



Windy, Late Flurries Possible

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Corps:

Mo. River Basin In Good Position

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
randy.dockendorf@yankton.net

The Missouri River reservoir system has gained nearly a half-million acre-feet of storage capacity thanks to the warm, dry winter, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials said Friday.

After a year of historic flooding, the basin sits in a good position heading into the 2012 season, according to Jody Farhat, chief of the basin water management office for the Corps' Omaha District. The Corps has taken a flexible and aggressive approach to its releases and opening up more storage, she said.

"All of the 2011 flood water was evacuated from the mainstem system. As of today, we have an additional 400,000 acre-feet of flood control storage available," she said.

"The snowpack is significantly lower than a year ago, but it's still early in the snow accumulation season. We continue to remain vigilant and monitor the situation closely."

For perspective, Farhat noted the additional storage capacity of 400,000 acre feet represents nearly the equivalent of Gavins Point Dam's reservoir storage of 450,000 acre feet.

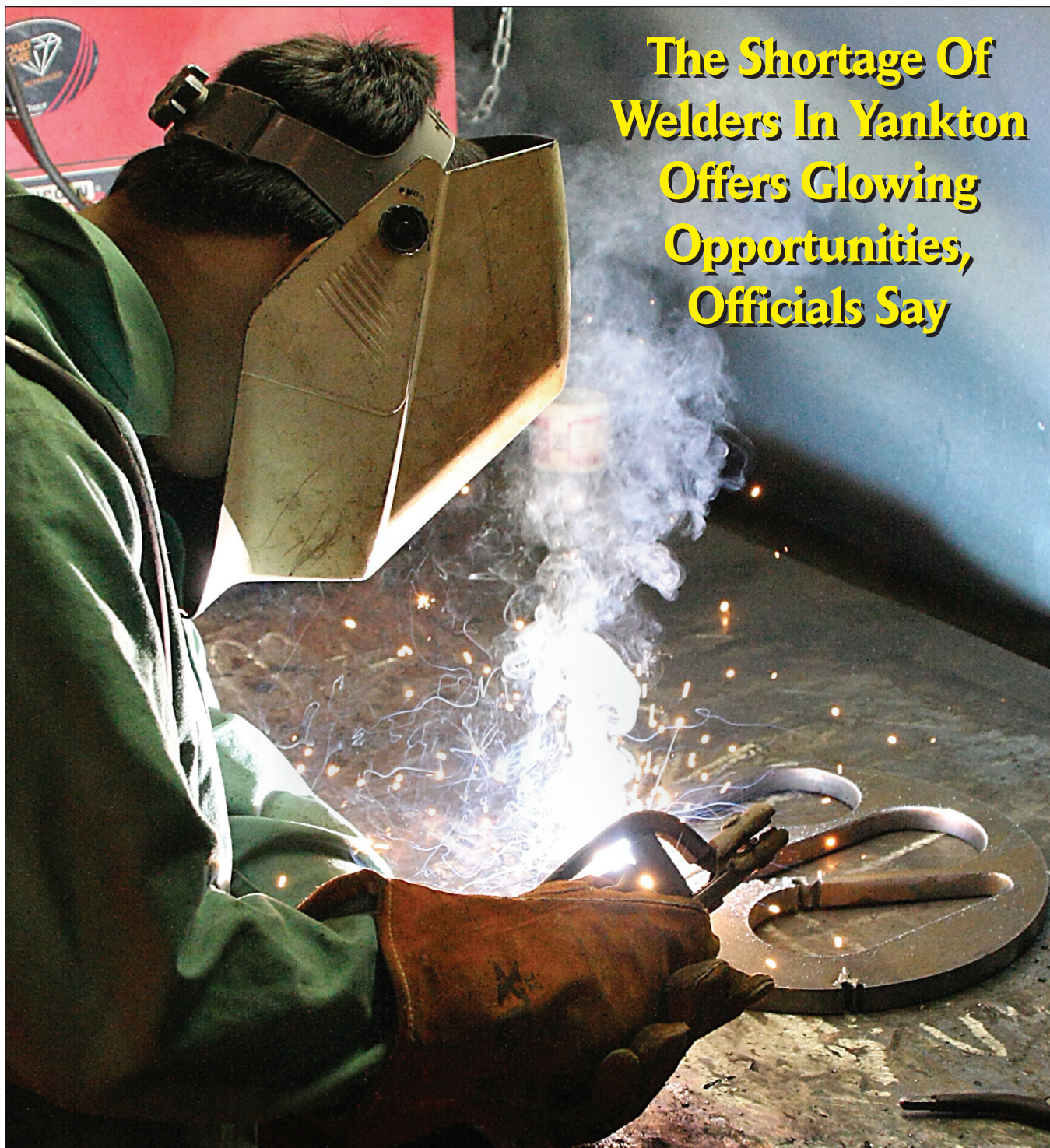
At this point, Farhat doesn't foresee a return to last year's record releases. The 160,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) released at Gavins Point Dam, which was maintained for much of the summer, more than doubled the previous record of 70,000 cfs.

"Looking at the current forecast, I don't anticipate a record flow out of any reservoirs this year," she said.

The total reservoir system currently contains 56.4 million acre feet (maf), Farhat said. Last year at this time, the system held 56.9 million acre feet — about 100,000 acre feet above the base of the annual flood control pool, she said.

A major difference this year

Wanted: Welders!



The Shortage Of Welders In Yankton Offers Glowing Opportunities, Officials Say

KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Juan Gutierrez, a junior at Yankton High School, works on welding skills during an Industrial Manufacturing and Fabrication class at the Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC) Friday. The high school training introduces kids to the skilled trade. Welders are in high demand in many area communities, including in Yankton. Adult classes that train prospective welders fill up quickly, and the students are usually hired shortly after the classes begin. But more bodies are needed. "We are to the point," said RTEC general manager Josh Svatos, "where we are at the end of what we have of an available training pool."

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE
shauna.marlette@yankton.net

With the economy in Yankton bouncing back from the lows seen throughout the past two years, the Yankton manufacturing community is seeing a shortage of skilled labor applicants — specifically welders.

Representatives from Dakota Trailer (DT) and Kolberg-Pioneer, Inc. (KPI), as well as Josh Svatos, Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC) general manager, said if 100 skilled welders walked in the door looking for positions, they could be found in Yankton's manufacturing community.

In order to meet that need, RTEC has been offering 12-week courses in welding starting with basic welding and finishing with an American Welding Society skill upgrade course.

"Right now, our biggest issue is finding the bodies," Svatos said. "We are to the point where we are at the end of what we have of an available training pool. We are just not seeing the individuals walk through the door that want to learn the skill set. Now, as a community, we have to figure out how to get creative selling the profession, number one; and number two, sell what we have to offer in terms of employment opportunities. I think the last piece of that puzzle is selling the community to bring them in from the outside."

Jaci Benjamin, human resources manager and safety instructor at Dakota Trailer said the key words are "skilled" welders.

"While we are in need of welders, we are in need of skilled welders," she said. "Every time we train a welder, it takes us a good 40-60 hours for them to be able to go on their own. So you have to realize where your labor dollars are going."

"The RTEC program is a good feeder program for us at Dakota Trailer because they come in with a skill set. So it is not like you have to stand right next to them and monitor them. They are able to complete a task that you give them because they are trained to do it. It alleviates some of that pressure on our current staff for training purposes."

Benjamin and Rhonda Kocer, human resources manager at Kolberg-Pioneer, said that within two weeks of each new RTEC welding course beginning, they are in the classroom interviewing the students.

"We have probably hired 15-20 guys in the last six months out of the RTEC program," Benjamin said, a number Kocer concurred with for KPI. "We are not getting the skilled welders walking in our door. We are getting a lot of good applicants for fabrication or whatever area we need, but the welders, the skill set, isn't out there right now."

Kocer explained that because the manufacturing community is a group,

Home Sales Up At End Of Dismal Year, Offering Hope

BY DEREK KRAVITZ
AP Real Estate Writer

WASHINGTON — Home sales rose in December to the highest pace in nearly a year. The gain coincides with other signs that show the troubled housing market

improved at the end of last year.

Still, sales remain depressed and ended 2011 well below healthy levels.

The National Association of Realtors says home sales increased 5 percent last month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.61 million.

For the year, home sales totaled only 4.26 million, up from 4.19 million the previous year. Since the housing bust four years ago, home sales have slumped under the weight of foreclosures, tighter credit and falling price.

S.D. Agency Helped Create 3,000 Jobs

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota's economic development agency helped 61 businesses last year in expansion projects that will create an estimated 3,000 jobs in the state, Gov. Dennis Daugaard said Friday.

The Governor's Office of Economic Development helped some businesses from other states locate in South Dakota, but more than 70 percent of the agency's development efforts in 2011 involved companies already in the state, he said.

South Dakota's economy continues to fare better than the national economy, the governor said. State officials recently announced South Dakota's unemployment rate for December was 4.2 percent, half the national rate.

"We're seeing the tepid national economic picture brighten a little bit, and I'm pleased South Dakota is leading the way," Daugaard said in his weekly news conference.

Area Native Kicks Off Campaign For House



BY NATHAN JOHNSON
nathan.johnson@yankton.net

Saying he wants to tip the balance in Washington back in favor of middle class Americans, Matt Varilek used Yankton as the staging ground Friday in his campaign to become South Dakota's next U.S. House member.

Varilek, 36, a Democrat who grew up in the Tabor and Yankton area but now lives in Sioux Falls, announced his candidacy for the seat held by Republican Rep. Kristi Noem in December.

He was set to launch a statewide "Meet Matt" Tour at Ben's Brewery in Yankton Friday night and stopped at the Press & Dakotan office prior to the event to talk about his candidacy.

Minnehaha County commissioner Jeff Barth is also seeking the Democratic nomination.

Having raised more than \$100,000 for his campaign and getting endorsements from Sen. Tim Johnson (D-S.D.) and former Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), Varilek said he feels very good about the race.

"There is a lot of frustration with Congress right now and the person I'm running against, Kristi



Decision
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Noem," he said. "I've talked in this campaign about wanting to focus on the interests of middle class people and working people. I've talked about trying to take a different approach to politics that focuses more on bridging divides between people who have different perspectives so that we can find solutions to things we all care about as Americans instead of being stuck in our ideological corners. With Kristi Noem, she takes a different

approach. She is part of the Tea Party movement, a leader of it, and a leader of the dysfunctional Congress."

While Noem was chosen last year to serve on the House Republican leadership team, she is not an official member of the House Tea Party caucus. She has,

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