

Short-Range Water Outlook Bleak

HORROR movies seem to be popular. Lines have formed to watch sharks devouring people, skyscrapers burning, earthquakes shaking, a giant ape battling helicopters and a maniac in a dirigible threatening to blow up a crowded stadium.

If moviemakers are looking for a new subject, they might portray the ultimate drought and call it "World Without Water." It could be a real chiller.

Unless they make it soon, it could become a reality first. Much of Oklahoma, many parts of the United States and many other countries are suffering from critical drought now.

Other than as a topic of casual conversation, many people do not seem to be concerned. After all, the oceans are full and how could we possibly run out?

We can't use it all, because most of the earth's water is unsuitable for agricultural, domestic or industrial purposes, because most of it is not located where it is needed and

because much of the water near users has been polluted.

There is hope. Comments of state civic and political leaders in a water meeting sponsored by the Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce last week reflected a spirit of unity that could result in action needed to meet Oklahoma's present and future needs.

Not all differences of opinion were resolved, but expressions indicated willingness to support workable plans to conserve, increase and utilize our resources. Here are some of the favorable and unfavorable aspects of our situation:

Oklahoma has sufficient water to satisfy our requirements, but most of it runs out of state without utilization.

Oklahoma has begun studies to transport water to areas of need, but misunderstandings and lack of adequate explanations to people in affected regions are impeding progress.

Oklahoma has practical laws to protect users in basins of origin

and to allocate water for beneficial uses, but unless a system for utilizing our water is activated soon, unused resources may be allocated to other states by federal agencies.

Preliminary planning is well along for removing impurities from rivers to make water usable, but money is needed to construct devices that will take salts out of the water.

Oklahoma has built thousands of lakes and ponds to conserve water, but great quantities are wasted by citizens who seem to be unaware that the supply of water is exhaustible.

Our long-range prospects for adequate water are good, but the immediate outlook is bleak. Farmers are facing critical times and some towns may have to ration water this summer.

To avoid or alleviate such crises in the future, the movement under way must be accelerated. If we keep on spending water like it is only money, we may dry up and blow away!