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OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

PUBLIC NOTICE

May 24, 2006

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON REVISED PROPOSED TMDLs FOR THE FORT COBB WATERSHED

Public Comment Period Ends: June 23, 2006

Since the public meeting and last TMDL public comment period, the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality has revised the model that it used in developing a plan to improve water quality in the Fort Cobb watershed and is seeking written comments on this revised draft document describing pollution limits. The federal Clean Water Act requires DEQ to develop plans with goals and pollution control targets for improving water quality where minimum standards are not met. This is accomplished by establishing limits known as Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for each pollutant exceeding the standards. TMDLs set levels for pollutants that allow water bodies to achieve their beneficial uses. Beneficial uses for the Fort Cobb watershed include water for drinking, recreation, aesthetics, irrigation, fishing, and swimming.

A TMDL is the amount of each pollutant a waterway can receive and not violate water quality standards. A TMDL takes into account the pollution from all sources. A TMDL document uses scientific data collection and analysis to determine the amount and source of each pollutant entering the system, and allocates pollutant loads to each source at levels that would ultimately restore water quality to clean water standards.

The beneficial uses of Cobb Creek, Lake Creek, Willow Creek, Fivemile Creek, and Fort Cobb Lake in the Fort Cobb watershed were evaluated for possible impacts from excess nutrients, suspended solids, siltation, turbidity, and pesticides. The report recommends a 78% reduction in nutrient levels to Fort Cobb Lake. It was estimated that 20% nutrient reduction has been achieved since 2001 towards this goal. There are no point sources in the watershed so pollutant levels are all due to non-point sources. Concerns had been raised by local residents that migrating geese may be a source of this problem. This possibility was evaluated using information provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. No significant pollutants could be attributed to geese or other wildlife. Stormwater runoff from nearby agricultural lands is the only possible source of the excess pollutants in the Fort Cobb watershed.

Nutrients from the watershed can be further reduced through the implementation of various effective Best Management Plans (BMPs). The BMPs may include riparian buffers, no-till cultivation, winter cover for row crops, conversion of worst cultivated land to pasture, grade stabilization structures, diversions, terraces to reduce sediments and nutrients, limiting access to creeks for cattle, nutrient management plans, and education on fertilizer application. The implantation of BMPs is voluntary for shareholders in the watershed.

DEQ encourages individuals with computer capabilities to view the revised Fort Cobb TMDL, which includes responses to comments to the previous report, on the agency's website at: <http://www.deq.state.ok.us/WQDnew/tmdl/index.htm>. For those preferring hard copies, they are available for a nominal fee by contacting Dr. Karen Miles at 405-702-8192 or the address below.

Send written comments to: Dr. Karen Miles, Water Quality Division, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 1677, Oklahoma City, OK 73101-1677 or e-mail them to Karen.Miles@deq.state.ok.us. Comments must be received by close of business on Friday, June 23, 2006. Following the close of the comment period, a responsiveness summary will be prepared addressing all comments and will be distributed to all persons submitting comments. All comments will be considered, the TMDL report will be finalized, and the TMDL will be submitted to EPA for final approval. The final results of the TMDL will be incorporated into Oklahoma's Water Quality Management Plan.