

# MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

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*Monthly News Review* is prepared by the Oklahoma Climatological Survey. Its purpose is to provide a summary of weather and climate news or related issues that may help guide policy-makers in the Oklahoma Weather Center. Along with weather, climate, environmental, and science issues, the review includes issues on the national and state agendas and events that affect major businesses in Oklahoma that bear some relation to demands for weather-related information. The summaries and any opinions expressed herein are those of the author, and in no way reflect positions of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey or the University of Oklahoma.

## NATIONAL

**House prepares for appropriations battles** (Congress Daily 5/5/2003) – House committee chairman are wrestling with how to divide the \$784.5 billion in discretionary spending for Fiscal Year 2004. The problem they face is unfunded promises, made to secure votes in passing the budget resolution. The added funds are designated primarily for politically popular programs, such as special education, impact aid to local school districts, the National Science Foundation, and veterans’ medical care. These additions were not offset by specific cuts, leaving a net \$7.6 billion hole in the “allowances” function, not specifically allocated to one of the 13 appropriations subcommittees. [Note: House and Senate leadership struck a deal to re-allocated \$3 billion from defense and up to \$2.2 billion from domestic accounts to cover the shortfall. Congress Daily 6/6/2003]

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/050503cd3.htm>

**House leaders plan campaign on ‘waste, fraud and abuse’** (Congress Daily 5/21/2003) – House Budget Committee Chairman Jim Nussle (R-IA) and several other committee chairman are pushing committees to review mandatory programs within their jurisdiction and identify examples of waste, fraud and abuse sufficient to reduce outlays by one percent. Unlike past attempts, this effort has the commitment of the House leadership and was included as part of the budget resolution. The effort is complemented in the Senate by Budget Committee Chairman Don Nickles (R-OK), who has laid out specific savings targets for each authorizing committee.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/052103cd1.htm>

**Homeland Security plans regional offices** (National Journal Technology Daily 5/20/2003) – In recent testimony, Secretary Tom Ridge outlined a plan to create regional offices that would act as conduits between the national agency offices and state and local officials. Ridge noted that the 22 agencies that became part of Homeland Security have differing presences in regions of the country, making coordination more difficult. Ridge would also like to see consolidation of state and local grants into a single office. During his testimony, Ridge noted that natural disasters were threatening funding for other activities, including directorates on science and technology and information analysis and infrastructure protection. Ridge suggested that an emergency supplemental may be needed to address the costs of recent natural disasters.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/052003td2.htm>

**Homeland Security establishes new cybersecurity division** (National Journal Technology Daily 6/6/2003) – The Homeland Security Department recently established a new division, within the Infrastructure Protection directorate, specifically focused on cybersecurity. The new office ends speculation about the structure and focus of cybersecurity in the Bush administration, following the dissolution of the Office of Cyberspace Security when Homeland Security was created. The search is now on for a director, likely coming from the private-sector. The office is established to prevent, protect, and mitigate cyber attacks. Among its early tasks, the division will oversee a Cybersecurity Tracking, Analysis and Response Center (CSTARC). Among longer-term policies the division will consider are creating standards, providing insurance, or requiring disclosure of cybersecurity efforts as part of companies’ required financial statements.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0603/060603td1.htm>

**Government management enters a new era** (Government Executive 5/6/2003) – As OMB Director Mitch Daniels departs, the legacy he created will face some new challenges. Experts say that Mitch Daniels put the ‘M’ in OMB – Office of Management and Budget, and his successor will face challenges in continuing the agenda. Unlike many of his predecessors, Daniels took a keen interest in the management side, not just the financial side. Daniels’ success is attributed to focusing on five areas: human resources management, competitive sourcing, financial management, electronic government and linking performance to budgets. Throughout his tenure, he continued to push agencies on these issues, with impressive results. With strong backing of the President, Daniels was able to push agencies to improve or face cuts in their budgets. Presidential researchers note that previous management initiatives have lost steam as administrations, or directors, turn over. However, even with Daniels departure, the future looks promising for continuing the agenda. OMB experts view Clay Johnson, White House personnel director who has been nominated by President Bush to become OMB’s deputy director for management, as “a closer” who will keep pressing on these issues.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/050603w1.htm>

**New OMB Director nominated** (Government Executive 5/22/2003) – President Bush nominated Joshua Bolton, White House deputy chief of staff for policy, to succeed Mitch Daniels as the next director of the Office of Management and Budget. Daniels announced that he will be leaving OMB on June 6 to return to his home state of Indiana, possibly to run for governor. Bolton was policy director for the President’s campaign in 2000 and has experience in both the private sector and government. Bolton was general counsel for the U.S. Trade Representative and deputy assistant for legislative affairs during President Bush Sr.’s term. He spent five years with Goldman Sachs International in London during the 1990s. Senate consideration needs to be prompt, as two senior positions within OMB are presently vacant, leaving the prospect for the top three positions of OMB being vacant in the midst of the fiscal 2004 appropriations markups.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/052203b2.htm>

**OMB Chief says government too big** (Congress Daily 5/23/2003) – Outgoing Office of Management and Budget director Mitch Daniels expressed dissatisfaction at progress in cutting the scope of government. Daniels was frustrated at his inability to curb congressional budget earmarks, which he notes will be an ongoing battle for his successor. Daniels noted some success in restraining the growth of government, with the exceptions of defense and homeland security.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/052303cdam1.htm>

**Democratic think tank embraces reform** (National Journal Technology Daily 5/1/2003) – The Progressive Policy institute, affiliated with the Democratic Leadership Council, urged Democrats to embrace government reform as a policy issue. “Network Government for the Digital Age” ([http://www.ppionline.org/documents/NetGov\\_0503.pdf](http://www.ppionline.org/documents/NetGov_0503.pdf)) argues that government reform is needed to embrace new technology and efficiency, and that if the Democrats do not engage in a debate on reform, the President’s Management Agenda will continue to drive reform. The report applauds several aspects of the president’s initiative, including e-government, pay for performance, and management flexibility. However, they voice concerns that the president’s agenda is focused on reducing the size of government, rather than making it better. The paper argues for an emphasis on funding a network of services rather than specific programs.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/050103td2.htm>

**Status of Legislation (newly added to report; action noted; legislation passed; legislation failed):**

- HR 6 – “Energy Policy Act of 2003” – Introduced 4/7/2003 by Rep. Tauzin [LA-3]; passed House 247-175 on 4/11/2003; Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar 5/5/2003; Omnibus energy legislation including: Division A – Energy and Commerce - (Title I) Energy Conservation, (Title II) Oil and Gas, (Title III) Hydroelectric, (Title IV) Nuclear Matters, (Title V) Vehicles and Fuels, (Title VI) Electricity, (Title VII) Motor Fuels, (Title VIII) Automobile Efficiency, (Title IV); Division B – Science, Research and Development – Energy Efficiency, Distributed Energy and Electric Energy Systems, Renewable Energy, Nuclear Energy, Fossil Energy, Science, Energy and Environment, and Management. (Present bill stands at 780 pages).
- HR 135 – Introduced by Rep. Linder [GA-7] on 1/7/2003; Referred to House (1) Resources and (2) Transportation and Infrastructure Committees; Hearings held in Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power (4/1/2003) and forwarded to Full Committee by Voice Vote; Still in Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment with Hearings Held 5/7/2003; Establishes the “Twenty-First Century Water Commission” to study and develop recommendations for a comprehensive water strategy to address future water needs. Guidelines for the Commission include respecting states rights, identifying incentives, avoiding unfunded mandates, eliminating duplication among Federal agencies, considering all available technologies, making recommendations for capturing excess water for use in times of drought, developing financing options for public works projects, and developing strategies for conservation and repair of infrastructure.
- HR 238: “Energy Research, Development, Demonstration, and Commercial Application Act of 2003” – Introduced 1/8/2003 by Rep. Boehlert [NY-24]; Referred to House Resources and Science committees; Reported from House Science Committee; extension granted to Resources Committee, expiring June 27; supports energy research, reduce consumption from imported sources, improve energy efficiency and supply, reduce environmental impacts, aid domestic production, and stimulate markets for advanced energy technologies.
- HR 268: “United States Weather Research Program Act of 2003” – Introduced 1/8/2003 by Rep. Ehlers [MI-3]; Referred to House Committee on Science, Subcommittee on Environment, Technology and Standards; authorizes appropriations for the Weather Research Program for fiscal years 2004-2006; sets research priorities including forecasts of strength and landfall of hurricanes, improving forecasts of heavy precipitation and winter storms, improving flood forecasting and warning systems, improving short and medium-range (2-14 day) forecasts, and examining societal and economic impacts, including evaluating methods for delivering information to users and assessing social and economic impacts.
- HR 460: “Wildfire Prevention Act of 2003” – Introduced 1/29/2003 by Rep. Hayworth [AZ-5]; Referred to House Agriculture and Resources committees; Referred to subcommittees; establishes Institutes to conduct research on the prevention of and restoration from wildfires in the interior West.

- HR 748: - Introduced 2/12/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]; Referred to House Committee on Resources; Comment requested from CEQ; requires Council on Environmental Quality to conduct a study on urban sprawl and smart growth.
- HR 1346 – Introduced in House 3/19/2003 by Rep. Turner [OH-3]; Referred to House Committee on Government Reform and Reported favorably (3/20/2003); Referred to House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; discharged and placed on the Union Calendar, Calendar No. 70; encourages Federal procurement policies that enhance energy efficiency and reduce dependency on non-renewable energy sources.
- HR 1904 – Introduced in House 5/1/2003 by Rep. McInnis [CO-3]; Passed House 256-170 on 5/20/2003; referred to Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; bill would improve the capacity of the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to plan and conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Management lands to reduce threats of wildfire.
- S 14: “The Energy Policy Act of 2003” – Introduced 4/30/2003 by Sen. Domenici [NM]; Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar; Omnibus energy legislation addressing Oil and Gas (Title I), Coal (Title II), Indian Energy (Title III), Nuclear (Title IV), Renewable Energy (Title V), Energy Efficiency (Title VI), Transportation Fuels (Title VII), Hydrogen (Title VIII), Research and Development (Title IX), Personnel and Training (Title X), and Electricity (Title XI). [Note: Section 501 requires the Secretary of Energy to undertake an assessment of renewable energy resources.]
- S 17: “Global Climate Security Act of 2003” – Introduced 1/7/2003 by Sen. Daschle [SD]; Referred to Committee on Environment and Public Works; initiates federal actions to reduce risks from climate change to the economy, the environment, and quality of life (contains major provisions of climate change amendments to Energy Policy Act of 2002).
- S 118: “Emergency Warning Act of 2003” – Introduced 1/9/2003 by Sen. Edwards [NC]; Referred to Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; provides for development of an all-hazards public warning system.
- S 139: “Climate Stewardship Act of 2003” – Introduced 1/9/2003 by Sen. Lieberman [CT]; Referred to Committee on Environment and Public Works; provides for scientific research on abrupt climate change, establishes greenhouse gas emissions tradeable allowances that could be used interchangeably with passenger fuel economy standard credits, limits greenhouse gas emissions in U.S., and reduce dependence upon foreign oil.
- S 194: “National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Registry Act of 2003” – Introduced 1/17/2003 by Sen. Corzine [NJ]; Referred to Committee on Environment and Public Works; establishes and inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and encourage voluntary reductions in emissions.

- S 196 – Digital and Wireless Network Technology Program Act of 2003; Introduced in Senate 1/17/2003 by Sen. Allen [VA]; Passed Senate 97-0 (4/30/2003); Referred to House (1) Science and (2) Education and Workforce Committees; establishes \$250 million program in National Science Foundation to improve access to and use of digital and wireless network technology at minority-serving institutions; includes efforts to increase scientific, mathematical, engineering, and technology instructions and research.
- S 212: “High Plains Aquifer Hydrogeologic Characterization, Mapping, Modeling and Monitoring Act” – Introduced 1/23/2003 by Sen. Bingaman [NM]; Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent (4/7/2003); Referred to House Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Water and Power; Executive Comment requested from Interior; authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate with the High Plains Aquifer States to conduct a hydrogeologic characterization, mapping, modeling and monitoring program for the aquifer (originally introduced in House in 2002).
- S 321 – Firefighting Research and Coordination Act; Introduced in Senate 2/5/2003 by Sen. McCain [AZ]; Referred to Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Hearings held on 4/30/2003; provides for development of new technology and methods (“a scientific basis”) for new firefighting technology standards, improve coordination and training, and improving response to emergencies.
  - Related Bill (identical): H.R. 545; Introduced in House 2/5/2003 by Rep. Camp [MI-4]; referred to House Committee on Science, Subcommittees on (1) Environment, Technology, and Standards, and (2) Research.
- S 515 – Introduced in Senate 3/5/2003 by Sen. Crapo [ID]; Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent of 5/21/2003; Referred to House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Material 6/2/2003; Would provide additional authority to the Office of EPA Ombudsman, making the office independent within the agency.
  - Related Bill (identical): H.R. 347; Introduced in House 1/27/2003 by Rep. Bilirakis [FL-9]; referred to House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials (2/3/2003).
- S 791 – Introduced in Senate 4/3/2003 by Sen. Inhofe [OK]; Reported favorably (4/9/2003) by Environment and Public Works Committee; Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar 6/3/2003; would amend Clean Air Act to establish a renewable fuels program and set standards by 2005, encourage the use of ethanol, and phase out MTBE.

**HEARINGS** (from NRCS legislative summaries):

**CLIMATE CHANGE FULL COMMITTEE HEARING** – The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee (Chairman McCain, AZ) held a hearing on the review on May 7 conducted by the National Academy of Sciences of the Administration’s draft U. S. Climate change Science Program Strategic Plan.

**FARM BILL IMPLEMENTATION HEARING** - The House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, and Rural Development and Research (Chairman Lucas, OK) held a public hearing on Wednesday, June 4, to review conservation technical assistance and the implementation of the Conservation Title of the 2002 Farm Bill. Deputy Secretary James Moseley was a witness. NRCS Chief Bruce Knight and FSA Administrator James Little accompanied the Deputy Secretary and responded to questions from Members of the Subcommittee.

Deputy Secretary Moseley testified regarding the USDA conservation programs and specifically the technical assistance necessary to help farmers and ranchers. He provided the history, challenges, and future direction on technical assistance programs. Chairman Lucas (OK) asked about the impact of current CRP signup on technical assistance on other programs such as EQIP. Other questions brought forth involved the Regional Equity provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill, Farm and Ranch Land Protection allocations in several states, and if the Grassland Reserve Program would be a national program this year. Deputy Secretary Moseley indicated the GRP would be a national program with signups beginning soon.

Another issue brought forth was the continual expansion of the Ground and Surface Water Program through EQIP. Chief Knight indicated this program would continue to expand as opportunities to meet the goals of the program were presented. Rep. Tim Holden (PA) asked about the Conservation Security Program timetable. Deputy Secretary Moseley indicated that 4,500 comments were received on the advanced notice of proposed rule and that an interim rule was expected before the end of the year.

Other witness panels of conservation and farming groups testified supporting the need for technical assistance and indicated the necessity of sufficient technical assisted to address all conservation needs, including financial assistance programs.

**RESOURCES LAND BILLS MARKUP** - The House Resources Committee (Chairman Pombo, CA) will mark up pending bills that deal with issues of developing comprehensive water strategies, the settlement of water rights claims, bridge construction adjacent to Folsom Dam, and to amend the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992.

Date TBA      Time TBA      1334 Longworth Building

**WESTERN WATER ISSUES OVERSIGHT HEARING** – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Chairman Domenici, NM) will hold an oversight hearing on the Interior Department programs that address western water issues. This hearing was originally scheduled for May 6.

Date TBA      Time TBA      366 Dirksen Building



## AGENCY NEWS

**IGs to keep closer watch on financial management** (Government Executive 5/30/2003) – Agency inspectors general told President Bush that they plan to increase focus on financial management, contract oversight, and homeland security measures. Their concerns center around the quality, timeliness, and usefulness of financial information, even though a record number of agencies received clean audits for fiscal year 2002. The inspectors general are concerned that some agencies success may be due to end-of-year efforts rather than ongoing good management.

**OMB releases new rules for federal job competitions** (Government Executive 5/28/2003) – The Office of Management and Budget's new rules for job competitions provide more opportunities for federal employees to bid on jobs open to contract, but would require that any federal employee groups winning contracts be held to performance agreements. The new Circular A-76, which has been controversial in its development, will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 29. Under the policy, 425,000 federal jobs will be opened to private-sector competition within the next twelve months.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/052803p1.htm>

**Commerce, Education improve but other agencies still in red** (Government Executive 5/13/2003) – Two agencies showed improved marks on the second-quarter 2003 scorecard of the president's management agenda, but other agencies showed no substantial improvement in any of the five categories rated by OMB. The Commerce department moved from red to yellow in its human capital scoring by developing a workforce restructuring plan based on the agency's first workforce assessment. Commerce sought help from OMB, the Office of Personnel Management, and experts from the National Academy of Public Administration in developing its plan. The agency also has yellow marks on e-government and budget and performance categories. The Education Department similarly moved from red to yellow on human capital. Education also has a yellow mark on e-government. The National Science Foundation was still the only agency to receive green marks, and did so in two categories – financial management and e-government. Despite NSF's green marks, it had red marks in all three other categories – human capital, competitive sourcing, and budget and performance. OMB itself has red marks across-the-board. Despite the overwhelming number of red marks given to agencies, most received green marks when rated on "progress in implementation." The scorecard can be found at

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/scorecard1.htm>.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/051303t1.htm>

**President plans pressure on agencies to reform** (Government Executive 5/27/2003) – Over the next thirteen months, OMB and the President plan to increase pressure on agencies to improve progress on the administration's management agenda. Although progress is slow, Clay Johnson, nominee for deputy director of OMB, noted that personnel are beginning to embrace the management agenda and expects rapid progress at moving many agencies from 'red' to 'green' on the OMB scorecard. In the most recent ratings, only the National Science Foundation, out of 26 total agencies graded, received a 'green' in any of the five areas. GAO officials support the OMB's efforts to move agencies forward, especially those on the GAO's list of "high risk" programs, noting that the effort is the most "focused and aggressive" effort by OMB to date.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/052703p1.htm>

**EPA Administrator Whitman departs** (AP/Oklahoman 5/22/2003) – EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman resigned, effective June 27. She plans to spend more time with her family in New Jersey. Whitman had battled the administration on a number of environmental issues during her two-and-a-half-year tenure, including climate change, allowable arsenic levels in drinking water, and power plant pollution. Whitman, considered a moderate in the Republican Party, highlighted several accomplishments: reducing pollution from off-road diesel engines, restoring “brownfield” sites, cutting pollution from school busses, and several pollution-reduction settlements. Some names of possible successors include David Struths, head of environmental protection in Florida; Josephine Cooper, president of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and former EPA employee; and former Michigan Governor John Engler.

**House committee considers EPA reorganization** (Congress Daily 6/6/2003) – A subcommittee of the House Government Reform Committee is considering an overhaul of the Environmental Protection Agency, which may elevate the Agency to a Cabinet-level department. Conservation activists voiced concerns that restructuring could hamstring the agency for several years. EPA reorganization has been an issue almost every year since President Bush, Sr.’s administration.  
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0603/060603cd1.htm>

**GAO recommends use of outside evaluators** (Government Executive 5/12/2003) – The General Accounting Office found that agencies need specialists in statistical and research methods as well as specialists in relevant academic fields to help them assess program performance. While some agencies have such in-house expertise, many would benefit from seeking assistance from other agencies or private companies. The GAO report, available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03454.pdf>, also says that agencies need a commitment to evaluating their work frequently. More than half of the 234 federal programs evaluated by GAO for fiscal year 2002 failed to adequately assess program performance, according to the report. Agencies not only need to improve the quality of advice, but also improve the quality of data, including identifying inconsistencies, making sure data are complete, and that information collected is useful.  
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/051203a1.htm>

**Cascading budget key to integrating performance** (Government Executive 5/19/2003) – John Mercer, a consultant with 20 years of budget experience and one of the developers of the Government Results and Performance Act (GRPA) of 1993, released a guide to help agencies develop budgets that link to strategic goals. Linking budgets and performance is one of the five goals in President Bush’s management agenda, as well as a part of GRPA. The first step is for agencies to align budgets comparable to their strategic plans. The second step is to present budgets to appropriators, with detailed breakdowns of how money will be spent to achieve specific results. This links annual performance with budget justifications. The third step is to identify daily activities necessary to achieve desired outcomes. The final step is to allocate money to each of the identified tasks. The guide is available on the web at: [http://www.john-mercerc.com/library/cascade\\_pb.pdf](http://www.john-mercerc.com/library/cascade_pb.pdf).  
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/051903a1.htm>

## **STATE / LOCAL**

**State to receive \$216 million in supplemental assistance** (Oklahoman 6/3/2003) – The federal tax cut bill will provide more than two hundred million dollars in state and local assistance to Oklahoma. Medicaid is slated to receive \$99 million, leaving the remaining \$117 up to the discretion of the legislature and governor. Already, legislative leaders are calling for how it will be spent. Republican leaders want \$70 million to be used to reimburse to state pension funds, whose funds were borrowed for the Fiscal Year 2004 appropriations. Others, including Governor Henry, are calling for at least some of the money to be reserved for emergencies or one-time capital expenditures. Payments will be distributed in two increments, in July and October.

**State can pay storm's cleanup tab** (Oklahoman 5/14/2003) – The two tornadoes that struck the Oklahoma City area in early May caused about \$100 million, but the Governor assured Oklahomans that the state can pay its share of the cleanup costs. Most of the losses were insured, which lowers the portion Oklahoma has to cover. FEMA covers 75% of the remaining cleanup costs, with the state picking up the other 25%. Oklahoma also will have several years to pay off its share of costs; the governor noted that the state is still paying off its portion of the May 3, 1999 event.

**Higher education gets 9.8% cut** (Oklahoman 5/31/2003) – The State Regents for Higher Education will have about \$83 million less to spend than what was originally allocated for Fiscal Year 2003. The cuts will be partially offset by tuition increases, which are expected to bring in an additional \$30 million. Regents made the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program a high priority in the budget. The program, which provides free tuition to students who commit to taking college preparation courses and maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average in high school, will be fully funded. In order to free up funds for the program, Regents trimmed \$6.3 million from more than a dozen other programs, including the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History and the Quartz Mountain Arts and Conference Center. Other tuition grant programs are also being cut, including the Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grant Program that will be discontinued, affecting 680 graduate students at the OU Health Sciences Center.

**Petroleum storage tank cleanup fund under investigation** (Oklahoman 5/14/2003) – The Petroleum Storage Tank Indemnity Fund, managed by the Corporation Commission, has become the subject of controversy recently. A recent audit showed \$35 million losses resulting from fraud, abuse, and mismanagement of the fund. The audit was conducted at the request of the state legislature. The Corporation Commission has begun its own investigation to validate or challenge the findings of the audit. Some legislators have called for elimination of the fund. In another challenge to the fund's management, several individuals and organizations filed a lawsuit challenging the diversion of \$38 million from the fund to build a Weather Center building in Norman and a biological sensory project in Stillwater. The lawsuit, filed in eastern Oklahoma, charges that there are not sufficient funds available for new cleanup projects and damage is worsening due to lack of resources to clean up leaking sources. David Kelly, deputy director of the underground storage division for the Corporation Commission, said the fund has \$19 million but it is all encumbered for cleanup projects. [Note: SB322 would transfer the fund to the Department of Environmental Quality; the bill apparently did not make it through the House before adjournment.]

**Court kills bond issue** (Oklahoman 6/4/2003) – The Oklahoma Supreme Court struck down a \$175 million bond issue from the 2000 legislative session, claiming that the language authorizing projects was not specific enough as to the purposes for the projects. The authorization listed agencies rather than specific projects. The bond issue had been tied up in court since authorized, so no money had actually been spent from it yet. Projects slated to receive money included the state Capitol dome, the Oklahoma Weather Center and several projects at Oklahoma's colleges and universities. Higher education was to receive \$30 million from the bond issue.

**Zero-based budgeting bill approved** (Oklahoman 5/20/2003) – The state legislature approved a bill (HB 1256) that mandates zero-based budgeting in the coming fiscal year. The bill requires collection of the following information for each agency:

- ✓ A budget analysis of existing and proposed programs using zero-based budgeting techniques;
- ✓ Statements listing any other federal, state, or local programs providing similar services;
- ✓ Statutory authority and objectives for each of the services provided by the agency;
- ✓ Descriptions of the people each program serves;
- ✓ A quantification of the need for the program;
- ✓ A description of the tactics intended to accomplish each objective;
- ✓ A list of quantifiable program outcomes which measure the efficiency and effectiveness of each program;
- ✓ A ranking of each program's importance to the agency;
- ✓ Actual program expenditures and the number of personnel involved in each program for each fiscal year; and
- ✓ Revenues expected to be generated by each program, if any.

The Office of State Finance is required to review strategic plans and existing programs for each agency at least once every four years. The review will include agency performance and management, the need for services provided, and whether that agency is the most appropriate provider of such programs and services. [Note: Governor Henry signed the bill on May 29.]

**New law creates oversight on privatization** (Oklahoman 5/22/2003) – House Bill 1115, which introduces new oversights on public-private contracts, has been sent to the governor. The bill would require state agencies to conduct cost studies, monitored by the state Central Services Department, whenever they consider hiring a private firm to provide one of their functions. It also requires private firms winning such contracts to consider hiring displaced public employees if they have openings on their staffs. The bill also contains a provision that allows the state to reduce payment to contractors if revenues run short.

**Ag appointment bill sent to governor** (Oklahoman 5/14/2003) – A bill that would allow the governor to also appoint the agriculture commissioner was passed by a House-Senate conference committee. The bill center around a contest between the governor and agriculture commissioner Dennis Howard, who was appointed to his term by Governor Keating shortly before Governor Henry took office. The bill changes the makeup of the board from five districts to four districts plus one at-large district. The at-large position would be appointed by the governor and would also be agriculture commissioner. Presently, the board selects a commissioner. [Note: Governor Henry signed the legislation on May 23.]

**Aquifer plans sunk** (Oklahoman 5/21/2003) – Senate Bill 288 is headed towards the governor’s desk. The bill would place a moratorium on water transfer outside the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer until the Oklahoma Water Resources Board completes a study on the sustainable yield of the aquifer. The bill stops plans by PESA LLC that would pump 10-12 million gallons of water per day from the aquifer in south-central Oklahoma to communities in Canadian county. The study could take as long as five years to complete, at a projected cost of more than \$5 million.

**Investigation sought into Tar Creek report** (Oklahoman 5/12/2003) – Representative Brad Carson (D-OK) and Senator Jim Inhoffe (R-OK) are squaring off over what actions should be taken to remediate problems at the Tar Creek superfund site. Tar Creek is a 40 square mile area in northeastern Oklahoma in which mining left exposed heavy metals in piles of chat and sunken caverns posing a collapse hazard. Despite being listed as a superfund site for 20 years, nobody can seem to agree on what needs to be done. Last year, Governor Keating issued a plan to relocate residents and turn the area into a “resource area” of wetlands and tallgrass prairies. Over the past several weeks, proposals and charges have been rapid. Representative Carson has proposed legislation that would offer immediate buyouts to relocate residents of Picher and Cardin, the two towns most heavily affected. Relocation was endorsed in a draft report issued by a federal team in August; however the final report released by the EPA in early May tied relocation to the longer-term solution of whether or not to make a resource area. The draft report concluded that more study was needed on the resource area proposal, but endorsed voluntary relocation without linking it to the final outcome of the area. Representative Carson was livid at the changes in the final report, which many of the authors of the draft report did not see prior to its release. Meanwhile, Senator Inhoffe plans to introduce his own legislation that would call for further study of the resource area proposal before taking action on relocation. Rep. Carson is considering asking for an inquiry into why the changes in the EPA report were made.

**Inhoffe plan unveiled for Tar Creek** (Oklahoman 5/18/2003) – Senator Inhoffe’s (R-OK) plan for the Tar Creek watershed would provide \$45 million to the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to clean up much of the 40 square mile watershed. The first phase, which affects 25 square miles, but does not include the towns of Picher and Cardin, would remove chat, pave roads, remove mine waste from stream banks and improve river channels. The 14-square mile area that includes Picher and Cardin would involve developing a geological map of hazards, close off mine shaft entrances, re-contour and vegetate chat piles, pave city and county roads, fill sinkhole areas, cap or remove mine waste from stream banks, and improve the stream channel. The cleanup is expected to take four to five years to complete. OU is the lead agency on the cleanup because of new cleanup techniques developed by two researchers, Bob Nairn and Bob Knox.

### **Oklahoma Legislation:**

*Bills listed in the last issue as failing have been removed from this list. See the May summary for more details.*

HB 1051: “Oklahoma Carbon Sequestration Enhancement Act”; develops plan to quantify carbon sequestration activities; creates advisory committee to Conservation Commission; identify opportunities to participate in marketing & credits. **Passed House 100-0, Passed Senate 43-0, Approved by Governor 5/20/2003.**

HB 1083: sets criteria for determining maximum annual yield for aquifers, based upon a minimum basin life of 100 years; restricts permits for use outside of counties overlaying the aquifer. **Passed House 82-16, Passed Senate 27-13, Died In Conference.**

HB 1512: “Oklahoma Emergency Management Act of 2003” – sets requirements for emergency management offices and personnel; requires emergency preparedness plans; defines makeup of advisory councils; defines hazard mitigation and management programs. **Passed House 101-0, Passed Senate 41-0, Approved by Governor 5/29/2003.**

HJR 1024: Amend Oklahoma Constitution to authorize a program for beneficial utilization and protection of natural resources; dedicates revenues for programs, mitigation, and liability. **Passed House 98-1, Failed Senate 22-18, Motion to Reconsider expired.**

SB 342: Funding for the Oklahoma Wind Power Initiative at EVAC. **Passed Senate 42-0, Passed House 87-11, Died in Conference 6/2/2003.**

SB 429: Tax credit for new ethanol production facilities. **Passed Senate 43-0, Passed House 96-3, Approved by Governor 6/4/2003.**

SB 547: Modifies appointment of state climatologist; requires the Oklahoma Climatological Survey to maintain and operate the Oklahoma Mesonet. **Passed Senate 41-0, Passed House 101-0, Approved by Governor 5/12/2003.**

SB 556: Creates Oklahoma Telecommunications Authority to “plan, promote, coordinate and develop a communications infrastructure that will provide a seamless delivery system for voice, data and video capacity throughout the state”. **Passed Senate 40-0, Passed House 88-6, Approved by Governor 5/21/2003.**

SB 826: Creates office of Homeland Security within the Department of Public Safety. **Passed Senate 40-0, Passed House 91-1, Died In Conference 6/2/2003.**

**Other bills that died during session (some light-hearted, some serious):**

HB 1038: hydrologic surveys for aquifers. Died in House Committee.

HB 1082: government reorganization. Passed House, Died in Senate Committee.

HB 1421: moratorium on groundwater permits. Died in House Committee.

HB 1610: emergency response to leaking storage tanks. Died in House Committee.

HB 1626: electric utility restructuring. Died in House Committee.

HB 1636: net metering act. Died in House Committee.

HB 1660: changes 'waters of the state' definition. Died in House Committee.

HB 1679: creates water policy planning commission. Passed House, Died in Senate Committee.

HB 1728: requires water quality standards plans. Died in House Committee.

HB 1759: defines when left turns are appropriate. Died in House Committee.

HB 1763: creates agricultural policy legislative advisory committee. Died in House Committee

HJR 1008: rescinds calls for federal constitutional conventions. Died in House Committee.

HJR 1028: calls for Oklahoma constitutional convention. Died in House Committee.

SB 222: changes 'waters of the state' definition. Died in Senate Committee.

SB 304: moratorium on groundwater permits. Passed Senate, Died in House Committee.

SB 309: limits poultry feeding operations. Died on Senate Floor.

SB 316: amends water quality standards. Died in Senate Committee.

SB 341: requires cloth napkins for eating barbeque. Died in Senate Committee.

SB 387: limits groundwater uses outside of basin; requires study. Died in Senate Committee.

SB 719: prohibits aluminum bats in schools. Died on Senate Floor.

SB 790: requires OU and OSU to play Tulsa in basketball. Died in Senate Committee.

SB 800: government reorganization. Died in Senate Committee.

SJR 8: voluntary goals for renewable energy. Passed Senate (2<sup>nd</sup> try), Died in House Committee.

## **BUSINESS / ECONOMY**

**April revenues meet revised projections** (Oklahoman 5/14/2003) – Oklahoma revenue collections for April 2003 were near the revised figure, meaning additional cuts are not needed at this time. Although falling far short of the original FY03 appropriation, the \$481 million collected in April was “a little better” than projected when cuts were made earlier this year. Gross production taxes far exceeded estimates, but all other revenues were less than last year and less than original FY03 projections.

**Oklahoma joins other states in Internet sales tax** (Oklahoman 5/22/2003) – Legislation sent to the governor would allow Oklahoma to join with ten other states in a pilot program to institute taxes on Internet and catalog sales. Senate Bill 708, which has been sent to the governor, changes sales taxes from point-of-sale to point-of-possession. The vast majority of Oklahoma businesses are not affected by the change, because the two are synonymous. As an incentive for retailers to participate in voluntary collection of these new taxes, participating retailers will be exempt from audits on previous sales. The bill also reclassifies the way some goods are listed, to make it easier to compare with other states.

**Microsoft strikes deal with AOL** (AP/Oklahoman 5/30/2003) – Microsoft and AOL came to terms over AOL’s claims that Microsoft unfairly used anticompetitive business practices to ensure dominance of its browser over rival Netscape, now owned by AOL. Under terms of the deal, Microsoft will pay AOL Time Warner \$750 million and grant free license to AOL for Microsoft’s browsing software for seven years. Microsoft will also provide technical information to AOL to ensure that its products run effectively on Windows. In addition, the two companies agreed to a long-term license to AOL of digital media software and will work to integrate their two instant-messaging networks.

**Weathernews to locate in Norman** (Oklahoman 5/28/2003) – Weathernews Americas Inc., the world’s largest private-sector weather company, will soon open an office in Norman. The office is being opened to accommodate a new contract with American Airlines, in which American is closing its Fort Worth offices and contracting to Weathernews for the service. American’s staff of 16 meteorologists will be allowed to interview for the new Norman-based forecasting positions. The Norman office will initially employ about 20 people, but plans expansion. Weathernews chose Norman for the site because of the Weather Center, which CEO Jeremy Usher characterized as “very aggressive in their pursuit of excellence in the area of meteorology.” The offices will be located on OU’s North Campus, near existing federal facilities, and will likely move to the new research park near Highway 9 when the new Weather Center building is completed. The Norman office is part of a worldwide operation that employs more than 700 people in 36 offices in 13 countries.

**Made in Oklahoma** (Oklahoman 4/13/2003) – A new study reveals that value-added agricultural products add more than two billion dollars annually to the Oklahoma economy. The study, conducted by Oklahoma State University’s Food and Agricultural Products Center and Department of Agricultural Economics, looked at 14 companies involved in agricultural production in Oklahoma. The results showed the companies combined to produced nearly 9,000 jobs, a payroll of almost \$240 million, exported \$1.6 billion in products and had overall sales of



\$2.1 billion. This is good news to the state, where agricultural production has often crossed out-of-state for making products. An additional advantage to the state businesses is that it gives producers more involvement in production and marketing, especially critical at a time of depressed producer prices. The 14 companies are members of the Made in Oklahoma Coalition.

**Data center developed in Oklahoma City** (Oklahoman 4/29/2003) – A facility once part of Williams Communications is now home to a new data center. The facility, located in northwest Oklahoma City, houses data storage capabilities, redundant sources of power – dual electric grids, a room-size battery, and a diesel-power generator, three separate air conditioning systems, four layers of network redundancies and two independent broadband fiber systems. The facility was planned to be closed when Williams Communications went into bankruptcy, but local entrepreneurs saved the facility and converted it into a hub capable of providing data services and redundancy for Fortune 500 companies. The facility has also applied to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to become a Data Center Business Incubator, which would provide tax breaks to developing businesses who use the facility. The facility is designed to provide access to data at critical times, such as during natural disasters or when backhoes cut regular communication lines.

**Exxon Mobil nixes renewable proposals** (CNN 5/29/2003) – Shareholders voted down proposals that would have promoted renewable energy and called for a report on climate change. Voting was 79% and 78% against the measures, respectively. CEO and Chairman Lee Raymond said: “We don’t invest to make social statements at the expense of shareholder return.” Raymond pointed toward existing efforts to reduce harmful emissions, including moves toward natural gas, while downplaying solar and wind power as viable sources of energy, stating those would not likely exceed a one percent share of the world’s energy needs by 2020. [*Thanks to Ken Crawford for the link to the story.*]

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/TECH/science/05/29/exxon.climate.reut/index.html>

**Barley crop could ignite new market** (Oklahoman 5/16/2003) – Oklahoma farmers may soon turn toward barley as a new crop with tremendous market potential. Early tests this year show that barley, planted on roughly 300 acres around the state, has the similar ethanol-producing capabilities to corn. If this spring’s crop develops, it may be the first step in a new market niche, with an ethanol production plant in north central Oklahoma within three years. In the past three years alone, domestic ethanol production has doubled, with 69 plants producing 2.7 billion gallons of fuel per year. Ten more plants are under construction and more could be on the way if Congress passes a Renewable Fuels Standard later this year. Along with the ethanol itself, the distilling process yields a distiller’s grain that can be used to feed livestock and liquid carbon dioxide useful for medical and research purposes. Agricultural experts concluded that if ten percent of wheat acres were switched to barley, farmers would benefit tremendously. Two bushes of barley can be produced for each bushel of wheat, and the spring harvest leaves time to grow sorghum in the summer.

## **WEATHER**

**Active hurricane season forecasted** (NOAA 5/19/2003) – The official hurricane forecast this year calls for 11 to 15 tropical storms, with six to nine of those reaching hurricane strength. Two to four storms should become major hurricanes, according to forecasters. This is above the long-term average of ten tropical storms, six hurricanes, and two major storms. For the central Pacific, only two or three tropical cyclones are expected, compared to an average of 4.5 per season. Transition from last year's El Niño to La Niña conditions, expected by this summer, is the cause of the lessened hurricane threat in the Pacific. In addition, the warm conditions in the North Atlantic sets up a pattern similar to the 1950s and 1960s, in which hurricane seasons were active in non-El Niño years. In the past two years, nine tropical storms and one hurricane hit the United States, causing 54 deaths and \$6.3 billion in direct damages.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/may03/noaa03055.html>

**Drought conditions improving according to NCDC** (NOAA 5/15/2003) – A wet February-April period helped many areas of the U.S. recover from drought conditions, according to the National Climatic Data Center. At the end of April, 24 percent of the contiguous U.S. was in moderate to extreme drought, compared to 37% in January and 50% last summer, based on the Palmer Drought Index. Although precipitation was above average across much of the eastern U.S., severe drought conditions continue across much of the West. A late-season extraordinarily heavy snowfall in Colorado helped raise snowpack levels to near or above average in much of the front range of the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada Mountains, but interior portions of the West remained below-average.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/may03/noaa03052.html>

**Nation's most active tornado week on record** (NOAA 5/13/2003) – During a one-week period, nearly 400 tornadoes were reported across the U.S., striking 19 states between May 4 and 10, and leaving 40 fatalities in their wake. The 384 total tornadoes more than doubled the previous record, 171 set in 1995. The total of 412 tornadoes in the first ten days of May also surpassed the previous record set in 1999, which included an F5 tornado that struck parts of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

<http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories/s1144.htm>

**NASA to provide soil moisture maps** (AP/Oklahoman 5/31/2003) – NASA will share data from its sensors with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide more information about soil moisture and earlier storm warnings, according to the Secretary of Agriculture. NASA's remote sensing technology and resulting maps will be used for precision agriculture practices, improving productivity, and protecting natural resources. Some of the products include products related to changes in crop yields, soil and crop conditions, and pest-related problems; sensors to indicate where fertilizer, pesticides, or irrigation is needed; and "technology that could warn farmers about changes in climate and track storms and severe weather", according to the statement. The project grew out of NASA's and the USDA Forest Service's cooperation in tracking pieces of the space shuttle Columbia.

**EPA and NOAA to make air quality forecasts** (NOAA 5/6/2003) – The Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration plan to develop a model that will create a consistent, national, numerical system of forecasting ozone and particulate matter. The new Air Quality Index is designed to alert people at risk, especially those with asthma, when ozone concentrations are expected to be high. The new model will become operational in the northeastern U.S. by September 2004, and is expected to be used nationwide within five years afterward. The goal is to have a four-day forecast of particulate matter within ten years.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/may03/noaa03r903.html>

**National Weather Service launches flood safety program** (NOAA 5/21/2003) – “Turn Around, Don’t Drown” is the slogan of a new initiative by the National Weather Service, the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH) and other partners. The initiative is targeted at the 80% of flood deaths that result from people walking into or driving into moving water. Over the last 30 years, the annual average number of deaths related to flooding is 127, compared to 73 for lightning, 65 for tornadoes, and 16 for hurricanes. The slogan was developed by Hector Guerrero, warning coordination meteorologist for the NWS forecast office in San Angelo, TX.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/may03/noaa03058.html>

**USGS offers West Nile Virus maps** (USGS 6/6/2003) – The United States Geological Survey has a map of reported cases of West Nile Virus, updated periodically on its webserver, <http://westnilemaps.usgs.gov>. Last year, West Nile was reported in 44 cases, causing 4,156 human infections and 284 deaths. The disease is carried by birds and horses, among other animals, and transmitted by mosquito bites from infected animals or people.

[http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public\\_affairs/press\\_releases/pr1760m.html](http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1760m.html)

**NOAA provides weather radios to committee members** (NOAA 5/20/2003) – Following a record-breaking week of tornadoes, NOAA representatives provided weather radios to members of the House Science Committee, to underscore their ability to provide timely warnings. Committee Chairman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) lauded the abilities of the NOAA weather radio network. “Every year, NOAA Weather Radio provides essential warnings so that individuals can protect themselves against sudden threats. Furthermore, as an all-hazards network, NOAA Weather Radio can alert our citizens to non-weather related threats such as chemical or nuclear spills, terrorist attacks, and it can even be used for AMBER alerts.”

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/may03/noaa03057.html>

## CLIMATE

**Three states sue over carbon dioxide** (National Academies 6/9/2003) – Attorneys General of Maine, Connecticut, and Massachusetts filed suit against the Environmental Protection Agency in an effort to force the agency to regulate carbon dioxide emissions. The suit cites requirements of the Clean Air Act, claiming that carbon dioxide is a “criteria pollutant” similar to nitrogen dioxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, carbon monoxide and lead, which are regulated by EPA.

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/headlines/#sh0609>

**Earth getting greener** (NASA 6/5/2003) – A NASA-Department of Energy study found that the Earth is getting greener. The study, appearing in *Science*, concludes that vegetation increased over the past twenty years. Authors attribute the growth in vegetation to increased moisture, heat and sunlight in places where one or more of those variables had been lacking. The study found that Net Primary Production of plants, obtained from satellite data of vegetation greenness, increased on average six percent between 1982 and 1999. Most of the increase was in tropical zones and in high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere. In general, the Earth has become more hospitable to plant growth – cold areas warmed, clouds dissipated in areas allowing more sunlight, and precipitation increased in other areas that had been drier.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/topstory/2003/0530earthgreen.html>

**Cities and fields make world seem warmer** (Nature 5/29/2003) – A recent study by University of Maryland researchers point to cities and agriculture as primary determinants of climate change. The study, by Eugenia Kalnay and Ming Cai, finds that changes in land use has contributed to about half of the 0.13 degree Centigrade warming over the last fifty years. Furthermore, they find that the diurnal temperature change has shrunk during the same period. The study compared surface temperature measurements from 1,982 stations and temperature measurements from satellites and weather balloons. Over the five-decade period, the average difference between surface stations and above-ground measurements increased to 0.40 degrees in minimum temperatures and -0.13 degrees in maximum temperatures, resulting in a land-use contribution of 0.27 degree C per century warming, or about twice as large as previous estimates. Agriculture effects, particularly irrigation, account for a significant proportion of the bias, the researchers concluded. The study was published in a recent edition of *Nature* (Vol 423, 528-531). [*Thanks to Derek Arndt for the story.*]

## **ENVIRONMENT**

**U.S. House approves forest plan** (AP/Oklahoman 5/21/2003) – The U.S. House of Representatives endorsed a plan to speed up thinning of overgrown areas prone to wildfires. The plan, backed by President Bush, passed the House and is now under consideration by the Senate. Critics charge that the plan opens the way for logging companies cut old-growth trees.

**Ocean policies have not kept up with science** (Oregon State university 6/4/2003) – Over the last quarter century, scientific knowledge about the ocean has increased tremendously, but policies for managing U.S. territorial waters is lagging far behind the science, according to the Pew Oceans Commission. The Commission released recommendations to address the disparity between scientific knowledge and outdated policies and practices. The commission recommends establishing Regional Ecosystem Management Councils reporting to a new federal agency, that would develop ecosystem-based management plans rather than focusing on individual species or limited political jurisdictions. The issue is lent urgency by a recent study reported in Nature in May that found that large predator fish declined by 90 percent from their highs. Algal blooms, the proliferation of invasive species, and coral bleaching are other symptoms of an unhealthy ecosystem. Many of the practices used today arose from the Stratton Commission in 1969, which led to creation of NOAA and implementation of the Coastal Zone Management Act. The report is available at: <http://www.pewoceans.org/>.  
[http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2003-06/osu-oph060403.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-06/osu-oph060403.php)

**BLM using technology to monitor lands** (Pacific Northwest National Laboratory 5/30/2003) – The Bureau of Land Management has gone high-tech in monitoring use of the 262 million acres of lands in the Western United States which it manages. BLM teamed with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory to develop a remote-sensing scheme that will alert BLM to possible problems. The scheme combines aerial photography and digital imagery from satellites to assess changes in vegetation cover, which is often related to overgrazing, weed invasion, or fire damage. Data are stratified according to homogeneous areas, making it easier to detect changes or anomalies. The technique is also being tested for monitoring forest fire fuel accumulations in southern Idaho. [From Eurek Alert!]  
[http://www.pnl.gov/breakthroughs/winter-spring03/solutions\\_update.stm](http://www.pnl.gov/breakthroughs/winter-spring03/solutions_update.stm)

**Lake breeze could contribute to asthma** (American Chemical Society 6/1/2003) – Research conducted at Argonne National Laboratory shows that the lake breeze may be a contributing factor in Chicago's nation-leading number of asthma cases. Each morning, pollution generated during the morning rush hour is blown out over Lake Michigan. Over the lake, the particulate matter combines to form new, more toxic, compounds. During the late afternoon, the pollution is blown back over the city, where it resides during the night. Compounds are also concentrated along the leading edge of the lake breeze, suggesting that people may be briefly exposed to much higher concentrations of pollutants than previously thought. [From Eurek Alert!]  
[http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2003-06/acs-clb053003.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-06/acs-clb053003.php)

**Central Oklahoma responds to ozone alerts** (Oklahoman 5/27/2003) – A survey by the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments revealed that more than half of the 400 respondents took actions to reduce ozone-causing activities during ozone alert days. Actions include reducing the use of vehicles, putting off mowing the lawn, and refueling vehicles during evening hours. Public transportation reports a 20% increase in passengers on ozone alert days, and many reported carpooling, walking or riding bicycles to work on those days. Oklahoma City and Tulsa each have about a dozen ozone alert days each year, usually between July 1 and September 14. Oklahoma City ranks among the largest metro areas in the country still in attainment of federal clean air standards, according to the Association.

**African-Americans concerned about environment** (University of Michigan 5/29/2003) – A recent study, appearing in the June 2003 issue of Environment Magazine, finds that African-Americans are as, if not more, concerned about the environment than whites. “Conventional wisdom” holds that jobs, crime, education, and other ‘survival’ issues are more important to African Americans, due to problems stemming from poverty and racism. The study, consisting of studies from Detroit and national datasets, studied environmental attitudes, lifestyle choices, political actions, environmental group memberships, and environmental voting records of African-American legislators. The study found that African-Americans were more likely than whites to make lifestyle choices that help protect the environment, were as likely to belong to environmental groups, expressed strong interest in the environment and had some of the highest pro-environmental voting records in Congress. Furthermore, African-Americans are more likely to form their own groups and mobilize on a grassroots level. [story via Eurek Alert!]

<http://www.umich.edu/news/Releases/2003/May03/r052903.html>

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

**Research priorities top agenda** (NASULGC Newline March 2003) – Research is featured prominently on the Bush Administrations Fiscal Year 2004 budget request, according to the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC). Research-related requests in the budget include a 32% increase in research and development within Homeland Security, a 6% increase in spending for networking and technology research, a 9.5% increase in nanotechnology research, a 13% increase in physical sciences programs within the National Science Foundation, and a \$1.2 billion five-year research initiative on hydrogen fuel. Also included in the budget is use of the Program Assessment Rating Tool, which rates each program on its effective use of funds. Twenty percent of government programs are rated each year using the tool. In the past year, the Department of Defense basic research programs, NASA's Mars Exploration program, and the National Science Foundation all rated near the top. The Office of Management and Budget is going to seek assistance from the academic community in developing research and development criteria, the spokesman said at a recent meeting. Some noted that while research funding overall is increasing, there are no funds for research infrastructure. Some specific changes from FY03 levels include:

- NSF Research and Related Activities: 1.0% increase
- NSF Education and Human Resources: 3.8% increase
- NSF Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction: 36.0% increase
- Department of Defense – Basic Research: 12.4% decrease; Applied Research: 20.2% decrease
- Department of Energy Basic Energy Sciences: 1.0% decrease
- Department of Energy Advanced Scientific Computing Research: 1.0% increase
- NOAA Climate Change: no change
- NOAA Climate Observations: 5.0% increase
- NOAA Weather Research Program: 62.0% increase
- EPA Science and Technology: 5.8% decrease
- USGS (overall): 3.2% decrease
- NASA Earth Science: no change
- NASA Biological and Physical Science: 12.7% increase
- USDA State Research, Education and Extension Service Research: 14.7% decrease
- USDA Higher Education Extension: 13.6% increase
- USDA Total Extension: 3.4% decrease

<http://www.nasulgc.org/Whatsnew/newline.asp>

**Security officials urge more supercomputing research** (National Journal Technology Daily 6/4/2003) – Officials at the National Security Agency said that more research on supercomputing is needed in order to resolve numerous computational problems, including weapons design and monitoring nuclear stockpiles, develop better mapping capabilities, and analyzing intelligence data. George Cotter, chief of the NSA's Office of Corporate Assessments, also said that advanced atmospheric models are needed for the national missile defense system and for precise modeling of the impacts of biological or radiological terrorist attacks. Industry trends in the 1990s pushed research into parallel and distributed computing that has increased productivity for high-end computing but has limited the ability to solve complex problems.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0603/060403td1.htm>

**New guide for precision agriculture** (American Society of Agronomy 6/4/2003) – The USDA Agricultural Research Service at Riverside, California has completed guidelines for soil mapping using mobile equipment. The mapping process couples a global position system to overlay measured soil properties on a geographic information system (GIS). Sampling includes the chemical and physical makeup of soil. The guidelines were originally presented at the 2000 annual meetings of the American Society of Agronomy, and the updated version appears in the May-June issue of Agronomy Journal. The technique is used for measuring pollutants and in precision agriculture to maximize yields and reduce environmental impacts. [Via Eurek Alert!].  
[http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2003-06/asoa-ppa060403.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-06/asoa-ppa060403.php)

**Commission urges more emphasis on writing** (NASULGC May 2003) – The National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges says that writing needs to be built into every curriculum, at all grade levels, according to a recent report. “The Neglected ‘R’: The Need for a Writing Revolution” found that more than half of the freshman class is unable to produce papers relatively free of grammatical errors, to analyze arguments, or to synthesize information. The Commission points to the use of multiple-choice tests, which it argues are unable to adequately assess writing quality. The report concludes that writing weaknesses cost colleges \$1 billion annually and finds that business leaders complain about a lack of writing skills of new employees. The report calls for a five-year campaign, the Writing Challenge to the Nation, to be led by former Nebraska Senator Bob Kerry. The full report is available at [www.writingcommission.org](http://www.writingcommission.org).  
[http://www.nasulgc.org/Whatsnew/Newsline/2003/Newsline\\_May03.pdf](http://www.nasulgc.org/Whatsnew/Newsline/2003/Newsline_May03.pdf)

**NASULGC embarks on “e-Extension”** (NASULGC May 2003) – A web-based system of information and education should be available this fall, according to the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. The “e-Extension” program is designed to bridge information, which is often organized by state lines. The web site will include sections on “ask the experts”, “frequently asked questions”, interactive multimedia modules, news and information, discussion groups, publications, and online courses. In addition, users will be able to customize preferences to highlight topics of interest to them and to provide feedback on their needs for research.  
[http://www.nasulgc.org/Whatsnew/Newsline/2003/Newsline\\_May03.pdf](http://www.nasulgc.org/Whatsnew/Newsline/2003/Newsline_May03.pdf)

**Independence a popular name** (USGS 6/6/2003) - There’s always a story in geographic names. Just pick a holiday, a topic, or an historical figure to learn how a placename is scattered across the landscape. For example, there are 528 features named “Independence” on USGS topographic maps – the source for the Geographic Names Information System. Missouri has the most occurrences of the name “Independence” (53), Illinois (43), California (37), Ohio (30) and Colorado (27). To get this information you can query a search engine at <http://geography.usgs.gov>. Click on Geographic Names under “Products,” look under “Query the GNIS Online Data Bases” for United States and Territories. Include “variant names” to get historical features. You can even find out which watershed the feature is in. And, of course, the database shows the latitude and longitude on the USGS topo map – after all we do maps and geography at USGS as well as the earth and natural sciences. [Directly from USGS.]  
[http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public\\_affairs/press\\_releases/pr1760m.html](http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1760m.html)



**Hydrogen car will not solve environmental problems** (Massachusetts Institute of Technology 3/10/2003, via EurekAlert!) – A study by MIT’s Laboratory for Energy and the Environment concludes that, barring any major breakthrough, hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions more than diesel hybrids. Furthermore, unlike hybrids which use existing fuels, fuel cell vehicles require major infrastructure changes. The finding is based upon the energy sources used to convert hydrocarbon fuels into hydrogen fuel-cells. The authors note that if hydrogen can be produced using non-carbon sources such as solar [*Ed. Note: or wind*] energy, greenhouse gas production would be reduced.

[http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2003-03/miot-msh031003.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-03/miot-msh031003.php)

**Senator Domenici preserves nuclear incentives** (Sen. Domenici news release 6/10/2003) – The Senate narrowly defeated an amendment that would have stricken nuclear provisions from S.14, the national energy policy bill. The provisions provide incentives to develop new, more efficient, and safer nuclear plants, with the goal of reducing dependence on foreign energy sources. Specific incentives include authorizing construction of a nuclear-hydrogen cogeneration project in Idaho and loan guarantees for construction of 8.400 Megawatts of nuclear power. It also permanently reauthorizes the Price-Anderson Act, which limits liability of nuclear plant operators. [Story lead from *CongressDailyAM*.]

<http://domenici.senate.gov/newscenter/record.cfm?id=204858>