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## News Release

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For Immediate Release: July 8, 2015  
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### **Multi-agency Team Deploys Sensors to Address Salt Fork Fish Kills**

Water quality sensors have been deployed in the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River in north-central Oklahoma as part of a joint, coordinated state effort to address major fish kills that have occurred in that tributary five separate times since 2012.

These sensors have been in place since April. They monitor the quality of the water in the Salt Fork and report conditions hourly to the newly formed Oklahoma Kill Response Management Team (OKRMT), a task force made up of representatives from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, Oklahoma Corporation Commission, Oklahoma Water Resources Board and several other agencies.

With these sensors in place, OKRMT representatives are confident they can better identify water quality issues occurring in the Salt Fork in Grant and Kay counties that are potentially triggering these major fish kills.

While no definitive causes have been established for the five fish kills that have occurred at various locations along the river from Great Salt Plains Lake to the Salt Fork's confluence with the Arkansas River, the four major state agencies involved in OKRMT are committed to analyzing current and future data in an effort to resolve any issues that could lead to additional fish kills.

"The goal is a coordinated and fast response to the present situation as well as efficient data-gathering, sharing and analysis that makes our collective response better to any event that may occur in the future," said Oklahoma Secretary of Energy and Environment Michael Teague.

Investigations of fish kills are challenging because the target area is constantly changing as water flows downstream. OKRMT is using sensors to help investigators improve response times in the event of a fish kill.

Barry Bolton, chief of fisheries for the Wildlife Department, said the OKRMT's water quality sensors should help investigators find out what has been happening along the Salt Fork.

"If these fish kills happen again this year, it's likely that this water quality data can help us to start narrowing down a cause," Bolton said.

Additionally, OKRMT recently provided training to field staff members who are often the first to respond when a fish kill is reported. Evidence collected by first responders at the site of a fish kill can prove very important to tracing a cause.

To report a fish kill anywhere in Oklahoma, call the state Department of Environmental Quality at [\(800\) 522-0206](tel:8005220206). For more information about OKRMT, call Ferrella March at [\(405\) 702-5175](tel:4057025175).

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