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## On The Firing Line



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Firefighters from Yankton battled this grass fire southeast of Utica Monday afternoon. This vegetation was in a slough that would normally be feeding a small pond, but the pond is now dry and the surrounding vegetation mostly dormant and brittle. Hot, dry and windy conditions will cause the Grassland Fire Danger Index to possibly reach the very high category today (Tuesday). The conditions are expected to carry on until late in the week.

## S.D Officials To Corps: Scrap Plan

### Proposal To Charge For Use Of Stored Missouri River Water Meets Stiff Resistance

BY CHET BROKAW  
Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota officials on Monday urged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to halt plans to charge for water taken from the six Missouri River reservoirs in the Dakotas and Montana, saying the proposal is unfair and violates states' rights to manage the water.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard argued that upstream states have the right to manage the river's natural flows, or water that would flow through the system without the reservoirs. States should continue to have authority to manage that water by granting water rights to users, he wrote in a letter read at a Corps of Engineers hearing in Pierre.



Daugaard

The corps' plan also appears to propose requiring contracts and payments from users who take water from the reservoirs, while people downstream of the dams would not pay anything while benefiting from flood control, water supplies and electricity generated by the dams, the governor said.

"Requiring upstream states to pay the entire cost with people in the downstream states enjoying these benefits at no cost is not equitable," Daugaard wrote.

The Corps of Engineers has proposed a storage fee system that would designate some water in the reservoirs as surplus because it has not been used for purposes authorized when the dams were built.

Municipal and industrial users would have to enter into contracts to purchase the water. They now only need to get an easement from the corps to install an intake, and the state issues a water right.

The charges would not take effect unless the corps passes a rule to do so, a process that could take 18 months.

The corps has already said temporary, no-cost permits to tap surplus water from North Dakota's Lake Sakakawea will be issued to oil drillers and other industrial users until a national policy is developed to determine how much, if anything, to charge.

About 100 people attended Monday's meeting in Pierre. The corps, which manages the Missouri River

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## Yankton Budget Hits \$40M Plateau

BY NATHAN JOHNSON  
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For the first time in its history, the Yankton City Commission is poised to approve an annual municipal budget that exceeds \$40 million.

The commission introduced the proposed \$40,200,167 million budget during its Monday meeting. It will be up for final approval Sept. 10.

Interim City Manager Al Viereck

Viereck said during a media briefing last week that the commission has held budget workshops during the last several months that helped shape the proposed document.

"We're happy to present a balanced budget," he said.

"It's pretty normal increases," Viereck added. "The only real increase is the debt service for the Menards project and the sales tax repayments. Otherwise, it's business as usual."

A tax-increment financing district was created to offset the infrastructure costs associated with the Menards development.

The adopted annual city budget for 2012 was \$38 million. It was \$37 million in 2011; \$34 million in 2010; and \$37 million in 2009.

Part of the budget includes proposed increases in utility

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## Fire Danger Index Climbs With Temps

BY DEREK BARTOS  
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Increasing heat and winds along with low humidity will result in elevated fire danger for the area today (Tuesday) through Thursday, the National Weather Service (NWS) announced Monday.

According to the NWS Grassland Fire Danger Index, fire potential for Yankton, Bon Homme, Clay, Hutchinson, Turner and Charles Mix counties is expected to reach the high to very high category by this afternoon.

"As we all know, it's been really dry," said Kerry Hanco, meteorologist with the NWS in Sioux Falls. "There's a lot of dead plant life out there, so we've got the fuels in place. The real concern is the really low humidity and also some gusty winds."

The forecast for the next few days calls for wind gusts of around 30 m.p.h., with humidity levels dipping below 30 percent. Combined with high temperatures around 100 degrees through Thursday, Hanco said conditions will be conducive for fires spreading out of control.

With such conditions in place, Yankton County Emergency Management Director Paul Scherschligt said residents should exercise extreme caution, as something as small as a spark from a mower or a cigarette thrown from a vehicle could ignite a fire that moves quickly.



Scherchligt

"It doesn't take much of anything," Scherschligt said. "With the dry conditions and any amount of breeze, the fire's going to run pretty hard."

Such was the case Monday afternoon when the Yankton Fire Department was called to a fire 2 1/2 miles north of Highway 50 near 436th Ave.

"They were cutting (Conservation Reserve Program land), and we believe they hit a rock and started the field on fire," said Yankton Deputy Fire Chief Larry Nickles.

Nickles said the fire spread quickly into a slough, which made it difficult to put out, and the department was on scene for roughly two hours. Approximately 15 acres were damaged, including several trees and part of a bean field.

Along with using caution with everyday activities that could start a fire, Scherschligt reminds residents to follow the burn ban that was enacted by Yankton County in July.

The ban prohibits open burning, which is defined as any outdoor fire, including but not limited to the prescribed burning of fence rows, fields, wildlands, trash and debris. It excludes fires contained within liquid-fueled or gas-fueled stoves, fireplaces within all buildings, charcoal grill fires at

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## Prison Group Eyes Rising Numbers

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
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SPRINGFIELD — A committee dedicated to reforming South Dakota's criminal justice system will learn information this week that could help prevent the building of two prisons in the next decade.

The South Dakota Corrections Commission learned more about the effort during Monday's meeting at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield. Several commission members also serve on the Criminal Justice Initiative Work Group, which holds its next meeting Thursday.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard, along with Supreme Court Chief Justice David Gilbertson and legislative leaders, announced the work group last month. The group has been charged with making recommendations in time for the 2013 Legislature starting in January.

At Monday's meeting in Springfield, Cor-

rections Commission members said action must be taken to deal with skyrocketing inmate numbers.

If nothing is done, South Dakota will begin running out of prison space, said State Sen. Craig Tieszen (R-Rapid City).

"Five years from now, we'll be needing a new women's prison. Ten years from now, we'll need a new men's prison," he said. "If that's the direction we're going, we need to make plans and start appropriating money."

However, much of Monday's discussion focused on ways of stemming the prison population rather than building more facilities.

"We need to be smarter on crime, rather than just tougher on crime," said Tieszen, the Corrections Commission chairman.

The challenge remains large, given the numbers. The state currently spends \$102 million on its corrections budget annually, compared to \$19 million in 1980. While their crime rates are similar, South Dakota's incar-

ceration rate is higher than that of neighboring states and is about double the rates of North Dakota and Minnesota.

The South Dakota prison population has grown by more than 500 percent since 1980, from about 600 inmates then to more than 3,600 today. If the state does not contain that growth, it is estimated the prison population will exceed 4,500 inmates by 2022, at a cost of more than \$224 million to taxpayers.

Mike Durfee State Prison, which hosted Monday's meeting, has seen a similar spike during the last three decades. Warden Bob Dooley told the Press & Dakotan. "We opened with 250 inmates in December 1984, and as of today, we're at 1,236," he said, with another 296 inmates at the Yankton Trusty Unit.

The Springfield prison employs the equivalent of 188 full-time employees, Dooley said.

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RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D  
Circuit Judge John Brown of Pierre listens to a presentation during Monday's meeting of the state Corrections Commission in Springfield.

## Tropical Storm Isaac Takes Aim At Gulf Coast

BY KEVIN MCGILL  
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — With its massive size and ponderous movement, Tropical Storm Isaac was gaining strength Monday as it headed toward the Gulf Coast. The next 24 hours would determine whether it brought the usual punishing rains and winds — or something even more destructive harkening back to the devastation wrought seven years ago by Hurricane Katrina.

The focus has been on New Orleans as Isaac takes dead aim at the city seven years after Hurricane Katrina, but the impact will be felt well beyond the city limits. The storm's winds could be felt more than 200 miles from its center.

The Gulf Coast region has been saturated thanks to a wet summer, and some officials have worried more rain could make it easy for trees and power lines to fall over in

also

■ Tropical Storm Produces A Subdued Opening To GOP Convo. PAGE 12

the wet ground. Too much water also could flood crops, and wind could topple plants such as corn and cotton.

"A large, slow-moving system is going to pose a lot of problems: winds, flooding, storm surge and even potentially down the road river flooding," said Richard Knabb, director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

The storm's potential for destruction was not lost on Alabama farmer Bert Driskell, who raises peanuts, cotton, wheat, cattle and sod on several thousand acres near Grand Bay, in Mobile County.

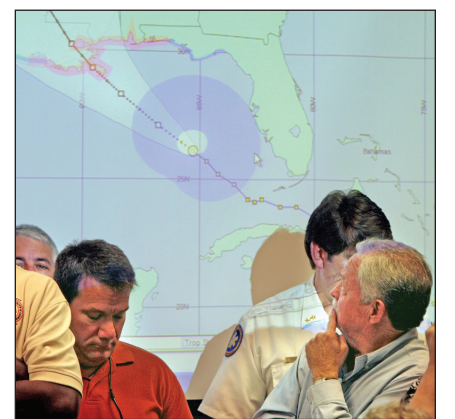
"We don't need a lot of water this close

to harvest," Driskell said.

However, Isaac could bring some relief to places farther inland where farmers have struggled with drought. It also may help replenish a Mississippi River that has at times been so low that barge traffic is halted so engineers can scrape the bottom to deepen it.

Forecasters predicted Isaac would intensify into a Category 2 hurricane, with winds of about 100 mph, by early Wednesday just before it makes landfall on the coast. The projected path took Isaac toward New Orleans Tuesday and Wednesday, but hurricane warnings extended across 280 miles from Morgan City, La., to the Florida-Alabama state line. It could become the first hurricane to hit the Gulf Coast since 2008.

Evacuations were ordered for some low-lying areas and across the region, people boarded up homes, stocked up on supplies and got ready for the storm. Schools, universities and businesses closed in many places.



JOHN FITZHUGH/BILOXI SUN HERALD/MCT  
Long Beach, Miss., mayor Bille Skellie Jr. looks at a map of the path of Tropical Storm Isaac during a meeting at the Harrison County Emergency Operations Center in Gulfport, Miss., on Monday.