



Partly Cloudy, Still Cold

9 a.m.: **2** | 3 p.m.: **11** | DETAILS: PAGE 2

WEDNESDAY ■ DECEMBER 26, 2012

YANKTON DAILY PRESS & DAKOTAN

VOLUME 138
NUMBER 205

The Dakotas' Oldest Newspaper | **12 PAGES** | www.yankton.net

75¢



One Year Later ...



Appearances can be deceiving. If you think this cornfield in Yankton County looks as if it has just been harvested, you'd be correct. But this photo was taken in early August, right when area corn crops should have been peaking and preparing to push toward the autumn harvest. A major drought, coupled with scorching temperatures, wreaked havoc on many area crop yields this year.

KELLY HERTZ/P&D

A Year After Record Flooding, Major Drought Is Voted Area's Top Story

From P&D Staff Reports

"From one extreme to the other."

Those words may have rushed through people's heads like flood water this year as they looked at the thirsty land withering beneath selfish skies that refused to give up much rain.

Meanwhile, the world baked, or so it seemed, as the area enduring a blistering summer in which triple-digit readings were familiar demons.

It was a far cry from 2011, when record flooding along the Missouri River dominated life in this region. It was tabbed as the area's top story of the year, as voted on by the *Press & Dakotan* staff.

No, this was 2012 — a much different year in which a record-setting drought has been named as the year's top area story.

The Yankton School District's second failed opt-out attempt was voted the No. 2 story in our annual survey.

In third place was the death of three of South Dakota's all-time political titans, including a man who ran for the presidency and shaped progressive thinking for a generation in this nation.

The No. 4 story was the long-awaited arrival of the Menards store in the Yankton market.

At No. 5 was the announcement by longtime Yankton School district superintendent Dr. Joe Gertsema that he would be resigning at the end of the current school year.

Rounding out the top 10 were South Dakota's two executions, the Nicholas Hines murder conviction, the transformation of Yankton's Charlie Battery to Bravo Battery, the struggles of area post offices and the death of a Wagner baby in July.

1. DROUGHT

One year after historic Missouri River flooding hit hard, the region — along with much of the Great Plains — suffered historic drought.

Both southeast South Dakota and northeast Nebraska remained entrenched in exceptional drought, the most extreme category. Some areas have fallen as much as 20 inches below normal for annual precipitation.

The drought set a number of records for both high temperatures and lack of precipitation.

On the agricultural scene, farmers received as little as one bushel an acre in some corn fields, and stalks were dried up. Corn and bean yields were dramatically lower, and some grain elevators were offering incentives to attract available crops. Pastures and stock dams also showed the effects of the dry conditions.

The drought has also dramatically impacted



RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D

Spc. Robert Buechler holds the Charlie Battery guidon at the start of a re-flagging ceremony at the Yankton Armory in September. The Charlie Battery guidon was encased and the Bravo Battery was uncased as the South Dakota National Guard unit took on the new name under SDNG reorganization.

the Missouri River Basin along with streams and tributaries. As of last week, 82 percent of the basin remained in drought with conditions expected to remain relatively unchanged through March.

Those conditions have re-ignited the Missouri River battle between upstream and downstream states. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced plans last week to increase its Gavins Point Dam releases rather than lower them as planned. As the year ended, Yankton city officials were assessing the impact on the municipal water intakes.

As the new year begins with no sign of improvement, fears are raised that the region may be facing a multi-year drought.

2. YANKTON'S OPT-OUT

Facing a budget shortfall of \$2.2 million for the Yankton School District's 2012-2013 budget, the Yankton school board in February chose to pursue a two-year property tax opt-out for up to \$1.4 million each year.

District voters defeated the measure 58 percent to 42 percent.



P&D ARCHIVE PHOTO/RANDY DOCKENDORF

Sen. George McGovern, who won the Democratic nomination for president in 1972 and was a tireless champion in the fight against hunger, died in October at age 90. When McGovern was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1962, he became the first South Dakota Democrat in 26 years to win the seat.

Vermillion Standoff Ends In Shooting

Man Dies Of Apparent Self-Inflicted Gunshot Wound

BY DAVID LIAS

david.lias@plaintalk.net

VERMILLION — A domestic altercation in Vermillion that began in the early morning hours of Christmas Day ended tragically.

A Vermillion man is dead and his two children are safe after a standoff that began at approximately 1 a.m. Tuesday.

The man apparently died of a self-inflicted gunshot after keeping local law enforcement at bay for approximately 12 hours.

At 1 a.m. Tuesday, officers were called to a residence on South Crawford Road near Main Street and determined that an armed man was in the residence with two of his minor children.

The immediate area was evacuated and negotiators made contact with the subject, according to a statement released Tuesday afternoon by the Vermillion Police Department.

At approximately 4:30 a.m., the man agreed to release his children and they were evacuated from the area.

Despite efforts to negotiate with the man, he stopped communicating with law enforcement officials at approximately 10:20 a.m. Tuesday. Police secured nearby residences and used other resources to safely approach the residence in an effort to once again begin communicating with the subject.

At 1:30 p.m., the man was found dead in the residence. According to the VPD press statement, "Initial investigation points to single self-inflicted gunshot wound as the likely cause of death."

The Vermillion Police Department, the Clay County Sheriff's Department, and the state Division of Criminal Investigation are currently investigating the incident.

The Yankton Police Department, the South Dakota Highway Patrol and the University of South Dakota Police joined these agencies in the early morning hours to stabilize the standoff situation with hopes of bringing it to a peaceful conclusion.

also

■ Christmas Eve Standoff In Marion Ends With Arrest.
PAGE 3

Top Neb. Stories: The Drought, Wildfires And The Election

BY NELSON LAMPE

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — What a difference a year makes. The top Nebraska news story of 2012, as voted by Nebraska members of The Associated Press, was drought, a natural disaster that left farmers, ranchers and a few city dwellers high and dry in an agricultural state that relies on bounty from the heavens.

A summer of historic flooding along the Missouri River was the top story in 2011, according to the survey of the state's AP newspaper and broadcast members.

The drought showed up in many ways. Cattle producers scrambled for feed, and some had to sell their animals at a loss. Scores of dryland farmers chopped fields of corn stunted by the relentless sun and lack of rain in order to salvage some silage. Lincoln and some other cities imposed restrictions on watering.

The U.S. Drought Monitor map and statistics produced by the National Drought Mitigation Center shows more than 77 percent of Nebraska remained under exceptional drought conditions well into December.

Another extreme of nature — wildfire — finished second in the AP member survey for 2012.

Human- and lightning-caused fires blackened hundreds of square miles, mostly in north-central and northwest Nebraska this summer. Remarkably, no deaths and only minor injuries were reported by the

NEBRASKA | PAGE 12