

League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Tulsa

November Issue Discussion Unit Meeting

Resource Materials

The League of Women Voters of Oklahoma will be engaged in a state-wide discussion of water issues that face the state of Oklahoma over the next five months. Consensus meetings will be held in February/March. Over the next few months Issue Discussion Units will be discussing various aspects of water. Resource documents and discussion questions will be supplied to the units each month to facilitate discussion.

The League of Women Voters of Oklahoma supports state policies and procedures that promote comprehensive long-range planning for conservation, management and protection of water resources. (from current Oklahoma state position on Water)

I. WATER AVAILABILITY

Resources: (both of these resources articles are available at:

<http://lwvtulsa.org/state-study/oklahoma-water-study-2011-2013/>

Oklahoma's Climate, Excerpted from the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan Supplemental Report, "Climate Issues and Recommendations," December 2012 (PDF)

Oklahoma Water Facts, <http://www.owrb.ok.gov/util/waterfact.php>

Climate may be roughly defined as the fairly consistent patterns of temperature and precipitation in a given area. The location and amount of precipitation are largely controlled by subtle interactions of the temperatures of air currents and bodies of water. We cannot know for sure exactly what climate changes will occur, but we do have sufficient scientific evidence to know that temperature can shift climate zones, particularly in ways that affect the availability of water.

The League of Women Voters of Oklahoma recognizes the basic human right for water. It further recognizes that water is a scarce resource which requires thoughtful and informed choices.

A civil society recognizes the interdependence of human needs with agriculture, energy, industry, recreation and wild life. This is a delicate balance.

While the state of Oklahoma currently is one of two states with a surplus of water there is a geographic disparity of water availability. Current trends in climate indicate that

water resources will be increasingly challenged. In addition, water demands will continue to increase. The future availability of water will be in the hands of individual and policy makers alike.

Oklahoma has a history of droughts which appear to be cyclic in nature. The US Geological Survey lists the following statewide drought episodes in Oklahoma from 1923 to 1988:

1929–1941, 1951–1975, 1961–1972, 1975–1982, with a brief regional drought from 1984–1986.

Climatologic data indicates that the current drought conditions, which are nationwide, may have originated as early as 2007. In addition, there seems to have been a brief drought period in 2001–2002. The best data for earlier periods come from tree-ring data and archeology bores from lake beds. These indicate two 10-year-plus droughts in the late 1700's, one in the mid 1800's, and another from 1905 to 1921, almost joining with the Dust Bowl drought. As you can see, droughts are frequent, roughly every 10 years, and tend to last around 10 years. Oklahoma appears to be dry much more than it is wet.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the most critical issue facing your community relative to the availability of water and how is your community addressing this issue?
2. List three techniques best suited to your community to address water availability issues over the next 50 years.