

Water/Ways Exhibit News Release

From above, Earth appears as a water planet with more than 71 percent of its surface covered with this vital resource for life. Water impacts climate, agriculture, transportation, industry and more. It inspires art and music. The traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street program, "Water/Ways," examines water as an environmental necessity and an important cultural element. The Oklahoma Blue Thumb Program, a water quality education program of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Water Quality Division, will be on hand as this exhibit makes its way through Oklahoma beginning this month and continuing into April 2020.

A partnership of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) and state humanities councils, the exhibit is scheduled to make stops in Oklahoma at:

- Norman Public Library East, June 29-Aug. 18, 2019;
- Ada Public Library, Aug. 26-Oct. 13;
- Locust Grove at Ingram's Custom Rods, Oct. 21-Dec. 8;
- Fort Towson Historic Site, Dec. 16-Feb. 9, 2020; and
- Altus at Museum of the Western Prairie, Feb. 17-April 12, 2020

All of the water currently on the [planet is all that there ever has been, and all that will ever be. Through the water cycle it is in endless motion on Earth's surface, below ground and in the atmosphere. "Water/Ways" explores this cycle, water's effect on landscape, settlement and migration, and its impact on culture and spirituality. It looks at how political and economic planning have long been affected by access to water and control of water resources. Human creativity and resourcefulness provide new ways of protecting water resources and renewing respect for the natural environment.

Designed for small-town museums, libraries and cultural organizations, "Water/Ways" will serve as a community meeting place to convene conversations about water's impact on American culture. With the support and guidance of state humanities councils, in our state Oklahoma City University has a role, these towns will develop complementary exhibits, host public programs and facilitate educational initiatives to raise people's understanding about what water means culturally, socially and spiritually in their own community.

"Water/Ways" is part of the Smithsonian's Think Water Initiative to raise awareness of water as a critical resource for life through exhibitions, educational resources and public programs. A primary reason that the Blue Thumb Program has a role is so that those visiting the exhibit have an answer to the question "What now?" Blue Thumb uses volunteers to monitor streams and educate the public about pollution prevention. It is anticipated that many who experience the exhibit – no matter where they go to see it – will be moved to help the general public learn how they can be involved in stream and river protection. A Blue Thumb exhibit and place to sign up for more information will be a part of each edition of Water Ways throughout the state.

“Water Ways” was inspired by an exhibition organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and the Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, in collaboration with Great Lakes Science Center, Cleveland; The Field Museum, Chicago; Instituto Sangari, Sao Paulo, Brazil; National Museum of Australia, Canberra; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; San Diego Natural History Museum; and Science Centre Singapore with PUB Singapore.