

Anglers Urged To Be Cautious

PIERRE (AP) — State officials are urging anglers to be cautious while ice fishing in South Dakota.

The state's Game, Fish and Parks Department says mild temperatures and snow cover have made for "unwinter-like" conditions on most of South Dakota's lakes, rivers and streams.

John Lott is the department's fisheries administrator. He says "repeated freezing and thawing have made for poor ice and open areas on many of our lakes."

Officials say it takes at least two inches to support an angler, at least six inches to support an ice shack and more than a foot to support a vehicle.

Lott says anglers should test ice conditions as they proceed in their adventure. He says six-inch ice conditions near the shore don't guarantee the same ice thickness across the lake.

Hanson Approves \$2.6M For Classrooms

ALEXANDRIA (AP) — The school district in Hanson will be adding new classrooms following the approval of a \$2.6 million expansion.

The Daily Republic reports the Hanson School Board has authorized the funding that will go toward the expansion of the middle and high school.

Superintendent Jim Bridge says the new classrooms will be for English, science and math classes and are expected to be ready by fall 2017. He says the school's enrolment has increased by 125 over the past decade.

Data from the state Department of Education show Hanson has 419 students from kindergarten through 12th grade this year.

The district has added new elementary and library wings over the past five years.

The expansion at the middle and high school will be attached to the existing building.

Woman Dies In Weekend Accident

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Authorities are investigating a rollover crash that killed a 20-year-old Lincoln woman.

The Sarpy County Sheriff's office tells the *Lincoln Journal Star* the crash happened around 6:20 a.m. Sunday along U.S. Highway 31 in Springfield.

The driver lost control of the 1992 Chevrolet pickup truck, and it wound up on its roof in a ditch. Tiffany Hofmeister died, and initially the driver couldn't be found.

Around noon, the driver, Colin Larsen was found emerging from a field about a mile west of the crash. He was taken to a hospital for evaluation.

School Board President Resigns

NORTH PLATTE, Neb. (AP) — The president of the North Platte school board is resigning because she is being transferred to Omaha for work.

The North Platte Telegraph reports Kimberly Kaschke resigned after her employer, First National Bank of Omaha, asked her to move to Omaha.

Kaschke had served on the board since 2010.

Superintendent Ron Hanson says the board will appoint someone to fill Kaschke's spot. Candidates will be interviewed at the Jan. 11 board meeting.

Whoever fills Kaschke's seat will have to run for re-election next November.

Shooting May Have Been An Accident

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Omaha Police say the shooting death of a 24-year-old man may have been an accident.

Police were called to a home in northwest Omaha shortly after midnight Saturday. Officers found Tyler Andersen dead when they arrived.

Police interviewed a witness, and detectives are investigating the incident as an accidental shooting.

But prosecutors will review the evidence after the investigation is complete to determine if charges are warranted.

Police did not immediately release any details of the shooting or explain why they believe it was an accidental shooting.

Patrol Conducting Holiday Enforcement

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska State Patrol has begun its holiday enforcement efforts as part of a nationwide campaign designed to raise awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving.

The patrol kicked off participation in the "You Drink and Drive, You Lose" campaign on Friday. The effort will run through Jan. 3.

Troopers will conduct special enforcement efforts to include high visibility patrols, DUI checkpoints and other efforts to catch drunken drivers.

Oglala Sioux Seek Solutions On Chronic Housing Shortage

BY JAMES NORD
Associated Press

PINE RIDGE — Delora Kills Enemy sleeps on her van's back seat. Raymond Eagle Hawk, his girlfriend and young daughter live in a plywood-walled shack barely larger than their bed. Rachel Hunter shares a single bedroom with her boyfriend and two children.

The housing shortage on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is a longstanding problem for thousands of Oglala Sioux members — from the poorest to those who can afford to buy a house — but the tribe is pushing the issue into the spotlight again after severe storms and flooding in May spurred a federal disaster declaration.

Roughly 200 households are receiving new homes and about 100 homes will be repaired. A task force of federal and tribal officials and housing advocates also began work this month on a new plan to address the shortage on the reservation of about 35,000 people, starting with a study of current houses and their condition to better understand the situation. Tribal officials say the reservation needs 4,000 more units to ease crowding and ensure residences have plumbing and electricity.

The task force will use the results in a plan to help address the shortage and improve the tribe's ability to get grant funding, federal officials said. Tribal housing leaders hope the numbers back up their estimates and spur federal recognition, since the largest direct grant for Native American housing programs hasn't kept up with inflation since the 1990s.

"I can show a plan from 1997 with the same amount of money and the same ideas," said Vince Martin, chief operating officer of Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing. "It's just not enough resources to meet that need."

The tribe gets between about \$10

million to \$12 million, which it uses to build an average of between 30 and 40 housing units a year.

Almost half of Pine Ridge's residents live in poverty, and unemployment sits at more than 21 percent, though some estimates peg joblessness as much higher among tribal members on the reservation.

Kills Enemy, 43, said she sells beadwork to buy gas to heat her van, where she makes a bed in the back while her husband sleeps in the front seat.

She's in a dispute over her father's house, and was forced to remove her tent from his land over the summer. Finding a home, Kills Enemy said, would be "everything."

Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing's inventory includes about 1,200 low-income rentals and roughly 500 homes for ownership that have been built since the 1960s, Martin said, estimating an average of between 12 and 15 people live in each home.

The housing authority's waiting list is hundreds of families long and can take years. It would likely include thousands if some people didn't let their applications lapse from discouragement, Martin said.

Raymond Eagle Hawk, 29, lives in a small shed next to his mother's trailer, near the site of the Wounded Knee massacre. His girlfriend, Natasha Cuny, said she's been on the list for about seven years. Neither work, but Eagle Hawk receives Social Security benefits.

The family shares an outhouse and gets water through a garden hose. The three boil water on an electric hot plate to stay warm in the shed, Cuny said. Conditions were no better when she was at her mother's house.

Cuny, 31, said she would like a home with running water and heat, but after years living largely with neither, she's not angry.

"Life goes on, and you can't do nothing about it," she said.

When they're lucky enough to reach the front of the line, tribal members are assigned a home, Martin said. For those who aren't working, federal aid is available to cover rent, which varies but can start at \$100 a month for a two-bedroom unit. He said the tribe doesn't evict people who can't pay.

Meanwhile, those with the means to buy a home run into difficulties getting a loan and navigating the complexities of securing land on the reservation, but several organizations are there to help.

The nonprofit Oglala Sioux Tribe Partnership for Housing, which is participating in the task force, has put more than 100 people in homes since 1999, Executive Director Pinky Clifford said. The group works in concert with other organizations on financial literacy, homebuyer counseling, foreclosure prevention and credit repair.

Thunder Valley Community Development Corp., a nonprofit organization that has caught the eye of the Obama administration, broke ground in June on a sustainable community that's expected to include more than 20 homes, a grocery store and powwow grounds, among other features.

Executive Director Nick Tilsen said energy-efficient homes allow a family to put money that would have gone to high utility costs, a problem with older and dilapidated houses, toward a home loan.

Rachel Hunter, who works at a food company, has been approved for a mortgage in the community. The 25-year-old imagines Christmas in her new home, away from the confines of the single bedroom that her family shares.

"This is something I want. I want to be a homeowner," she said. "I want to set the example for my kids that there are things on the reservation. Hopefully whenever they're my age, there'll be more opportunity for homeownership."

Nebraska

Lawmakers Push For Property Tax Relief In 2016

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska lawmakers are gearing up for next year's legislative session with a focus on broad-based property tax relief for city dwellers as well as farmers and ranchers.

Legislative leaders and Gov. Pete Ricketts have pegged property taxes as one of the top priorities for the session, despite a projected budget shortfall.

Sen. Mike Gloor, chairman of the Revenue Committee, said he expects an attempt to slow the sharp land value increases that have forced farmers and ranchers to pay more in taxes. Gloor said he and others are also looking at proposals that would benefit residential and commercial properties.

But Gloor, of Grand Island, said there's "just no way" lawmakers will find enough money to bring property taxes into balance with income and sales taxes next year. Farmers and ranchers have complained that property taxes account for a disproportionately large share of their total tax burden.

"If we can come up with significant amounts of money year after year after year, we'll get there," Gloor said. But next year, "I think it's unlikely that we'll come up with hundreds of millions of dollars that would be required to get us back to an appropriate balance."

Speaker of the Legislature Galen Hadley said he doesn't yet know which specific property tax policies lawmakers will debate, but he expects the issue to dominate the

short, 60-day session that begins on Jan. 6.

Hadley said it's too early to tell how the state budget will affect the Legislature's ability to reduce taxes. Nebraska faces a projected \$110 million revenue shortfall in addition to major budget requests from the Department of Correctional Services, the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies.

"I certainly hope we can put together some kind of package," said Hadley, of Kearney. "It seems like every time we get some momentum going, we get hit with one of these problems."

The projected shortfall will likely change in February, when the Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board meets to update its revenue projections. A projected increase in state revenue would make it easier for senators

to balance the budget, but a decrease could force them to trim spending or tap the state's cash reserve.

Ricketts spokesman Taylor Gage said the governor remains "committed to working with senators to provide additional property tax relief," but declined to discuss specific proposals.

During a press conference last week, Ricketts said he wouldn't rule out an increase to the state's property tax credit fund, which uses state money to offset what property owners have to pay to counties and school districts.

Ricketts and lawmakers approved a budget this year that provided \$204 million a year for the tax credit, increasing it by 45 percent. With the additional money, owners of a \$150,000 home get a \$141 credit applied to their property taxes.

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 21	10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.	MONDAY, DECEMBER 28	10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22	10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.	TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29	10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23	10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.	WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30	10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24	10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31	10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25	CLOSED for the Holiday	FRIDAY, JANUARY 1	CLOSED for the Holiday
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26	NOON - 4:00 p.m.	SATURDAY, JANUARY 2	10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27	NOON - 4:00 p.m.	SUNDAY, JANUARY 3	NOON - 4:00 p.m.



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