

\$11 Million Rain Project Backed

By Ed Montgomery

A \$2.2 million emergency appropriation to launch a five-year, \$11 million weather modification program for drouth-stricken Oklahoma was proposed Thursday by the State Weather Modification Advisory Committee.

Committee members voted unanimously to present the proposal to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board at its March 8 meeting and urge the board members to present the program to the legislature.

The supplemental appropriation for the current fiscal year would launch a five-year program to cost \$2.2 mil-

lion a year. Members of the advisory committee said they were convinced that the plan would pay for itself many times over in taxes generated by a boosted economy.

Wayman Cornelsen, a member of the committee from Fairview, said the proposed program would mean at least \$100 million a year to the state economy.

Dick Hamilton, Harmon rancher who is vice chairman of the committee and presided Thursday in the absence of chairman Robert S. Kerr Jr. of Oklahoma City, said the

The monitoring firm would have the power to stop operating firms from seeding clouds which could produce dangerous results. Otherwise, any district could start and stop a seeding program as it chose.

Hamilton said that seeding contracts with Irving P. Krick, the nation's best known weather modification expert, are in effect in nine counties, although no seeding programs have been conducted since the first of the year. The contracts are with Lawton in Comanche County, the Hitch ranch in Texas County, and with groups in Harper, Woodward, Ellis, Beaver, Cotton, Kiowa and Woods counties.

The proposal calls for each county to have two representatives in its weather modification district. County commissioners would appoint a rural member and the water resources board would appoint an urban member.

Other members of the advisory committee at Thursday's meeting including Ferdie J. Deering of Oklahoma City, newspaper columnist and former farm magazine editor; Paul Hitch of the Hitch ranch; C.R. Holden, Tulsa water superintendent, Nelson Dougherty, Altus banker, and J.G. Stratton Sr., Clinton farmer.

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homa City, has insisted on local controls for any weather modification program.

The plan recommended Thursday meets that requirement by dividing the state into nine districts corresponding to the present crop reporting districts.

Committee members pointed out that existing records for the crop districts would be handy for comparison

of the results of the weather modification program with records from past years.

The weather modification effort would be aimed at increasing rainfall and suppressing hail. Some of the funds would go to hire an independent meteorological firm to monitor programs.

Each district could hire its own weather modification firm for cloud seeding and other procedures.