

Statement of James M. Inhofe
Hearing: Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife hearing entitled, "EPA's Role
in Promoting Water Use Efficiency."

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Today we are focusing on a very small piece of a very large issue: water efficiency. Our nation currently has hundreds of billions of dollars of needs in both clean water and drinking water infrastructure. Many of our systems are reaching the end of their lifetimes and are going to need replacement and repair in the future. Using water more efficiently is one way we can help extend the life of current systems and is important for planning for the future. Additionally, we can help address this need through a continued commitment to infrastructure. I am looking forward to working with Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Crapo on the water infrastructure bill.

Consumers understand the importance of saving energy. Energy prices have risen around the country and many people have chosen to cut their energy costs by purchasing products that save them money, such as more energy efficient appliances. EPA's Energy Star program has been a great example of a public-private partnership that relies on market based principles to drive technology forward. EPA is working to do the same thing with its Water Sense program. Using the market and public-private partnerships along with education, water efficiency programs can be widely successful in saving water for communities and money for consumers.

Using water more effectively helps reduce strain on existing water treatment plants and can help areas like Oklahoma, which has had to deal with drought conditions for several years, better use the water that is available. In addition to helping stretch our water resources further, water savings also saves energy. EPA estimates that 4 percent of the nation's electricity consumption is used moving or treating water and wastewater. In homes with electric water heaters, 25% of their electricity consumption is used to heat water for cleaning and cooking.

I know there is a great interest in using water more efficiently. Currently, my home state of Oklahoma is doing a comprehensive state water plan. One of their main objectives is to focus on ways to improve water efficiency and water conservation. Additionally, the state legislature created a grant program last year to assist communities to implement pilot water conservation projects in Oklahoma communities. These projects will serve as models for other communities and result in significant water efficiency improvements and water savings. I believe that projects like these will demonstrate new cost-effective technologies and help spur new markets.

I am looking forward to hearing from EPA what they are currently doing to promote and improve water use efficiency, what research and development initiatives they have begun and how they are reaching out to the public to educate them about opportunities to improve their water efficiency. I am also interested in discerning what some of the current barriers are with assisting and encouraging people become more water efficient and if there is a role for Congress to play.