For example, Lake Texoma every year receives an average of 3.1 million acre-feet of water; because of salt pollution from the Red River, the water is virtually unusable for irrigation or industrial/municipal use.[7]

In 1959, the Corps began study of ten source areas in the Red River basin and five in the Arkansas basin.

The Arkansas part of the study subsequently became mired down in environmental and economic problems.

In 1981, the Arkansas River salt study was shelved in eight volumes prepared under the leadership of project manager David Steele.

On the Red River, however, Tulsa District experiments at two sites proved successful.

The first experiment was at Estelline Springs, about 90 miles southeast of Amarillo in the Texas Panhandle.

An earthen and rock wall traps water that suppresses the spring through hydrostatic pressure. This project was placed in operation in 1966 and over subsequent years has reduced the flow of brine by about 80 percent from Estelline Springs.[8]

A second project, southwest of Wichita Falls, Texas, captures salt brine as it seeps from the ground, then diverts it to safe storage in off-site brine lakes that won't pollute rivers. A low-flow dam collects brine that is pumped and piped 23 miles to Truscott Brine Lake.

The 1986 Omnibus Water Bill exempted the Red River project from new local cost-sharing requirements — on the condition that an independent evaluation of the Truscott site showed it would do what the Corps said it would do.

In August 1988 a five-member evaluation panel, chaired by Utah State University's Dr. Jack Keller, reported that the project topped Corps' projections. The panel said it would remove 87 percent of the chloride seepage over the project's life.

"We . . . recommend that authorization be given to continue with the construction of the Red River Chloride Control Project," Keller wrote.[9]

By 1988, cost of the Red River chloride control project was estimated at $142 million, of which $11 million had been spent. The remainder had yet to be approved by Congress, but the success of the Truscott site raised hopes that a fully funded cleanup project would make the Red River potable — useful, at long last, for cities, industries, and farmers.[10]

As part of the chloride control project, Truscott Brine Lake was dedicated i 1987.