

MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

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Prepared by Mark Shafer, Oklahoma Climatological Survey

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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

Appropriations bills wrapping up (Congress Daily 11/6/2003) – House and Senate leaders are moving toward an omnibus appropriations bill for fiscal year 2004. Within the next several days, House and Senate Appropriations Committees leadership will put together a package, with plans to finalize it prior to the scheduled November 21 adjournment target. Objections to measures in some of the bills have delayed passage, as well as the Senate’s recent focus on judicial nominations. Leaders still need to resolve differences of \$3 billion between the House and Senate spending bills and the White House’s \$786 billion budget. Options on the table appear to include an across-the-board spending cut or reductions in agency “contingency funds.” *[Note: as of November 18, only Defense, Homeland Security, Interior, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction appropriations have been completed. The House passed all spending measures while the Senate passed only five of the 13 measures. Military Construction has not yet been signed by the President.]*

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1103/110603cdpm2.htm>

Federal spending up 27% in two years (Washington Post 11/12/2003) – Federal discretionary spending increased 12.5% in the fiscal year ending September 30, bringing spending increases to 27% over a two-year period. Although much of the spending was for military spending, nonmilitary discretionary spending increased 8.7% in FY 2003. If one-time spending requests, such as war supplementals and natural disaster aid, are removed from the figures, spending increased 7.9%. In comparison, discretionary spending increases averaged 2.4% during the 1990s. Non-discretionary entitlement programs experienced large increases during the last year as well; with Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid jumping 7.3% to \$2.16 trillion, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A28252-2003Nov11?language=printer>

Federal budget shows signs of improvement (Congress Daily 10/20/2003) – The latest budget figures, both by the White House and Congressional Budget Office, estimate a \$374 billion budget deficit for fiscal year 2003. This is \$81 billion below the \$455 billion forecast in July. Administration officials point toward signs of economic recovery increasing revenues, however many Democrats point out the budget deficit is more than twice the \$158 billion budget deficit in fiscal year 2002, and the largest budget deficit in American history. The relative good news for fiscal year 2003 does not necessarily translate into the future; fiscal year 2004 is already on a pace to exceed the \$485 billion budget deficit projection, according to OMB Director Josh Bolten.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1003/102003cd1.htm>

State budgets looking brighter (Stateline.org September 2003) – The economy is picking up and state budgets are slowly recovering. State governments predict moderate economic growth through the remainder of 2004 and stronger growth next year, but substantial recovery is not likely until at least mid-2004. A survey by the Rockefeller Institute of Government in Albany, NY, found a median projected domestic product growth of 2.7 percent for 2003 and 4.1 percent for 2004, consistent with private-sector forecasts. State officials remain cautious, however, noting that it may take a year or longer before improvement shows up in tax revenues.

<http://www.stateline.org/issue.do;jsessionid=fq4m8s5dx1?issueId=122>

Natural gas price spikes likely, but imports could help (Palm Beach Post 7/11/2003) – Alan Greenspan, in testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said natural gas price spikes were a near certainty for this coming winter, with weather the main determining factor. However, Greenspan said long-term solutions were available. New technology has reduced the costs of compressing natural gas, and liquefied natural gas would open up world markets that could be tapped in future years to offset imports. Developing technologies could also lead to “regasification”, in which the gas is warmed and added into distribution systems from a safe distance offshore, alleviating fears of large LNG terminals being targets for terrorist attacks.

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/business/content/auto/epaper/editions/friday/business_f3e002c1168b702010a2.html

Natural gas supplies full (Oklahoman 11/5/2003) – even though national reserves of natural gas were at a record low in March, mild weather this summer allowed production to fill reserves to capacity. The storage marks good news for the winter months. If normal weather occurs across the upper Midwest and Great Lakes region, prices are likely to range between \$4 and \$6 per thousand cubic feet, well below the \$8.62 peak last winter. The downside is for state gross production taxes, as prices have fallen each of the last two months, although the current price of \$4.19 remains well above average. Concerns still remain over production; even though more wells were drilled, production rates did not increase. Analysts say the best reserves have already been tapped, and voice concerns about future shortages.

Gulf between authorizations and appropriations widening? (National Journal 8/4/2003) – Few people realize that the grand statements made about funding programs are ever actually achieved. In fact, some on The Hill say that the gap between what is authorized in legislation and what is actually appropriated is actually growing. Part of the problem is that those writing authorizing legislation do not have to consider the bottom line. An example is President Bush’s \$15-billion five-year AIDS initiative. Legislation was quickly written, authorizing \$3 billion per year for five years. The appropriations budget, however, only contains \$2 billion, and in fact administration officials say more is not needed. Former Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert Livingston noted that “authorizers look at policy ... appropriators look at numbers.” The complexities of the process led James Dyer, Republican staff director of the House Appropriations Committee, to conclude: “the only people who understand [the appropriations process] are within three square blocks of this building.”

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0803/080403nj1.htm>

Energy Bill stalls House action (Congress Daily 11/10/2003) – A House vote on the Energy Bill has been delayed, due to ongoing differences between conference committee members. A vote had been hoped for before adjournment, but the delays push it back into an already-crowded calendar before Thanksgiving adjournment. In the few days before Thanksgiving, the House will need to wrap up work on the Energy Bill, fiscal 2004 appropriations, and a Medicare prescription drug bill. Meanwhile, Senate action is stalled over continuing controversy over judicial nominations.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1103/111003cdpm1.htm>

House considers tuition caps (NASULGC Newsline September 2003) – Representative Howard “Buck” McKeon (R-CA) plans to introduce the “Affordability in Higher Education Act of 2003.” In hearings this past summer, the House Education Committee noted problems associated with the rising cost of tuition. The act would create a “College Affordability Index”, which essentially would limit tuition increases to no more than twice the Consumer Price Index. If increases exceed the limits for three consecutive years, the institutions would become ineligible for federal student aid programs.

<http://www.nasulgc.org/newsline/SeptNewsline12.8c.pdf>

First responders need national standards (Technology Daily 9/9/2003) – Former Senator Warren Rudman (R-NH) testified to a House Government Reform subcommittee that the Homeland Security and Health and Human Services departments need to set national minimum standards for first responders. Only then can priorities be set, according to the senator. Senator Rudman advocated the two departments institute a “best practices” guide on how to work with state and local governments. Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) said that homeland security is a strain on local governments due to a lack of guidance and insufficient funding to meet mandates.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0903/090903td2.htm>

AGENCY NEWS

New OMB director confirmed (Congress Daily 6/27/2003) – Joshua Bolten was confirmed as the new director for the Office of Management and Budget. Bolten had been President Bush’s deputy chief of staff and was previously a senior executive with Goldman Sachs.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0603/062703cd1.htm>

Third-quarter improvement on OMB scorecards (Government Executive 7/14/2003) – Nine agencies moved up a notch in the OMB’s color-coded scorecard system during the third quarter of fiscal 2003 (<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0703/ScoreCard1.htm>). The Environmental Protection Agency and Social Security Administration moved from yellow to green in financial management, bringing to four the total number of “green lights” on the scorecard. At the end of the third quarter, 39 agency initiatives had yellow lights and 87 had red lights. OMB had red lights in all five areas – human capital, competitive sourcing, financial management, e-government, and linking budgets to performance. Despite the large number of red lights, agencies are improving. Clay Johnson, deputy director for management at OMB, said that by next year, “the average agency ... will be performing better than the best agency did two years ago.” Commerce scored red lights in competitive sourcing and financial management and yellow lights in the other three areas. The National Science Foundation had green lights in financial management and e-government. Most agencies rated well in progress in implementation.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0703/071403a1.htm>

Corps projects slated for independent review (Congress Daily 7/24/2003) – The FY2004 appropriations bill for the Army Corps of Engineers will include a provision requiring large projects to undergo independent review. The amendment comes after criticism of the Corps evaluations and a critical study by the National Academy of Sciences.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0703/072403cdam1.htm>

Commerce plans reorganization (Technology Daily 7/17/2003) – The U.S. Department of Commerce unveiled a plan to consolidate technology and telecommunications policy functions. The plan would consolidate the Technology Administration, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the e-commerce functions of the International Trade Administration. The new agency would be called the Technology and Telecommunications Administration.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0703/071703td1.htm>

Provision would require telecommuting for Commerce (Technology Daily 8/22/2003) – A provision in the House Appropriations subcommittee conference report for Commerce, Justice and State would require agencies to implement policies promoting telecommuting for 100 percent of their workforce within six months. The provision was inserted by Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA), who cited advances in information technology and high-speed Internet access as removing barriers to telecommuting. “Hoteling”, or sharing a single office with several employees who spend little time in the office, saves the Patent Office over a million dollars per year in real estate costs.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0803/082203td1.htm>

e-government initiative falls far short (Government Executive 9/10/2003) – The House of Representatives allocated only \$1 million to an interagency fund for electronic government projects. This compares to \$5 million allocated by the Senate, and \$50 million authorized in a bill passed in 2002. The original bill authorized \$345 million over four years, but to date only \$5 million has been appropriated. The authorization is part of the Transportation-Treasury appropriations bill. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0903/091003a2.htm>

[Note: a subsequent article in Technology Daily, 10/16/2003, said e-government initiatives are on schedule and will be funded from the general IT budget, if necessary. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1003/101603td2.htm>.]

How to merge public agencies (Government Executive 8/6/2003) – A new report by the IBM Center for the Business of Government says finds four factors for success in mergers of government agencies: a new organizational culture, extensive communication with stakeholders, swift implementation and time for adjustment. The report, “Making Public Sector mergers Work: Lessons Learned” (http://www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/Frumkin_Report.pdf) includes several case studies of public-sector agency mergers. Peter Frumkin, the report’s author and associate professor of public policy at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, cautions officials to consider not just similar functions, but the ‘fit’ of culture and competencies before moving forward with mergers. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0803/080603t1.htm>

Interoperability requires “data-centric” systems (Government Executive 10/21/2003) – Federal government managers wrestling with sharing information are turning toward the Department of Defense for some lessons. The interoperability problem facing Homeland Security and other departments is that there are some 44,000 public safety agencies that use different software and different data formats, creating a tremendous backward-compatibility problem. The Department of Defense is taking a different approach, moving away from “application-centric” systems toward “data-centric” systems. In this paradigm, users dump data into a system and information is available for different users with different computer applications and security privileges. The application-centric approach, which requires everyone to use the same programs, has created problems at the tactical level, where soldiers have only scaled-down systems.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1003/102103c1.htm>

Geographic data portal moving slowly (Technology Daily 6/10/2003) – A federal initiative to create a common Internet portal for accessing geographical data is progressing slowly, according to testimony given to a House Government Reform subcommittee. The portal must contend with more than 40 sites collecting “geospatial” data. Officials were also concerned that state and local governments may be reluctant to abandon their own projects in favor of a federal system. The system is geared for data-sharing among federal, state, and local agencies to aid emergency-response workers and others.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0603/061003td2.htm>

STATE & LOCAL

State revenues holding steady (Oklahoman 9/10/2003) – Revenues for August 2003 met the estimates, continuing a positive economic streak that began in late fiscal year 2003. The revenues, totaling \$34.9 million, were 10.6% higher than August 2002 and 0.1 percent above the estimate for August 2003. State Finance Director Scott Meacham cautioned that while the situation is favorable, it does not mean the state will end the fiscal year with excess funds. Meacham cited improvements in individual income tax and sales tax collections, as well as continued gross production taxes, as principal factors in the higher revenues for August. *[Editors Note: From both July and August figures, it appears the official budget projects included about a 10-11% increase in revenues over fiscal year 2003, or roughly a return to the actual revenues in fiscal year 2002.]*

Late surge produces \$51 million bonus (Oklahoman 7/16/2003) – With steep increases in revenues from natural gas taxes, Oklahoma ended the year with \$51 million additional revenue above what had been allocated in Fiscal Year 2003. Because allocated revenues were below appropriated amounts, the extra tax revenue will be distributed to state agencies on the basis of their appropriation share. Overall, FY03 produced \$4.41 billion for the general revenue fund, \$227 million (5%) below FY02 collections and \$539 million (11.4%) below the estimate approved by the board of equalization. State officials caution that it is too early to assume a recovery is in full-swing, but they are cautiously optimistic that the recession has bottomed out.

Economic index turns positive (Oklahoman 9/3/2003) – the Mid-America Index, prepared by Creighton economics professor Ernie Gross, hit 50 in August, on a scale of zero to one hundred. This is the seventh time in the last eight months that the index has reached or exceeded 50. Overall, the regional index rose to 60.2, its highest level since April 2000. These numbers suggest that the recovery is gaining a hold. Unemployment figures, however, have not rebounded. Economists note that unemployment is a “lagging indicator”, because firms will try to retain personnel as long as possible at the front-end of a recession and will wait to see if a recovery is solid before hiring new personnel. The result is that unemployment actually increases during a recovery, sometimes more than it did during a recession. The manufacturing index similarly made a strong showing, rising to its highest level since December 2002, and far exceeding expectations of the 53 analysts from the Institute for Supply Management. New orders and production have both been positive for four consecutive months. Analysts note that orders are expanding as fast or faster than production, indicating future growth is likely.

Natural gas prices spur new drilling (Oklahoman 7/20/2003) – Rig counts are up in Oklahoma, as high natural gas prices have spurred new drilling. As of July, there were 127 active drilling rigs in Oklahoma, compared to 104 the previous year. Tulsa drilling companies have added 25 rigs and about 500 employees. The drilling is a boon to small towns, where work crews spend their time – and money – in local motels and restaurants. Even rural water districts are benefiting from water required in the drilling process. Unlike earlier drilling operations, these wells are generally deeper and more costly. Gas prices must remain above \$4 per thousand cubic feet in order for drilling investments to pay off. Nationally, the rig count stands at 1,089, but energy experts estimate that about 1,400 rigs are needed to keep up with demand.

Legislators want leaner government (Oklahoman 9/21/2003) – Lawmakers are thinking about reorganizing some of Oklahoma’s 176 state agencies, eliminating several commissions in the process. Some lawmakers expect that zero-based budgeting, adopted this year, will lead to consolidation of some agencies and commissions, but several commissions are self-supporting and therefore difficult to change. In all, 35,000 people with a budget of \$10.5 billion are supported under the umbrella of Oklahoma state government. The legislature makes appropriations for slightly more than half the agencies.

[http://www.newsok.com/cgi-bin/show_article?ID=1082592&TP=getarticle\](http://www.newsok.com/cgi-bin/show_article?ID=1082592&TP=getarticle)

Vacancies in State Legislature (Oklahoman 9/20/2003) – Oklahoma’s Senate and House are left with seats to fill, following the death of Senator Keith Leftwich (D-Oklahoma City) and overseas deployment of Representative Hopper Smith (R-Tulsa). Senator Leftwich, who died from cancer in September, served in the state House of Representatives from 1982-1988 and in the state Senate from 1990 through the present session. Leftwich was Senate’s majority whip in the current session. Leftwich’s most recent accomplishments included legislation that moved the Oklahoma presidential primary to February, which has attracted more national attention on Oklahoma. The other anticipated vacancy, in the state House of Representatives, comes with Representative Hopper Smith’s deployment to Afghanistan. Smith is a commander of the 1st Battalion of the 179th Infantry Brigade, based in Stillwater. The Brigade is being sent for a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan in December. Smith has served in the Oklahoma House for seven years and is assistant minority leader. Smith is awaiting his final orders, which may not arrive until after training is completed, before resigning. Governor Henry has called a special election to fill Leftwich’s seat, and will similarly do so for Smith’s seat if he chooses to resign before March 1.

OSU ag reorganization plan (Oklahoman 10/3/2003) – The agriculture division at Oklahoma State University will eliminate degree programs and consolidate administrative functions next spring. Entomology and Plant Pathology undergraduate degrees are slated for elimination, and other departments will be merged into a single natural resources department. The plan will retain all faculty positions, although some staff positions may be eliminated. The reorganization will also affect the cooperative extension services and agricultural experimental stations, which are part of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

Governor Henry chairs Southern Policies Growth Board (Oklahoman 9/23/2003) – Oklahoma’s Governor Brad Henry is chairman of the Southern Policies Growth Board, a nonpartisan organization that is part of the Southern Governors Association. Topics discussed at this year’s annual meeting included preparing students for college and avoiding energy problems. The next conference will be held in Oklahoma City, June 13-15, 2004. The meeting will focus on how Southern states are connected to the global economy and will include governors, legislators, corporate executives and academic leaders and include an interactive town hall meeting format.

Kay County to receive cleanup funds (Oklahoman 9/26/2003) – After nearly two years of haggling, Kay County commissioners and the Federal Emergency Management Agency settled on cleanup costs for the January 2002 ice storm. FEMA maintains that the county did not follow proper procedures for bidding the contract, which they awarded at \$16 per cubic yard; the lowest bid was \$7.95 per cubic yard, for which FEMA reimbursed the county. After further review, FEMA concluded that a rate of \$12 per cubic yard was reasonable, and will provide about \$500,000 additional reimbursement to the county.

Sardis Lake goes to mediation (Oklahoman 9/15/2003) – U.S. Magistrate Paul Cleary sent the Army Corps of Engineers and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board to a settlement conference, trying to bring a conclusion to a longstanding dispute over payment for Sardis Lake. The lake was declared operational in 1983, at a cost of \$38 million. The Army Corps of Engineers claims the state was obligated to make payments once it became operational, a standard provision in Corps contracts, but the state claims that payments were contingent upon water sales, which remain virtually non-existent now some twenty years later. Since 1983, the state has made \$4.4 million in payments, and the Corps claims another \$6.3 million is owed in payments. The Corps filed suit in 1998, claiming default on past-due payments.

http://www.newsok.com/cgi-bin/show_article?ID=1078297&TP=getarticle

Aquifer study approved (Oklahoman 7/20/2003) – The House of Representatives approved \$700,000 to study the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer in southeastern Oklahoma. The study is part of the Energy and Water Development Act, and is expected to take five years and \$3 million to complete. The study was initiated because of opposition to a proposed pipeline, that would take waters from the aquifer, near Ada, to communities in Canadian County, in central Oklahoma.

Hearings set for aquifer case (Oklahoman 9/26/2003) – The state attorney general announced intentions to defend a state statute that prohibits large-scale transfer of water from the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer until a study is completed. Under the law, passed in the 2003 legislative session, the Oklahoma Water Resources Board is required to conduct a study to determine how much water could be taken from the aquifer without causing harm. Plaintiffs filed suit, claiming the law violates their property rights. A status conference was scheduled for October 3.

Deadlines approach on new water rules (Oklahoman 10/6/2003) – New water quality standards, passed as part of the Safe Drinking Water Act, will begin affecting smaller towns soon. Large cities compliance standards went into effect in 2002, but smaller communities have until 2006 to come into compliance. According to state officials, water costs could rise dramatically in the smaller systems, given that costs have to be spread across a smaller customer base. These small towns will be looking toward the state for help. Among the new standards, water systems must test for 130 different contaminants, instead of the 30 required under previous standards. Lower acceptable levels for some contaminants are also part of the new requirements. Twenty-eight systems in Oklahoma, most west of I-35, presently do not meet the new standards for arsenic, commonly found in groundwater. Not only do communities need to remove the arsenic from the water, but they may then face a hazardous-waste problem in disposing of the arsenic sludge.

Rural Development Foundation planning water project (Oklahoman 9/17/2003) – The Rural Development Foundation, a nonprofit foundation, secured permission from the Oklahoma Water Resources Board to use up to 25 billion gallons of water annually from Lake Eufala. The water would be treated and supplied to communities in seven eastern Oklahoma counties. The Foundation plans on building the large treatment facility partly in anticipation of small communities’ difficulties in meeting new federal water quality standards. The 25 billion gallons represents less than four percent of the capacity of Lake Eufaula.

Panel wants consistent measurement standards (Oklahoman 9/25/2003) – The Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission recommended setting consistent measurement practices for phosphorus content in the shared rivers. The Oklahoma Water Resources Board, the Arkansas Water Resources Center, and the USGS all have different ways of measuring phosphorus levels. With three different sets of numbers, coming to any conclusion about the severity of the problem or trends is difficult.

Tar Creek advice: wash your hands (Oklahoman 8/31/2003) – Advising children in Picher to wash their hands have produced more tangible results than the \$120 million in federal and state funding over twenty years in mitigating the effects of heavy metals pollution from nearby lead mines, according to local health officials. Picher and Cardin remain at the center of controversy over remedies to clean up the 40-square-mile Superfund site. Residents charge that the cleanup has been mismanaged at all levels. Elected officials are criticized for not implementing cleanup plans and for now ‘conducting studies of studies’. The EPA is criticized for spending \$100 million on soil remediation with little to show for it. Environmental advocates and medical researchers are charged with turning the site into ‘welfare science’ with little accountability on how money is spent and outcomes evaluated. The end result of the finger-pointing is that the best solution is ‘wash your hands’.

Oklahoma City water plan introduced (KOCO News 9/22/2003) – Oklahoma City will look toward surface water reservoirs for future supplies, rather than utilizing groundwater. A 50-year plan being drawn up for Oklahoma City calls for tapping water from Lake Atoka and a reservoir near Lake Stanley Draper. Oklahoma City owns the water rights to Lake Atoka and McGee Creek in southeast Oklahoma. Currently, a pipeline connects Lake Atoka with Lake Stanley Draper, but an additional \$200 million pipeline will be needed to increase supply. The council will also consider a pipeline to connect Lake Stanley Draper with Lake Hefner, in case of a drought in northwest Oklahoma that could reduce flow from Canton Lake to Lake Hefner. Longer-term plans look toward acquiring water rights from Lake Sardis in southeast Oklahoma.
<http://www.channeloklahoma.com/news/2501664/detail.html>

Oklahoma City handles ozone issues (Oklahoman 8/6/2003) – Oklahoma City has not exceeded ozone limits during 2003. As of early August, four ozone alert days had been issued. On those days, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments’ Clean Air Committee has sent people out to interview people on their awareness of ozone alerts and activities taken to reduce ozone production. Their findings show that more than half of those interviewed were aware of the alerts and knew about actions to reduce ozone production.

Boeing nears decision on new jet (Oklahoman 9/10/2003) – Boeing expects to make a decision about going forward with its new 7E7 aircraft in early 2004. Tulsa is one of more than 20 candidate locations to build the new jet. According to Washington Governor Gary Locke, Boeing has narrowed its search to a “handful” of candidates, including Washington where Boeing builds nearly all of its aircraft. *[Editors Note: The Oklahoma Climatological Survey, particularly Derek Arndt, provided valuable assistance to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce comparing Oklahoma’s weather and climate to competitor locations.]*

WeatherNews move a cornerstone of research campus (AP 9/13/2003) – Weathernews Americas Inc. plans to relocate its operations headquarters to the University of Oklahoma University Research Park – South. The company will occupy half of a new 50,000 square-foot facility, to be completed by August 2004 at a cost of \$8 million. The building, which has been approved by the Regents, will be financed with 30-year revenue bonds. OU President David Boren hailed the move as a “poster child” for economic development centered around the new \$67 million weather center facility, also being constructed on OU’s Research Park – South. *[Thank you to Billy McPherson for the article.]*

Biomass plants planned for Oklahoma (Oklahoman 9/27/2003) – The Rural Development Foundation, a non-profit organization, plans to build three biomass energy plants to convert chicken waste to energy. The plants would be located in Jay, Stilwell, and Broken Bow. State Senator Richard Leblance, attorney for the foundation, noted the plants would also address related water-quality issues resulting from runoff of phosphorus from agricultural chicken waste applications. The plants, if funding can be secured, would be constructed by Barlow Projects, Inc, based out of Fort Collins, CO.

Digging for dollars (Oklahoman 9/27/2003) – Forty million dollars has been added to the Corps of Engineers budget to dredge portions of the Kerr-McClellan waterway to a depth of 12 feet, in order to make a deepwater port at Tulsa. The addition to the budget is in response to Tulsa’s bid to lure a Boeing manufacturing facility. Among the requirements for Boeing is access to a deepwater port. Much of the channel is already at least 12 feet deep, but portions are only nine feet. The Senate has not yet taken up the measure.

WEATHER & CLIMATE

U.S. House honors Weather Service for warnings (NOAA 6/20/2003) – The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science praised the National Weather Service for their performance during the May 4-11 severe weather outbreak. The letter was authored by Committee Chair Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY). The Science Committee oversees research and development programs in federal agencies, including NOAA. During the event, 386 tornadoes were reported in 21 states, killing 41. National Weather Services offices in the affected regions issued more than five thousand warnings, including 1,115 tornado warnings. Oklahoma's Governor Brad Henry said: "They did such a tremendous job of giving early warning to the residents of Oklahoma about these storms and in such a manner that it enabled people to seek appropriate shelter. I believe that was a major factor contributing to the fact that we had only one fatality."

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/jun03/noaa03075.html>

NOAA Science Advisory Board meeting (NOAA 7/10/2003) – The annual meeting of NOAA's Science Advisory Board, July 15-16, included updates on the status of the Climate Change Science Plan and the Earth Observing Summit. The board advises the undersecretary of Commerce on research strategies, education, and the application of science to resource management and environmental assessment and prediction. The Board was scheduled to be briefed by James Mahoney (Climate Change Science Plan) and Carla Sullivan (Earth Observing Summit), Policy Advisor in the Office of the undersecretary. Other topics included FY 2006 budget priorities, NPOESS, the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (CORE), the NOAA Education Council, and climate and global change.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/jul03/noaa03r505.html>

NASA helping monitor Western water (NASA 9/4/2003) – A pilot program between NASA and the Bureau of Reclamation will provide satellite-based information on snowpack, soil moisture, and evapotranspiration. The information will be included in Land Surface Models, to help decision-makers better allocate available water resources in the Rio Grande and Columbia River Basins. The model data will be incorporated into decision support systems, which include ecological, human, and legal restrictions on use of water.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2003/03-85.htm>

Satellite agencies sign cooperation, data-sharing accord (NOAA 6/24/2003) – Europe's Meteorological Satellite Organization (EUMETSAT) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) signed the Joint Transition Activities (JTA) Regarding Polar-Orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite Systems Agreement and the Agreement for Access to Data from the Meteosat Second Generation (MSG) satellites. The agreements follow a 1995 agreement that allows NOAA and U.S. affiliates access to products from the EUMETSAT satellites. The JTA provides for exchange of data from the Metop-3 and U.S. National Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS). Admiral Lautenbacher, NOAA administrator, notes that the agreements are a "strong precedent for the free and open exchange of data that will be critical to a successful Earth observing system."

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/jun03/noaa03079.html>

Climate Change plan adopted (NOAA 7/24/2003) – The Climate Change Science Program (CCSP) strategic plan was formally adopted, according to an announcement by Commerce Secretary Don Evans and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham. The plan coordinates climate change research and activities among 13 federal agencies. The plan focuses on four core approaches: science, observations, decision support, and communications. The goal is to coordinate research activities, filling gaps in information, develop operational tools for decision-makers, and communicate results to affected individuals. The plan sets for the following scientific goals: (1) extent knowledge of Earth’s climate and environment, including its natural variability, (2) improve understanding of the forces that bring about changes, (3), reduce uncertainty in projections, (4) understand sensitivity and adaptability of natural and managed systems, and (5) Identify opportunities and limits of managing risks related to climate variability and change. Secretary Evans also announced a two-year, \$103 million federal initiative to accelerate the deployment of new global observation technologies.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/jul03/noaa03089.html>

Intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations holds first meeting (NOAA 8/6/2003) – The first meeting of the ad hoc Group on Earth Observations was held in Washington, D.C. on July 31, in conjunction with the Earth Observation Summit. Ministers and other representatives from many nations adopted a declaration that provides guidance on developing a comprehensive, coordinated global observation system. The ad hoc group is charged with creating a working intergovernmental body to meet the goals outlined in the declaration. Vice Admiral Lautenbacher, NOAA administrator, is the U.S. representative and co-chair of the group. The next meeting of the group will take place in Italy in late November 2003.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/aug03/noaa03094.html>

West Nile Virus headed for record year (AP/Oklahoman 9/19/2003) – As of mid-September, almost as many cases of West Nile Virus had been reported as in all of last year. Nationwide, 4,137 human cases had been reported. Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that the actual numbers of those infected are probably much higher. One official estimates that 100,000 may have a “nasty three-day bout of fever” and 500,000 overall infected, most showing no noticeable symptoms. Despite the higher numbers of reported cases, only 80 have died this year, compared to 284 in 2002. Colorado leads in the number of cases (1,542) while Oregon and Nevada have reported no cases. *[Note: 500,000 total infections is less than 0.2% of the U.S. population; the 4,137 reported cases – those severe enough to be identified – is 0.0014% of the U.S. population.]*

Largest hailstone recorded (NOAA 8/1/2003) – The National Climate Extremes Committee accepted measurements of a record hailstone. The hailstone, which fell in Aurora, Nebraska on June 22, measured 18.75 inches in circumference with a 7-inch diameter. The previous record of 5.7 inches diameter and 17.5-inch circumference, was held by a hailstone found in Coffeyville, Kansas on September 3, 1970. The hailstone did not set a record for weight, however, because up to 40% of it may have been lost through contact with objects on the ground and melting before it was preserved.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/aug03/noaa03093.html>

Frog eggs fall from hurricane (CNN 10/6/2003) – Hurricane Isabel brought more than winds and rain to the northeastern U.S. One resident in Connecticut thought he heard hail, only to discover tiny amphibian eggs in his yard. Naturalists suspect the eggs traveled a great distance, perhaps as far as North Carolina, because frogs do not lay eggs in Connecticut this time of year.
<http://www.cnn.com/2003/TECH/science/10/06/flying.frogs.ap/index.html>

Hearings on EPA enforcement (Congress Daily 11/6/2003) – Senate Democrats are requesting hearings on the EPA’s enforcement policies on the Clean Air act. EPA enforcement chief J.P. Suarez informed enforcement agents that the agency would drop dozens of cases against utilities and other industrial polluters, although the EPA has not formally made such a decision. The EPA is re-evaluating ongoing cases on the basis of new regulations for the New Source Review program, adopted in August.
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1103/110603cdpm4.htm>

New England rivers cleaner, mostly (USGS 7/23/2003) – A study of three major rivers in New England identified decreases in pollution and disease levels, with the notable exception of chlorides. Phosphorus and sulfate concentrations decreased in the rivers, once the most polluted in America. The study attributes the decreases to wastewater treatment facilities, the removal of phosphates from detergents and soaps, and the switch to cleaner fuel sources from high-sulfur coal. Chloride concentrations, on the other hand, showed dramatic increases, ranging from 186 to 760 percent during the century, due to the use of salts to de-ice roads during the winter. The report, “Water-Quality Trends in New England Rivers During the 20th Century” is available from the USGS, <http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/wri/wrir03-4012/>.
http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1773m.html

Ozone big culprit in European heatwave deaths (CNN 9/10/2003) – Ozone levels reached their highest levels in ten years in parts of Europe, potentially contributing to 1,000 to 3,000 deaths in France during the summer heatwave. France recorded 11,400 more deaths than usual for early August during the heatwave. The European Union announced the start of new anti-pollution rules, which go into effect on September 16. The new rules require countries to monitor ozone levels, inform the public if levels exceed certain limits, and use short-term measures such as limiting traffic and reducing the use of solvents.
<http://www.cnn.com/2003/TECH/science/09/10/europe.ozone.reut/index.html>

Antarctic ozone hole grows (CNN 9/12/2003) – After declining during 2002, the Antarctic ozone hole has grown again in 2003, reaching near-record proportions. The size of the hole typically peaks in mid-September, and levels this year are just short of the 28.5 million square kilometer record. *[This event did not surpass the largest ozone hole on record, which occurred in September 2000. See NASA press release (link below) for more details.]*
<http://www.cnn.com/2003/TECH/science/09/12/ozone.layer.reut/index.html>
<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2003/h03-306.htm>

Ozone-depleting chemical on decline (NOAA 8/13/2003) – The Climate Monitoring and Diagnostics Laboratory reports that bromine, one of the ozone layer’s most destructive attackers, has been decreasing since 1998 and is currently more than five percent below its peak value. Officials attribute the decline to decreased production of methyl bromide, which is now governed by the Montreal Protocol. Industrial production has declined substantially, although naturally-occurring sources offset some of the decline. Bromine from halons, however, is still increasing, and remains of concern.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/aug03/noaa03097.html>

Lightning proficient producer of ozone (NASA 7/14/2003) – A recent study lead by David Edwards at NCAR found that lightning over the tropical Atlantic produced a greater amount of near-surface ozone than originally thought. Conventional wisdom held that most near-surface ozone was produced from agricultural uses and burning fossil fuels. According to the new research, nitrogen oxides, produced from lightning strikes, combine with smoke from fires, which contain carbon monoxide, in the presence of ultraviolet light to produce ozone. Manmade fires, such as vast tracks cleared for crop production, create a bountiful supply of carbon monoxide, which the scientists tracked westward from Africa over the Atlantic. When combined with the lightning strike information from satellites, the combination showed in-situ creation of ozone over the Atlantic rather than direct transport from Africa as was previously believed.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2003/03-72.htm>

Ocean heat storage increasing (NASA 9/3/2003) – Shan Sun and James Hansen from NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, have found the rate of heat storage by the oceans is increasing. In 1951, they found ocean heat storage rates of about 0.2 Watts per square meter. Now, that rate is about 0.75 Watts per square meter. One of the impacts of this increased heat storage rates is that new global climate models (GCMs) show less warming than earlier IPCC models, in the range of 0.4 to 1.2 degrees Celsius over the next fifty years. The increased heat storage of the oceans, however, could cause accelerated warming and melting ice in the North Atlantic. Previous studies indicated that increased freshwater from melting glaciers could disrupt ocean circulation patterns, but the Sun and Hansen study found no such indication.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2003/03-83.htm>

Urban heat islands effects may be overestimated (NOAA 9/15/2003) – A new study by Thomas Peterson at NCDC revealed that urban heat island effects may be less than previously believed. Peterson examined 289 rural and urban weather stations across the country and found that after adjusting for known biases, including time of observation and elevation effects, the differences between rural and urban sites were small. Peterson attributes this to the location of many of the sites. Urban records often come from parks rather than industrial sections or city centers. Rural sites may not be as pristine as commonly portrayed either.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/sep03/noaa03107.html>

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

International forum on science, government and business (National Academies 9/9/2003) – Bruce Alberts, President of the National Academy of Sciences, and Hiroyuki Hoseda, Japanese Minister of Science and Technology Policy, announce the creation of a new multinational forum that will bring together leaders in science, government and business to address critical global social, environmental, and ethical issues in science and technology. Representatives from more than 13 countries are involved in the planning of the first Science and Technology for Society Forum, to be held Nov. 14-16, 2004 in Kyoto, Japan.

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/topnews/#tn0909b>

Facilitating interdisciplinary research (National Academies 9/12/2003) – The Keck Futures Initiative, a part of the National Academies of Sciences, will host a two-day convocation in January 2004 on facilitating interdisciplinary research. The focus will be on how funding organizations and academic institutions can best facilitate interdisciplinary research, including learning about effective practices and overcoming barriers. The convocation will include poster sessions. Registration is required by October 15.

http://www7.national-academies.org/interdisciplinary/Convocation_web.html

Keeping tech transition out of ‘valley of death’ (Technology Daily 8/6/2003) – The Office of Naval Research is looking at ways to improve technology transfer. The process, described by one official, is that companies are told that government will not fund their projects until they can demonstrate that the technology works, and even when they reach that point, funding can still be two years away. Several recent steps have been taken to keep projects from falling into the so-called ‘valley of death.’ First, the Navy, under the defense acquisition program, is looking for non-traditional suppliers, with an emphasis on smaller companies. Second, the Quick Reaction Fund provides for one-time purchases that meet an immediate need. The third initiative, technology transition, seeks to accelerate Defense initiatives into new technology. This latter program may include venture-capital investors to speed the process.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0803/080603td2.htm>

Texans look toward Washington to support tech investment (Technology Daily 10/20/2003) – University of Texas researchers and local tech leaders from Austin are asking the federal government to step in to provide support of basic science and technology research and accompanying technology transfer efforts. The current business climate has reduced investment in basic research, including fewer venture capital funds, and states are not making those kinds of investments, according to the group. They point toward Congress’ legislation that would provide billions of dollars for nanotechnology research, but argue that a much broader effort is needed in other industry sectors. The group highlighted the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) as an example of “highly focused” investment in technologies to resolve specific problems. Wireless networking and communications is an area that could similarly benefit, but more leadership from the federal government is needed, according to the researchers.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1003/102003td2.htm>

Institute of Medicine to host water quality workshop (National Academies 9/12/2003) – The Institute of Medicine will host a one-day workshop on issues related to water quality. The workshop, to be held October 16 in Washington, D.C., is free and open to the public. Topics include the status and interface between science and policy, and particularly examine practices related to the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

<http://www.iom.edu/subpage.asp?id=14629>

NSF aims for national network of research sites (National Academies 9/17/2003) – The NSF plans to build seventeen National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) sites over a seven year period, to link existing ecological research sites to form a network of networks. The NSF found that large-scale ecological research has been impeded by a lack of technology, scientific instruments, and facilities to collect and synthesize complex information. An ad hoc NRC committee has recently been tasked to evaluate regional issues. The prepublication of the NRC report is available online at http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10807.html?onpi_topnews_091703.

<http://dels.nas.edu/bls/neon/workshop.html>

UCAR develops new network for sharing weather information (UCAR 9/23/2003) – UCAR and seven other institutions will share in an \$11.25 million grant over five years to develop a new system for sharing earth information. The project, known as the Linked Environments for Atmospheric Discovery (LEAD), will incorporate a network of high-performance computers and new software to enable sharing data and results. Mohan Ramamurthy, director of Unidata Program Center, said the goal of the program “is to provide on-demand computing for scientists and the public”, including researchers and weather forecasters. Kelvin Droegemeir at the University of Oklahoma is the project director of LEAD. Other participating institutions include the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; University of Alabama, Huntsville; Colorado State University; Howard University; Millersville University; and Indiana University at Bloomington.

<http://www.ucar.edu/communications/newsreleases/2003/lead.html>

New effort aims to improve forecast resolution (NOAA 8/19/2003) – NOAA, NCAR, the Air Force, Navy, and the Federal Aviation Administration entered into an agreement to develop a new weather forecast system, designed to produce high-resolution forecasts as detailed as radar images. The Weather Research and Forecasting (WRF) is now entering the testing stage and will be used next year by the NCEP and specialized applications in other organizations. The system is modular, which allows specialized routines to be added to meet specific applications, and should be much easier for researchers to develop and test improved techniques.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/aug03/noaa03100.html>

New Hampshire institute receives \$3.2 million for study of complex systems (NOAA 7/10/2003) – The Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space at the University of New Hampshire, received nearly \$3.2 million for development of remote sensing tools. The funding supports two ground-based systems, one at Mount Washington and the other on Mauna Loa, to collect vertical profiles of wind speed and direction. The data are used to study clear air turbulence, cloud and aerosol influences on climate, severe weather forecasting, and air quality.
<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/jul03/noaa03r915.html>

NCAR launches study of air quality (UCAR 10/8/2003) – Scientists from NCAR, Washington State University, the University of Washington, and the U.S. Forest Service are embarking on a three-year study to improve knowledge of the relationship between climate change and air pollution. The study will look at landcover factors, such as wildfires, vegetation, suburban landscapes, and agriculture, in addition to potential impacts of global warming. The study will compare land use and wildfire patterns over a ten-year period to EPA analysis of air pollution, and use that information to develop a model capable of prediction.
<http://www.ucar.edu/communications/newsreleases/2003/guenther.html>

High-Tech Flood Measurements - A no-contact sport? (*Direct from USGS release 10/9/2003*) – Scientists have successfully demonstrated a device that can measure river discharge rates without ever touching the water using two different kinds of radars - microwave radar and long-wave ground-penetrating radar technology. The need for a rapid, accurate, and safe method of measuring flood waters during a storm was punctuated by the recent arrival of Hurricane Isabel where rivers throughout North Carolina and Virginia rapidly swelled beyond their banks threatening homes and businesses. Once this technology is refined, measurements that used to take hours and were often times made under very hazardous conditions, can be taken in minutes from the safety of a bridge, riverbank, or helicopter flying high above floodwaters. USGS scientists working in partnership with scientists from the University of Washington demonstrated the ability to make non-contact stream flow measurements that are very close to in-stream readings. The next test is scheduled for the Cowlitz River in a region located between Portland, Ore., and Seattle. For more information contact John Costa at (503) 251-3290.
http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1802m.html

REPORTS & STUDIES

Academy urges closer ties between academia and industry (National Academies 10/9/2003) – The National Academy of Engineering reported that more collaboration is needed between academic research and industry. The Academy reviewed relationships in five sectors: network systems and communications; medical devices and equipment; financial services; aerospace; and transportation, distribution, and logistics services. The study found that while academic research has had significant impact on performance of the first three, it has only had a moderate impact on the last two. The study also looked at the imbalance in federal funding across disciplines, links between research universities and service industries, and conflicts between industry concerns and university missions, including the disposition of intellectual property. The findings are published in *The Impact of Academic Research on Industrial Performance*, available from the National Academies Press.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309089735?OpenDocument>

Academy conference on food and health urges integration (NASULGC June 2003) – At a meeting hosted by the National Academy of Sciences focusing on food and health, White House Science Advisor John Marburger stressed the linkages between research and applications. Dr. Marburger said that “More important than technology is the problem of how to get it used. We must increase the traction that our research has in these issues.” Marburger and other participants noted a number of public health issues related to food production and consumption, including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

<http://www.nasulgc.org/newsline/updatedjuneNewsline.pdf>

Supercomputing needs studied (National Academies 8/15/2003) – The NRC Computer Science and Telecommunications Board has issued an interim report on the state of supercomputing in the United States. The report reflects the current understanding of the state of U.S. supercomputing today, the needs of the future, and factors that contribute to meeting those needs. The committee’s interim report is available through the National Academies website:

<http://www.nap.edu/books/0309089956/html/>.

Weather Modification Research (National Academies 10/13/2003) – A new report draws attention to a gap in funding for weather modification research and new technologies and tools. In the late 1970s, more than \$20 million was invested in the United States for weather modification research. Thirty years later, less than one million dollars is invested in research, despite new abilities to observe and model natural processes. The report calls for a coordinated, sustained national program to focus on this knowledge gap, especially regarding fundamental questions about basic atmospheric processes and related issues. Studies also should focus on negative impacts of weather modification, including anthropogenic pollution sources.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309090539?OpenDocument>

Estimating climate sensitivity (National Academies 9/8/2003) – A report from a recent workshop held by the Board on Atmospheric Sciences and Climate (BASC) is available on the National Academies website: <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309090563/html/>. The report examines approaches used to estimate climate sensitivity and feedbacks, uncertainty, and the needs of the user community.

Transportation industry report cites traveler information needs (Transportation Research Board 8/8/2003) – The Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 92 surveys current practices in traveler information systems and discusses future opportunities for information provision. The report is on the web at http://gulliver.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=1704.

Emergency manager of the future (National Academies 9/8/2003) – In its eighth Disasters Roundtable meeting, the National Academies reviewed the needs of emergency managers. The roundtable focused upon the necessity of maintaining an ‘all-hazards’ approach, despite the recent emphasis on homeland security, and the needs for interoperability among key stakeholders. Training, communications, and organization needs were cited. The report is on the National Academies website: <http://www.nap.edu/books/NI000431/html/>

Reason foundation advocates use of contractors (Government Executive 9/9/2003) – A report by the Reason Foundation, a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, suggested that contractors could be used to handle day-to-day tasks while agencies concentrate on retaining in-house experts to oversee contracts and tackle substantive mission-related projects. The foundation report focuses on recent reports of an impending “human capital crunch”, as many federal employees become eligible for retirement in the next decade. Through workforce planning, combined with competitive sourcing initiatives, agencies could plan on future gaps and identify how contractors could help fill those voids. This would free up remaining staff to focus on mission-critical areas, according to the report. The report, “Getting the Right People for the Right Job” is available on Reason’s website: <http://www.rppi.org/>.
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0903/090903a1.htm>

NRC report critical of NASA plan (National Academies 8/8/2003) – A national academies committee charged with reviewing NASA’s Earth Science Enterprise Strategic Plan noted numerous shortcomings in the plan, and suggested that as submitted, the plan be considered more of a draft than a final plan. In particular, the committee noted a lack of milestones and evaluation criteria, lack of clarity on educational outreach goals, and insufficient attention to transferring mission data to scientific information.
http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10786.html?onpi_topnews_080803

Find it, fix it, fly it (Government Executive 9/1/2003) – A review of the Columbia shuttle disaster led a board to conclude that NASA had not addressed management, cultural, and organizational issues identified from the 1986 Challenger disaster. The report concluded that the way the agency is run threatens the safety of spacecraft and the people who fly them. An example of the “find it, fix it, fly it” attitude is the rush to launch another space shuttle as soon as possible. In recent weeks, NASA has backed off from that goal, admitting changes to its organizational culture and management are necessary. The board’s report highlighted numerous problems in NASA, but offered few solutions. Few agencies have been able to change their organizational culture to the extent which NASA is being asked to do, and it promises to be a difficult journey for the agency.
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0903/090103ff.htm>

Early Spring (USGS 7/23/2003) – Spring seems to be coming earlier to New England, according to a study appearing in the July 25 issue of the Journal of Hydrology. The USGS study showed that over the last 30 years, spring snowmelt has advanced by one to two weeks. The study used at least fifty years of river flow data on rural, unregulated rivers. All 11 gaging station studied showed significantly earlier dates at which half the total volume of winter/spring runoff occurred.

http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1774m.html

Broad approach needed for Klamath River Basin (National Academies 10/22/2003) – The Klamath River Basin is in need of a broad management approach, according to a recent National Research Council study. In addition to proposals for a water storage bank and seasonal flow adjustments, the Council urged other initiatives, including the removal of migration obstacles for fish, improving habitat, and reducing summer water temperatures in tributaries. The problem needs more than just increasing restrictions on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, according to the study. The report found no substantial scientific support for requirements of higher water levels or flows, as was the opinion offered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2001. Instead, the committee looked toward other sources that endanger habitat. The report, *Endangered and Threatened Fishes in the Klamath River Basin: Causes of Decline and Strategies for Recovery*, will be available in early 2004.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309090970?OpenDocument>

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Introduced (in committee)

HR 268 – “United States Weather Research Program Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/8/2003 by Rep. Ehlers [MI-3]
- Last Major Action: 2/20/2003 Referred to House subcommittee
- Status: House Committee on Science; referred to subcommittee
- Description: 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]
- Last Major Action: 2/13/2003 Referred to House subcommittee
- Status: House Agriculture and Resources committees; referred to subcommittees
- Description: Establishes Institutes to conduct research on the prevention of and restoration from wildfires in the interior West.

HR 748 – “Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth Study Act”

- Introduced 2/12/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Last Major Action: 2/24/2003 House committee actions
- Status: Referred to House Committee on Resources; comment requested from CEQ
- Description: Requires Council on Environmental Quality to conduct a study on urban sprawl and smart growth.

HR 1578 – “Global Change Research and Data Management Act of 2003”

- Introduced 4/2/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Last Major Action: 5/1/2003: House Science committee defeated measure to report
- Status: Referred to House Science, Budget, and International Relations Committees
- Description: Directs the President to establish an interagency committee to coordinate federal research activities related to global change, develop and interagency research program to provide periodic assessments of the vulnerability of the U.S. and other regions, and develop a National Global Change Research Plan. Also requires the President to establish an interagency climate and other global change data management working group, including establishing an Office of Global Change Research Information.

HR 2447 – Interagency task force on biotechnology

- Introduced 6/12/2003 by Rep. Smith [MI-7]
- Last Major Action: 6/24/2003 House committee requests comments
- Status: Referred to House (1) International Relations and (2) Agriculture Committees; Agriculture requests Executive Comment from USDA
- Description: Establishes a federal interagency task force to promote the benefits, safety, and potential uses of agricultural biotechnology.

S 17 – “Global Climate Security Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/7/2003 by Sen. Daschle [SD]
- Last Major Action: 1/7/2003 Referred to Senate committee
- Status: Referred to Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: 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]
- Last Major Action: 1/9/2003 Referred to Senate committee
- Status: Referred to Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Description: 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]
- Last Major Action: 10/30/2003 Referred to Senate committee
- Status: Discharged from Committee on Environment and Public Works (10/29/2003); Amendment failed; Referred back to Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: 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]
- Last Major Action: 1/17/2003 Referred to Senate committee
- Status: Referred to Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Establishes and inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and encourage voluntary reductions in emissions.

S 321 – “Firefighting Research and Coordination Act”

- Introduced in Senate 2/5/2003 by Sen. McCain [AZ]
- Last Major Action: 4/30/2003 Senate subcommittee hearings held
- Status: Referred to Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Description: 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

S 1164 – “Abrupt Climate Change Research Act of 2003”

- Introduced: 6/2/2003 by Sen. Collins [ME]
- Last Major Action: 6/2/2003 Referred to Senate committee.
- Status: Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Description: Comprehensive research program on abrupt climate change, to be housed within NOAA; provides \$60 million for research on indicators and documenting past occurrences.

House/Senate Floor

HR 135 – “Twenty First Century Water Commission Act of 2003”

- Introduced: 1/7/2003 by Rep. Linder [GA-7]
- Last Major Action: 10/31/2003 House preparation for the floor.
- Status: Referred to House (1) Resources and (2) Transportation and Infrastructure Committees; Reported favorably from Resources Committee 9/24/2003; discharged from Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on 10/31/2003; placed on Union Calendar
- Description: 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]
- Last Major Action: 6/27/2003 House preparation for the floor
- Status: Referred to House Resources and Science committees; Reported favorably from House Science Committee on 4/2/2003; Discharged from Resources Committee on 6/27/2003; placed on Union Calendar
- Description: 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 1346 – “Federal Government Energy Management Improvement Act”

- Introduced in House 3/19/2003 by Rep. Turner [OH-3]
- Last Major Action: 6/2/2003 House preparation for the floor
- Status: Reported favorably from House Committee on Government Reform (3/20/2003); Discharged from House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (6/2/2003); Placed on Union Calendar.
- Description: Encourages Federal procurement policies that enhance energy efficiency and reduce dependency on non-renewable energy sources.

S 189 – “21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act”

- Introduced: 1/16/2003 by Rep. Wyden [OR]
- Last Major Action: 9/15/2003 Senate preparation for the floor
- Status: Reported favorably by Commerce, Science, and Transportation committee on 6/19/2003; placed on Senate Calendar.
- Description: creates advisory committee on nanotechnology, to be within the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST); increases spending on nanotechnology from \$677 million for one year to \$4.7 billion over five years and creates interdisciplinary research centers.

S 791 – “Renewable Fuels Act”

- Introduced in Senate 4/3/2003 by Sen. Inhofe [OK]
- Last Major Action: 6/3/2003 Senate preparation for floor
- Status: Reported favorably (4/9/2003) by Environment and Public Works Committee; Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar
- Description: 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.

Passed originating body (House / Senate)

S 196 – “Digital and Wireless Network Technology Program Act of 2003”

- Introduced in Senate 1/17/2003 by Sen. Allen [VA]
- Last Major Action: 7/21/2003 Referred to House subcommittee
- Status: Passed Senate 97-0 (4/30/2003); Referred to House (1) Science and (2) Education and Workforce Committees
- Description: establishes \$250 million program in NSF 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 and Modeling Act”

- Introduced 1/23/2003 by Sen. Bingaman [NM]
- Last Major Action: 10/30/2003 House subcommittee hearings held
- Status: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent (4/7/2003); Referred to House Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Water and Power
- Description: 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 515 – “Ombudsman Reauthorization Act of 2003”

- Introduced in Senate 3/5/2003 by Sen. Crapo [ID]
- Last Major Action: 6/2/2003 Referred to House subcommittee
- Status: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent of 5/21/2003; Referred to House Committee on Energy and Commerce
- Description: 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 (2/3/2003).

S 1400 – “Ocean and Coastal Observation Systems Act”

- Introduced 7/14/2003 by Sen. Snowe [ME]
- Last Major Action: 11/4/2003 Referred to House committee
- Status: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent 10/31/2003; Referred to House (1) Resources, (2) Science, (3) Armed Services, and (4) Transportation and Infrastructure Committees
- Description: Establishes an integrated ocean and coastal observing system of marine monitoring, data communication and management, data analysis, and research to detect and predict changes in the marine environment; requires that at least 51% of NOAA funds be reserved for grants to develop and implement regional coastal observing systems (FY04-08).

In Conference (passed both bodies)

HR 6 – “Energy Policy Act of 2003”

- Introduced: 4/7/2003 by Rep. Tauzin [LA-3]
- Last Major Action: 11/7/2003 Resolving differences / Conference – House actions.
- Status: Passed House 247-175 on 4/11/2003; Passed Senate 84-14 on 7/31/2003 (S.14 substitute); in Conference
- Description: Omnibus energy legislation. Part II, Sections 1341-1345 contain language on climate services, including creating a National Climate Service Plan.

HR 1904 – “Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003”

- Introduced in House 5/1/2003 by Rep. McInnis [CO-3]
- Last Major Action: 11/6/2003 Resolving differences / Conference
- Status: Passed House 256-170 on 5/20/2003; Passed Senate 80-14 on 10/30/2003
- Description: 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.

Sent to President