



# ADA JOBS FOUNDATION

## VISION STATEMENT ADA, OKLAHOMA, WATER RESEARCH CAPITAL OF THE NATION



General Concepts Approved by Ada Jobs Foundation, September 10, 2004

## ***Introduction***

Few small communities have such a unique resource as the E.P.A. Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Center. To develop this resource to its fullest potential is a professional imperative for local economic development. By stimulating other business related to water quality research, education, and service, Ada can take advantage of a unique competitive niche and create high quality, high-paying jobs.

This is a discussion paper intended to help formulate a strategy to capitalize on the unique water-related features of Ada, especially the Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Center. The ultimate purpose is to improve the quality of life in Ada now and into the future. The more immediate purpose is to improve the quality and number of jobs available in the Ada/Pontotoc County area. Additionally, the result should contribute to the securing of ample water resources to support growth in Ada and throughout Oklahoma.

Ada has the potential to develop nationally recognized expertise that will also address Oklahoma's water issues.

## ***Vision 1***

By 2015, Ada, Oklahoma will be recognized as a major hub of water research, with over 2,000 knowledge workers, both public and private, employed in water related research, safety, education, and production of related products and services. By 2025, Ada, Oklahoma is known as the Water Research Capital of the Nation.

## ***Vision 2***

Ada will seize on the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in water planning

for both the region and the state. This opportunity is unique in time and requires Ada to value state and regional macro needs as highly as we value local needs. By demonstrating this leadership, the community leadership-infrastructure will become knowledgeable partners for water related businesses.

(We must think about doing this in order to avoid a situation of cross-purposes where the local objectives take center stage in the short-run, to the detriment of the long-term potential to be recognized as a place where seemingly intractable water issues are researched and solved and the findings are used to educate others around the world.)

(Also, a critical network of legal services could grow, as a result of the study of various legal issues related to water.)

## ***How***

In order to realize this vision, a critical mass of scientists and laboratories will be needed. Additionally, a strong degree of public support, along with private investment will be required.

## ***Why Ada? Why Now?***

The Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Center is the "Anchor Asset" which creates a unique feature unlike many others in cities the size of Ada. If we do not act to stimulate ancillary growth around the work of the Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Center, we may lose the scientist to other more aggressive communities. If we do not act, instead of moving toward a critical mass, the number of scientists could decline below a viable mass and the laboratory and the opportunity go elsewhere – regardless of the federal budget

appropriations to the EPA.

Ada stands at a cross roads in terms of water policy history. In the next few years several issues will be decided based on struggles over surface versus ground water, urban versus rural, development versus recreation versus agriculture, quality, protection from sabotage, and new water testing, protection, and purification products.

Ada itself has need of long-term water planning studies.

Oklahoma has long-term water needs. By taking a leadership role in solving statewide issues, Ada positions itself for state support for this economic development initiative.

The people of Ada and the surrounding area are inclined to work peaceably to solve problems for which solutions stretch beyond the lifetime of the devotee.

Ada has powerful, supportive, and well placed Senators and Congressman right now. This will not always be true.

Ada has supportive state representatives. Representative Bob Plunk will most likely be serving his last term in the Oklahoma House of Representatives beginning in January.

Ada has private wealth not visibly invested in Ada's future.

Ada is geographically located to place a water research center logically near to the weather related research center in Norman and the Noble Foundation in Ardmore, engaged in biological research.

The OU law school is near enough to be a valuable asset in not only service, but also collaborative research.

East Central University is a key

resource. One challenge is to build such a research center without a major research institution of higher education. Stillwater is probably the major regional competitor. A collaborative relationship with a research university is not only feasible, many grants, include EPSCoR (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research) reward collaboration with regional institutions, particularly rural regional institutions.

This region has an additional steward, resource, and partner, in the heritage goals of Native Americans.

Ada has a cluster of retired (and aging) water experts who are willing, but who will not always be able, to contribute their expertise to the challenge.

This cluster would not compete with any other major employer in Ada.

Ada is going to struggle with water issues in any event – we might as well develop additional expertise which can be exported to solve issues elsewhere, thus creating jobs in Ada and keeping the dollars spent on research close to home.

Water needs are international and will not go away in any imaginable lifetime.

Water will even be a field of exploration in the space program.

### ***What Will It Look Like?***

- In state-of-the-art satellite laboratories and offices in and around Ada, spin-off research and product development will reach such a level that anyone wanting to study hydrology will know that at some point in their career they must come work in Ada.
- A consortium of privately funded research “pods” will be developed under one roof much like the Pittsburgh Digital

Greenhouse, which developed to foster a regional cluster of hi-tech companies in Pittsburgh in 1999. (<http://www.digitalgreenhouse.com/>)

- Post-Doctorates will increase (Noble Foundation for example is not near a major research university, yet employs numerous post-doctorates.)
- Water engineering or service companies will want to at least have a portion of their R&D located in Ada, and eventually recognize that having their headquarters in Ada, the Water Research Capital of the World, adds to their stature in the business.
- Producers of water related products would build prototypes and then products first in Ada because of the “intellectual capital” and the availability of testing laboratories. The community leadership’s unique water-knowledge will enhance the ability of producers here to be first to market, because we will know what they need most to succeed and we will combine that knowledge with our economic development and finance knowledge to form competitive start-ups.
- The cluster will evolve and cease to be totally dependent on federal funding. As a result, Ada will not be as vulnerable to federal EPA budget cuts.

### ***Where Should We Begin?***

- Establish a new non-profit Research and Education Institute “The American Water Institute”.
  - o Initiate discussion and research for solving central Oklahoma City’s metropolitan water needs. Take the lead and offer constructive solutions.
  - o Successfully compete for the

contract to do long range planning for the City of Ada.

- Explore the feasibility of using former Sykes facility as laboratory space available for lease to multiple organizations.
- Engage community leaders in vision development
- Engage federal and state elected officials.
- Have the vision adopted by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce as one of the state’s target clusters.
- Ada Jobs Foundation should identify, join, and participate in major water research conferences – get to know the science just as we would get to know an industry.
- Ada water experts and leaders put forth-proposed solutions to initiate collaborative work on Oklahoma super-fund sites.
- Ada water experts and leaders take a constructive and leading role in helping Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area communities solve water supply issues.
- Identify an opportunity to host a major water quality event in Ada.
- Bring high-level water researchers to Ada. Coordinate with ECU, OU and OSU.
- Solicit buy-in by trust departments of regional financial institutions and identify key foundation sponsor – the next Sam Noble or a Robert S. Kerr from Ada.
- Study the desires of the Robert S. Kerr family to assure highest impact of legacy.
- Implement a training program for environmental science workers with ECU.
- Develop grant-writing capabilities focused on water research.
- Visit best examples of consortiums such as Charlotte, Pittsburgh, and Norman.

***Who are the Players (local and state players, in no particular order)?***

- ECU Chair of Environmental Sciences
- Science and Natural Resources Foundation
- ECU Center for Entrepreneurship
- Ada Jobs Foundation
- EPA Robert S. Kerr Research Center
- CPASA
- Ada Water Resources Board
- NRCS
- USDA
- Ok. Dept. of Commerce/Tourism
- Chickasaw Nation
- Choctaw Nation
- Other Native American Tribes
- REI
- Ok Water Resources Board
- Rural Water Districts
- Oklahoma League of Municipalities
- County Commissioners
- EPA
- ODEQ
- Farm Producers
- Land Owners
- COGS
- Tri-County Indian Nations CDC
- Other ED organizations
- Universities
- Foundations
- NSF
- USGS
- Oil and Gas Producers
- Rural Fire Fighters
- Pontotoc Technology Center
- Region 6 EPA
- Pontotoc Technology Center

***Why this and not something else?***

We have a unique opportunity and the

means to build a unique niche giving Ada a competitive advantage, which does not conflict with core values of the community. No other community in Oklahoma, except perhaps Stillwater, is likely to compete, so we have a good chance of getting the weight of state leaders behind us. This vision fits with the state strategy to develop a unique target or cluster strategy.

It not only does not harm the environment, it will help the environment.

It will bring in new money from the outside. The jobs will pay well and be enriching.

It does not require access to an Interstate or four-lane highway.

***Role of Ada Jobs Foundation:***

- Work in partnership with those in the business and use our partnership to build support and sponsorship
- Do the work of developing other targeted industries, recognizing water constraints
- Weigh this vision against other possible target industries
- If this one captures the passion of the community, take the lead in putting our money where we can garner passion and attention.
- Communicate the value of a long range and unique vision.
- Identify funding and strategies to make it happen.

**END**