



Federal Water Program Holds Great Promise

(Two southwestern Oklahoma farmers discuss the new federal water project legislation passed by the U.S. Congress by overriding Pres. George Bush's veto. Danny Robbins, seated, expresses his opinions about the new law to Mark Nichols, standing. Robbins, Altus, is chairman of the Oklahoma Cotton Council. Nichols, Altus, serves on the Cotton Council board of directors and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. NTOKCotton picture.)



Altus, Ok., Nov. 19, 2007--A presidential veto override by the U.S. Congress holds great promise for southwestern Oklahoma farmers.

One of the programs included in the federal legislation is the Red River Chloride Control project. It stipulates operation and maintenance of Oklahoma chloride control projects at the Red River will be at full federal expense. This is consistent with current operation and maintenance chloride projects in Texas for the past 20 years. This project will enhance drinking water supplies and agricultural irrigation in the area.

A three-year feasibility study, now in its second year, on controlling chloride in the Red River is being conducted by the U.S. Corps of Engineers.

The Red River Chloride Control project is just one of many such programs included in legislation first approved by the U.S. Congress earlier this year. First vetoed by Pres. George Bush, it found new life in the first successful veto override by Congress during the Bush Administration. The Senate voted 79-14, well beyond the two-thirds necessary. The House voted 361-54 to override the President's veto.

A longterm project of Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Tulsa, the law, "doesn't spend a cent. This is not a spending bill," Inhofe said.

The law gives congressional authority for \$23 billion in spending on hundreds of water project across the nation. Funding of the projects will have to be handled in separate bills.

Two western Oklahoma farmers who are glad to see the bill become law are Danny Robbins and Mark Nichols, both from Altus. Robbins is the current chairman of the Oklahoma Cotton Council and Nichols serves on the Oklahoma Water Resources Board and the Oklahoma Cotton Council.

"Controlling chlorine in the upper region of the Red River has great potential for cities needing water and for irrigation projects," Robbins said.

"Water will one day be the most important resource we have," Nichols said, "not just in western Oklahoma, but everywhere. We are waiting on the results of the Corps of Engineers study to see what can be done."

