



THE EARLY HISTORY OF EFO FORMATION AND PURPOSE

As the 1980s were coming to an end, Oklahoma's economic and environmental programs had bottomed out from financial difficulties, and multiple efforts were being made to achieve delegation of federal environmental programs by State agencies to provide regulatory management by Oklahomans for Oklahomans. However, interagency bickering and duplication of effort continued to have an impact on business and industry compliance with the multitude of rules and regulations at the state and federal level. A thought prevailed among environmental professionals that a statewide coordinated approach could facilitate environmental compliance and provide economic benefits for Oklahoma industry and Oklahoman's employed by these industries.

As a former Oklahoman, Bob Gasper was an environmental professional who continued to have strong ties with members of Oklahoma's environmental community when he moved to Arkansas. He served as the Chief of the OWRB's Water Quality Division, OG&E's Environmental Control Specialist, and Weyerhaeuser's Asst. Manager Environmental Affairs before relocating to Arkansas as an Environmental Specialist with AT&T in 1979. In Arkansas, they had began the Arkansas Environmental Federation (AEF), and as a member of the AEF, Bob became a strong advocate for the organization, singing their praises to his Oklahoma contacts.

Founded in 1967, the Arkansas Environmental Federation (AEF) was a 501c(6) non-profit environmental education association which had grown to more than 250 members by the 1980s. The vast majority of AEF members was composed of businesses and industries that dealt with environmental, safety, and health regulations on a day-to-day basis. The AEF's stated purpose was to develop practical, common-sense laws and regulations based on sound science; a teamwork approach to compliance; and waste minimization and pollution prevention. The AEF strived to enable information to be exchanged on a daily basis between its members, government regulators, and policy makers.

One of those contacts was Jim Barnett, an environmental attorney. Jim served as the Executive Director of the OWRB through the late 1970s and the entire decade of the 1980s. Jim had previously served as a Deputy Attorney General for the Oklahoma, where he developed a firm understanding of the Oklahoma law making process and the legal aspects of the state's environmental agencies. As the 1980s became the 1990s, Jim left the OWRB and entered private practice. However, he did not forget the Bob

Gasper praises for the AEF, and he certainly understood the issues it took achieve environmental compliance for Oklahoma's business and industry, including the development of achievable laws rules and regulations by the state regulators.

This simple friendship and interaction by these two dedicated environmental professionals eventually resulted in the establishment of the **Environmental Federation of Oklahoma** as a 501c(6) non-profit environmental association.