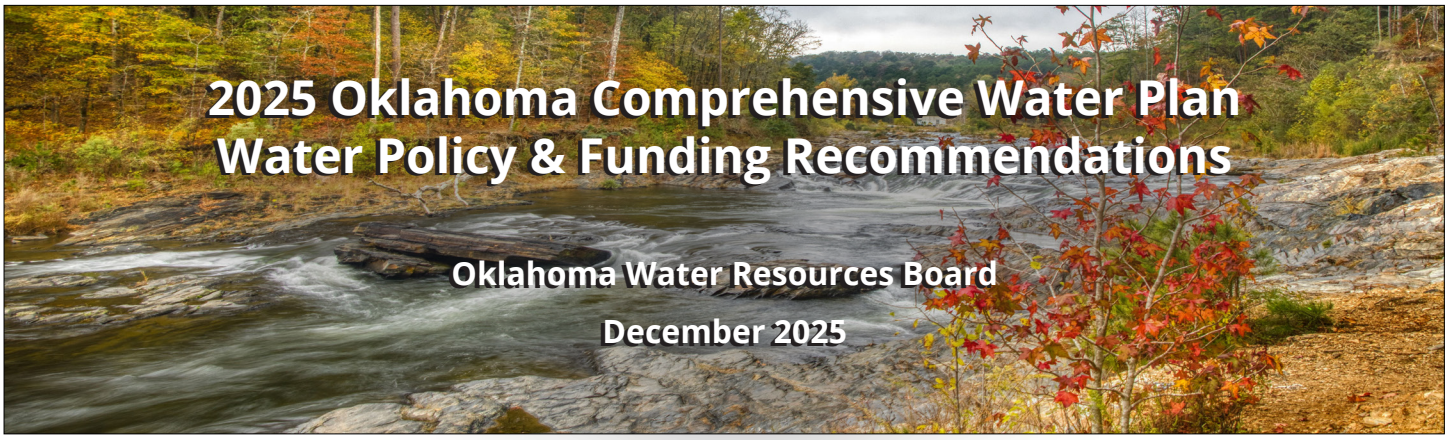


2025 Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan
Water Policy & Funding Recommendations

Oklahoma Water Resources Board

December 2025

Water is Oklahoma's most critical natural resource. It nourishes communities, fuels agriculture and industry, generates power, and sustains the natural systems that define the state's beautiful and diverse landscapes. Reliable water supply is essential for the economic growth of the state and the safety of its citizens.

OCWP Executive Summary

The Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan (OCWP) outlines the state's strategy for maintaining reliable water supplies, which will ensure sustained certainty for investment, economic growth, and environmental stability. It identifies long-term needs by region, assesses potential challenges, highlights opportunities, and proposes strategies and sustained funding to develop key water resources that support Oklahoma's competitiveness in the national market and quality of life.

Water Infrastructure & Workforce

Reliable growth infrastructure, including water and wastewater systems, not only protects public health, but is vital to building a thriving economy, attracting business, preparing sites to enable manufacturing expansion, supporting technology and innovation, sustaining healthcare facilities, and providing the foundation for community development. Oklahoma faces a $24 billion water infrastructure crisis, reflecting the combined pressure of aging assets and growing demand from expanding communities and industries. Many drinking water suppliers across Oklahoma struggle to maintain aging infrastructure, comply with regulatory public health standards, and attract a qualified workforce. The greatest obstacle is funding: high upfront costs for engineering services, difficulty in securing the required local match, and escalating labor and material expenses often stall projects, leaving essential upgrades out of reach.

Dedicated funding through general revenues, Progressing Rural Economic Prosperity funds, or other sources is recommended to support the following priority areas:

1. Establish a recurring fund (e.g. "Water for Oklahoma Fund") to address Oklahoma's infrastructure needs and priorities by supporting existing, proven loan and grant programs, developing new financing products, and leveraging state dollars for technical assistance and regional planning. Initial recommendation: $50 million (recurring), 100% pass-through.

2. Explore and develop new revenue streams and partnerships—such as cost-share initiatives to leverage state investment, gambling revenues, impact fees, tribal match grants, and local tourism taxes—to expand infrastructure investment. Action needed: legislation.

3. Address the critical workforce shortage in water-related industries through targeted new outreach and education assistance programs, tax relief in specific fields, and coordination with the Oklahoma Workforce Commission, State Chamber, and trade organizations. Estimated cost: TBD based on program scope and design (see Water Workforce workgroup recommendations).

Water Supplies & Storage

Through strategic investments in water supplies and storage, Oklahoma's leaders have historically not only secured abundant and reliable water supplies for communities across the state, but have strengthened protection against drought and severe flooding that threatens lives, property, and local economies.

Dedicated funding through general revenues or expansion of OWRB and OCC's current apportionments of the gross production tax is recommended to support the following areas:

1. Implement the Oklahoma State Flood Plan by funding program enhancements, including education and outreach initiatives, and provide funding for the state matching requirement of federal grants to address State Flood Plan infrastructure project needs. Estimated cost: $1.7 million for flood plan implementation (recurring), $5 million for infrastructure federal grant matching (recurring for 8 years).

2. Fund Oklahoma's upstream flood-control watershed dam rehabilitation program to restore and extend the life of these critical infrastructure assets. Estimated cost: $15 million (one-time).

3. Develop ongoing voluntary agricultural water conservation programs and support for local water planning, basin-specific technical studies, and stakeholder engagement. Estimated cost: $5.5 million (recurring); Oklahoma Emergency Drought Committee agricultural cost-share grant: $5 million (recurring).

4. Fund a voluntary water conservation initiative program targeting specific basins that support water-related tourism, recreation economies, and critical ecological habitats. The program will also assess the quantity and timing of water needed to support designated uses or ecological values on specific streams and the economic impacts of competing water uses. Estimated cost: $500,000 (recurring).

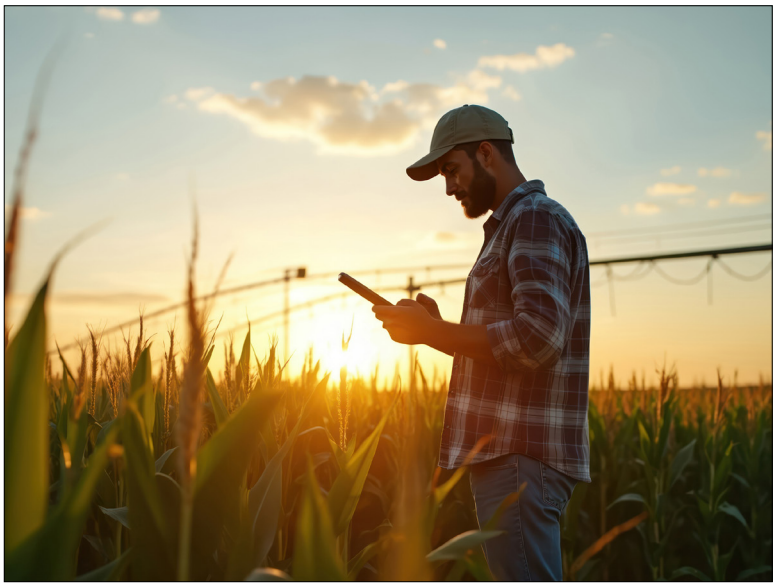
5. Perform a preliminary screening of off-channel reservoir sites, possible reservoir expansions, and modernization of proposed federal and state reservoir location reports, including sizing and updated costs for construction, operation, and maintenance. Leverage this screening effort to conduct targeted, timely investigations to evaluate additional sources and increased storage opportunities in basins with projected shortages. The studies will identify feasible groundwater basins for aquifer storage and recovery, in-basin marginal quality water sources and potential uses. Estimated cost: $170,000 (one-time).

6. Implement Oklahoma Water Reuse Action Plan (OWRAP) recommendations and continue evaluating statutory limitations, funding incentives, partnerships, and guidance that can support innovative strategies for developing non-potable and portable water reuse systems. Estimated cost: TBD based on program scope and design (see OWRAP recommendations).

7. Dedicate recurring funding for water quality and quantity protection and restoration: restore soil health, reduce flooding, and remove woody invasive species; expand outreach through the Oklahoma Source Water Collaborative, support Oklahoma's 319 Nonpoint Source Program. (See Oklahoma Source Water Collaborative recommendations.) Estimated cost: $4.9 million (recurring).

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board is authorized and directed by Title 82, Sections 1085.14, 1086.1, and 1086.2 to develop and update the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan every ten years to determine water availability and study the water laws of the state. The plan must provide recommendations, including any legislative actions necessary for implementation.

Water Management & Policy



The OWRB is responsible for managing and administering Oklahoma's water resources, including the legal allocation of water and protection of the interests of landowners, as well as ensuring compliance with water use permits and regulating well drilling to prevent groundwater contamination. Together, these activities form the foundation of Oklahoma's comprehensive approach to water management, supporting public health, economic development, and the protection of water quality.

Locally led regional water planning is recognized as an important way to increase stakeholder engagement and support collaborative, non-regulatory approaches to water management. Regional planning groups provide input on local water supply and conservation priorities, infrastructure needs, and management strategies, helping ensure that statewide policies reflect local conditions and challenges.

Dedicated funding through general revenues or expansion of OWRB and OCC's current apportionments of the gross production tax is recommended to support the following priority areas:

1. Increase dedicated, recurring funding to modernize and improve Oklahoma's water rights administration program. Estimated cost: $907,000 (recurring).

2. Complete maximum annual yield studies for unstudied groundwater basins and those requiring 20-year updates to allow proper water management and prevent over-allocation.

3. Modernize water law to improve groundwater management and ensure long-term resource reliability (e.g., well spacing minimums, well drillers indemnity fund, and other needed protections to prevent waste and safeguard private property). Action needed: legislation.

4. Improve agriculture water use accounting and reporting by permitted water right holders. Explore needed statutory or agency rule amendments, alternative technology-based accounting methodologies, flexibility in water use through a multiyear water permit that allows permit exceedances based on need in a given year, and voluntary or incentive-based programs such as mobile metering incentives. Estimated cost: $1,350,000 (one-time) and $250,000 (recurring).

5. Establish a statutory framework for regional water management districts, including authority and responsibilities, provide funding for technical assistance and administration, and establish regional water planning grants to assist districts with technical or engineering studies, stakeholder engagement, and interlocal agreements. Estimated cost: $550,000 (recurring).

Water Data & Information

Accurate and accessible water quality and quantity data are vital for effective management, public health, economic growth, and long-term security. Without reliable information, decision-makers face uncertainty, risking inadequate supplies, declining quality, and reduced reliability for sectors like agriculture, industry, and public water suppliers. In Oklahoma, major data gaps limit the assessment of water availability and risks from drought, flooding, and pollution. Investing in monitoring, analysis, and accessibility will close these gaps and strengthen future water management.

Dedicated funding through general revenues or expansion of OWRB and OCC's current apportionments of the gross production tax is recommended to support the following priority areas:

1. Appropriate funding for targeted regional and local water availability and water quality studies and monitoring programs to identify sources of impact and develop restoration or regulatory actions. Estimated cost: $2,500,000 (recurring) to OWRB and OCC.

2. Restore eroded funding and increase statewide coverage of the state's comprehensive stream gauging network, essential for water rights administration and interstate river compact compliance. Estimated cost: $450,000 (recurring).

3. Sustain state investment in the Oklahoma Hydronet; expand to unserved areas and ensure long-term reliability of components. Estimated cost: $965,000; $475,000 (recurring) pass-through to Oklahoma State University.

Looking Ahead

Meeting future water needs will require collaboration, innovation, and shared commitment. By strengthening partnerships among state and local governments, community leaders, tribal nations, industries, and citizens, we can protect our investments from droughts, floods, and other water-related risks. With sustained commitment and proactive planning, we can secure a water future that ensures all Oklahomans have the water resources to grow and thrive.

OKLAHOMA
Water Resources Board

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