

# \$1.4 million upgrade helps Cherokee RWD 3 meet demands

Originally built in 1967 the Cherokee County Rural Water District 3 has served the people of Cherokee County in southeastern Kansas for the past 41 years. When the district was first constructed, it consisted of two wells, a treatment plant and pipelines to accommodate the original 135 customers. In 1974 the district underwent further improvements and under an agreement with the Farmer's Home Administration, the district expanded to provide service to the city of Treece and the unincorporated communities of Hallowell and Faulkner.

Jon Houser, manager for Cherokee RWD 3, has experienced the growth firsthand and has seen many changes take place over the 31 years he has been working for the district. With the help of his wife Betsy, the Housers have often worked day and night to provide quality service to the folks in this corner of Kansas.



*Bob Kirby  
Tech Assistant*

Today the district covers approximately 160 square miles of service area and serves nearly 700 users. In the last two years alone the district has added 60 new customers. In fact, growth for a time was so rapid that the district had to put patrons on a waiting list to be approved for service.

With the growth the district was experiencing it became apparent that there was a need for improvements not only to existing facilities but also to the water supply.

## Debating new source

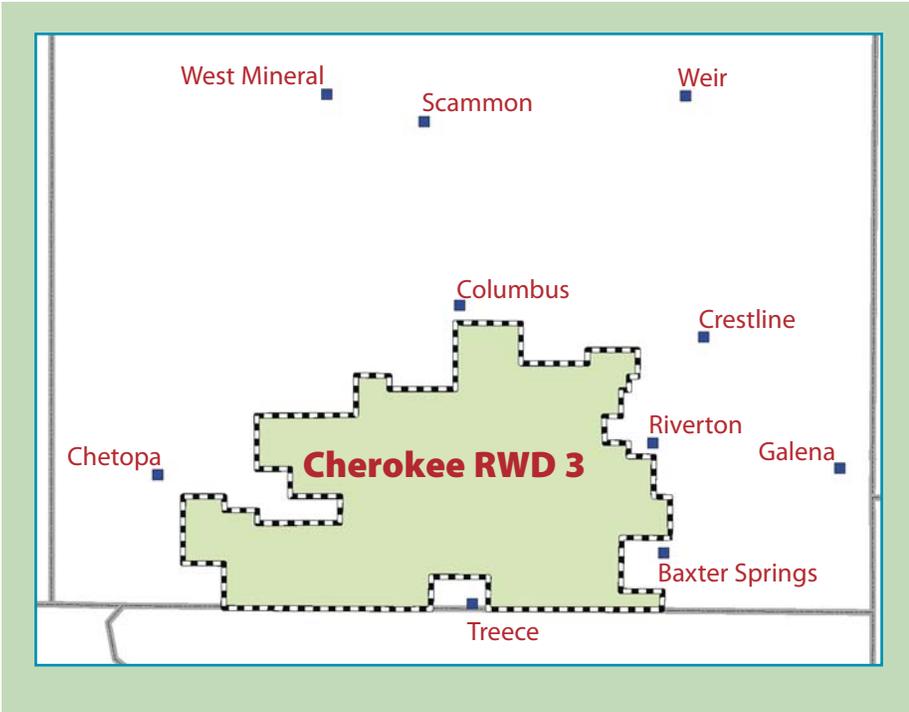
With the growth the district was experiencing it became apparent that there was a need for improvements not only to existing facilities but also to the water supply. In the early 1990's the district joined the Spring River Public Wholesale group, also known as Public Wholesale District No. 19 (PWWS 19). For years, PWWS 19 has pursued a viable source of supply from the Spring River. Representatives from Cherokee RWD 3 spearheaded the

effort. To date, the group has not been able to procure funding for the project. With growth within Cherokee RWD 3 continuing at a rapid pace the district realized that it must move forward with its own project in order to ensure the viability of their system.

The first steps for the district in planning the improvement were to identify its needs in respect to available water appropriations and to identify a source of funding. A hurdle that presented itself to the project in regard to water right



The Cherokee Rural Water District No. 3 construction site sign proclaims funding from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's State Revolving Loan Fund. It also notes the project engineering firm is Professional Engineering Consultants, PA, Wichita, Kansas and the general contractor is LaForge and Budd Construction Company of Parsons, Kansas.



appropriations was the issue of a water rights moratorium in the Ozark Aquifer from which the district pumps its water supply. This moratorium essentially stopped all new appropriations from the aquifer with the exception of domestic wells and requests for appropriations under five acre-feet. However, under the conditions of the moratorium a water supply system could apply for either temporary permits or term permits with the term permits being issued under the condition that the system applying for the term permits be developing a surface water source for supply. With the system still actively involved with the PWWS 19, thus trying to develop a surface water source, the district was able to obtain term permits for the improvement project. The term permits could be extended, converted to regular appropriations or dismissed when the moratorium is lifted in 2010, depending on the results of the study and the groundwater flow

modeling that is taking place. For funding, the district turned to the Kansas Revolving Loan Fund. This funding source is administered through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. With the 20-year term and extremely low interest rate, this program best fits the needs of the project.

With the term permits and funding procured the system moved forward with the engineering of the plant improvements. The improvement project would include a new filter building with new filters and controls, a larger detention tank and a new aeration tower. Two new lagoons would also be included. The existing plant would be receiving a major overhaul as well. The existing filters and pressure tanks were removed and the plant building was divided off to make room for replacing the motor drives and control center. A climate control system was installed to extend the life of the motor drives as well.



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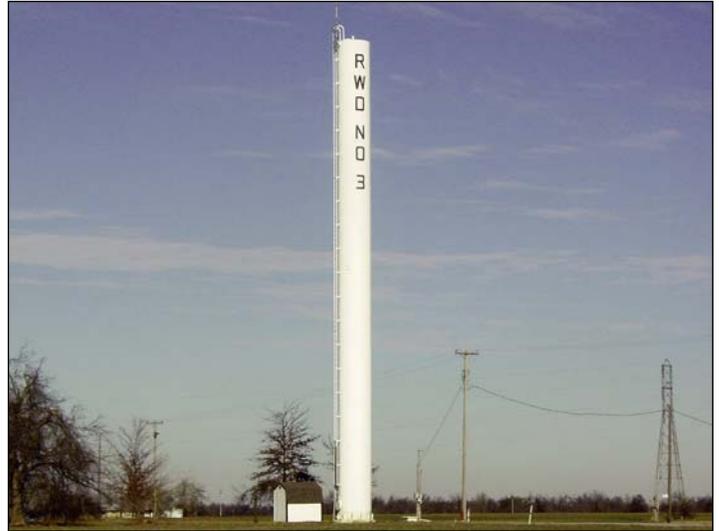
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*This is a view of the new filter building for Cherokee County RWD 3 in southeastern Kansas. The project is designed to improve the overall capacity of the district. The building houses overhauled pump motors with new column pipes and pump bases. The new filters are cleaned with a new backwash pump.*



*This standpipe three miles east of Columbus, Kansas is one of three storage units for Cherokee County RWD 3. Growth within the district over the years was the driving force behind the improvement project to increase the overall capacity of the system.*

The system utilized existing high service pumps but did rebuild the existing equipment. The motors driving the pumps were overhauled and new column pipes and pump bases were utilized. In order to adequately clean the new filters a new backwash pump was purchased and installed.

**Costs climb**

When the project was originally initiated the engineer's cost estimate for the work to be completed was approximately \$989,000. When bids were opened two years later the price of steel and other construction costs had increased dramatically. These increases drove the cost of the project up to \$1.4 million. Professional Engineering Consultants of Wichita, Kansas was the engineer for the project. The project was awarded to LaForge and Budd Construction Company in Parsons, Kansas.

The district had been planning for the project and the debt service that would come along with the improvements for some

time leading up to the actual project. In July 2006 the district initiated a rate increase to pay for the work. The monthly minimum charge remained the same at \$10. This minimum includes a thousand gallons of water. The cost per thousand gallons increased from \$3.05 per thousand gallons to \$4.50 per thousand gallons.

The project at Cherokee County RWD 3 is an example of what it takes to overcome setbacks and to move forward to ensure the future of the water supply business in Cherokee County.

In closing I want to announce that I have accepted a position with Penn National Tours and the City of Baxter Springs to oversee development of water and wastewater infrastructure for the new area casino. I may still be doing some part time work for KRWA. I very much appreciate KRWA and respect everything the association stands for; I am honored to have been part of KRWA.

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For more information contact Stan Rinehart, City of Sublette Maintenance Supt., 620/ 675-2781.

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