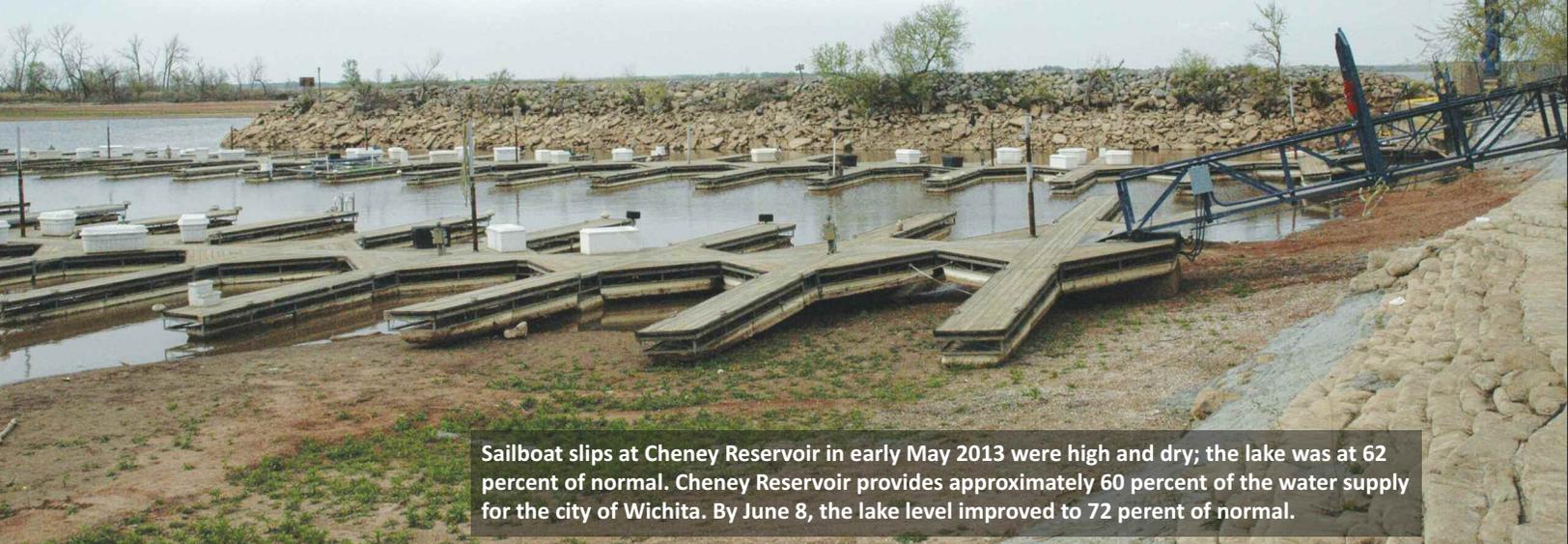


There's No Relief From Dealing With Drought Conditions



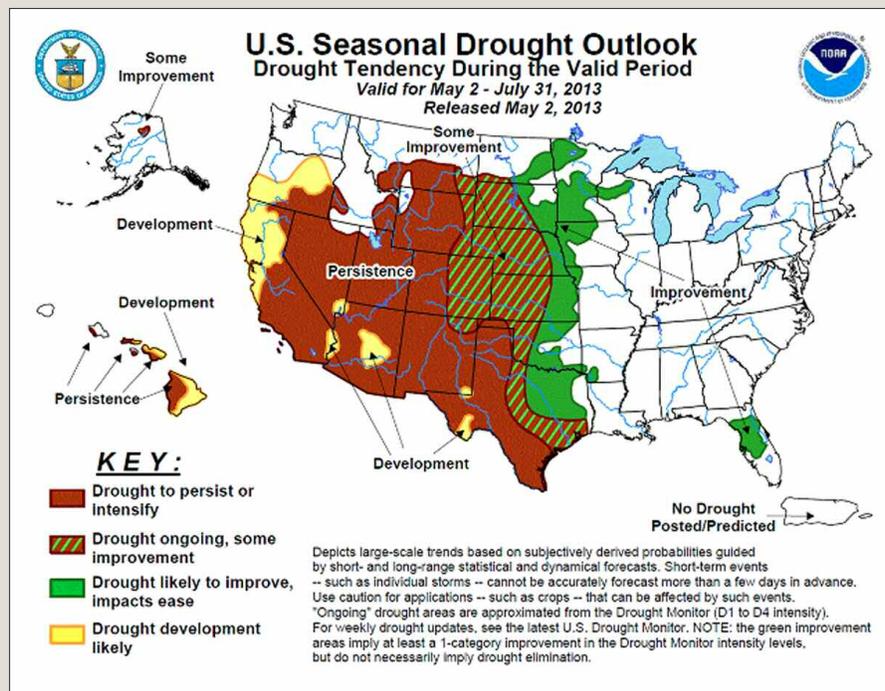
Sailboat slips at Cheney Reservoir in early May 2013 were high and dry; the lake was at 62 percent of normal. Cheney Reservoir provides approximately 60 percent of the water supply for the city of Wichita. By June 8, the lake level improved to 72 percent of normal.

In early January 2013, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack designated 597 counties in 14 states as primary natural disaster areas due to drought and heat. Kansas had 88 counties in that designation. The 597 counties designated as disaster areas were located in these states: Alabama, 14; Arkansas, 47; Arizona, 4; Colorado, 30; Georgia, 92; Hawaii, 2; Kansas, 88; Oklahoma, 76; Missouri, 31; New Mexico, 19; Nevada, 9; South Carolina, 11; Texas, 157; and Utah, 17.

As I write this article in mid-May, we know that many of the states east of Kansas have received beneficial rainfall this spring – and in some cases, way too much. But most of Kansas is still critically short of subsoil moisture, not to mention having low stream flows, low lake and reservoir levels and declining water levels for many public water systems that rely on ground water. And even if beneficial rainfall begins, the problem for public water systems that rely on wells is that recovery of ground water typically lags increased rainfall by six months or more.

In late December 2012, Governor Brownback requested that all public water suppliers evaluate their water sources and report to the Kansas Water Office. That publicity raised the attention of many public water systems

to evaluate their sources and to request assistance with developing or updating their water conservation plans. Kansas Rural Water (KRWA) provides assistance to systems in developing or updating water conservation plans.



From January 1 to May 1, 2013, KRWA offered assistance to 180 cities and RWDs with their water conservation plans.

Funding for that assistance is provided through a contractual arrangement between the Kansas Water Office and KRWA with funding as a benefit of the Clean Drinking Water Fee. From January 1 to May 1, 2013, KRWA offered assistance to 180 cities and RWDs with their water conservation plans. KRWA has also conducted measurements of static and drawdown levels in many public water supply wells. It is very important that water systems frequently monitor and record pumping rates and well drawdown. That information is critical to the successful operation of ground water systems.

KRWA developed an information brochure late in 2012, urging water systems to take action to alleviate the impact of severe drought conditions. With some updates, it is included as a sidebar on this page, at right.

Public Water Systems Urged to Take Action to Alleviate the Impact of Severe Drought Conditions

In light of the fact that many parts of Kansas experienced severe drought during 2012, and that the drought conditions continue for much of the state, the Kansas Rural Water Association recommends that all public water supplies take the following precautionary measures:

Closely monitor daily pumping or production figures to ensure that more than normal quantities of water are not being produced. By closely monitoring daily production figures water systems may be able to determine if what appears to be high demand may be a large water leak. It is also advisable to compare production/pumping records to water sold or accounted for loss at least monthly to calculate your system's percent water loss. Again, if unaccounted for water is higher than normal, then it's time to check meters, check recordkeeping and likely, start looking for leaks.

Measure both static and pumping water levels in all wells. A handout explaining how to measure such water levels can be found on the KRWA Web site at www.krwa.net and then under "Downloads". While this is a practice that should be followed on a monthly basis throughout the year, it becomes even more critical during drought conditions. Historical static water level readings and current static levels should be compared to determine if water levels are declining. Water pumped should also be examined to determine if air is present. KRWA staff report several systems having well drawdown to the extent that pump suction has been broken. This may be caused by a drop in static water level – and it's past time to call for help. Any system experiencing such problems should consider contacting its well driller, engineer or KRWA staff for assistance.

Find and review your Emergency Operations Plan and/or Drought Contingency Plan to ensure it is up-to-date. These plans allow systems to legally take actions if needed to help ensure that the system continues to provide water service. If your system needs assistance with review of either the Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Response Plan or Water Conservation Plan, contact KRWA at 785.336.3760.

It is advisable to have a Boil Water Advisory handy in case the system loses water pressure for whatever reason. A Boil Water Advisory template can be found on the KRWA Web site under "downloads." When water pressure is lost, it increases the likelihood of back-siphonage drawing contaminants into the system. Once an advisory is issued, continued bacteriological monitoring throughout the system is needed. An advisory can usually be rescinded once pressure is restored, the system is thoroughly flushed and additional bacteriological monitoring confirms that the water is safe to drink.

Wichita Watches Water Level in Cheney Reservoir



Cheney Reservoir west of Wichita, provides approximately 60 percent of the city's annual water usage. Due to continued drought conditions, the lake was determined to hold 62 percent of normal water storage. City officials have calculated that if current (as of May 1, 2013) drought conditions continue, the lake may not be able to provide adequate water for the city. City officials have launched a water conservation campaign to reduce water use. They are also considering other alternatives such as punitive pricing of applying a surcharge for high water users.

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I am proud to be part of the leadership that will ensure that KRWA will continue to be the pre-eminent training and technical assistance provider for public water systems in Kansas.

Regardless if drought conditions persist or not in 2013, KRWA encourages water system operators to be proactive in partnering with either their engineer, state agencies, well drillers or KRWA to address any concerns associated with water system supply or operations. The citizens of Kansas – all our customers – depend on city councils and RWD boards – and the managers and operators and others working for those systems to do everything possible to ensure that quality water service is available.

2013 and beyond

KRWA recently sponsored its 46th Annual Conference & Exhibition. This issue carries a review of the conference. It was a great event. And by “great”, I mean, it was beneficial to anyone who attended. Following the annual meeting of membership, the KRWA board elected me as President for the next year; Sam Atherton served a three-year term which is limited by KRWA bylaws.

I also want to express appreciation to all the presenters and exhibitors and all those who attended the conference. That participation continues to make the KRWA conference “the” event of the year for water and wastewater systems. KRWA has long history providing unparalleled training opportunities. I am proud to be part of the leadership that will ensure that KRWA will continue to be the pre-eminent training and technical assistance provider for public water systems in Kansas.

Dennis Schwartz is the current President of KRWA. He retired on March 31, 2013 as General Manager of Shawnee RWD 8 since 1976. Dennis is a member of the Kansas Water Authority and has



also been a director for National Rural Water since 1992. He was a member of the Water Industry Coordinating Council from 1996-2002 and EPA's National Drinking Water Advisory Council from 1999-2005.

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