



# YANKTON DAILY PRESS & DAKOTAN

VOLUME 137 NUMBER 71

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

75¢ 38894 0002 4

## A Tale Of River Heroism

### Rescue In L&C Lake Highlights The Perils Of High Water

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
randy.dockendorf@yankton.net

After nearly two months of Missouri River flooding, officials are urging the public to remain alert about dangerous currents and bank erosion.

The warning takes on even more meaning with the recent near-drowning of a woman and her 7-year-old granddaughter in Lewis and Clark Lake at Springfield. They were rescued by four men working on a nearby cabin, along with a Springfield police officer who responded to the call.

According to one of the rescuers, the woman said she and the little girl were standing knee-deep in the water. The little girl, trying to retrieve her sandal, was swept away. The woman, attempting to rescue the child, also became caught in the swift current.

While he couldn't speak specifically to the Springfield incident, a Game, Fish and Parks official said anyone can become quickly trapped by the water.

Just one moment can mean the difference between life and death, said Jeff VanMeeteren, regional park supervisor for Lewis and Clark Lake.

"You have to watch kids, because they're curious around water," he said. "You have to watch them below the dams, where they are really running around, looking to see what is going on, which is natural for kids."

Children aren't the only ones needing to show vigilance around high water, VanMeeteren cautioned. Even if adults don't plan to enter the lake, they need to be wary of bank erosion, he said.

"This is the time of the year where a lot of people like to sit along the shoreline and catch some panfish and catfish," he said. "They need to be careful around the shoreline, especially if it's an overhanging bank. There could be some under cutting from the currents."

Lewis and Clark Lake remains open for recreation, although a boat advisory remains in place, VanMeeteren said. However, the currents may catch people off guard, he explained.

Lewis and Clark Lake has changed in character because of the flooding, said Dave Becker, operations manager for Gavins Point Dam near Yankton.

"The lake is a river-lake hybrid, and there is always a current flowing through it," he said. "But this is five times the amount of water normally going through it, so there is quite a bit of current in some areas."

Missouri River remains off limits to water craft below Gavins Point Dam, Becker said.

"As far as the banks, we added a lot of rock below the dams to the river banks. We put up signs telling people to stay off (the rocks)," he said. "Every stone is loose, and it's just not very stable to be standing on (the stones) — but people stand on it."

Debris remains another concern, although major items aren't as common as at the start of flooding, Van Meeteren said.

"The danger from debris is minimal. It's more trashy," he said. "Our workers have really been cleaning up. Then, for whatever reason last weekend, we seemed to get another dose of it."

The current and debris are unpredictable and not always visible, making them dangerous, Becker said.

"Public safety has been 'Job One' for us in this flood, and really the same message applies now as much or more than it did (at the beginning)," he said. "There is still a tremendous amount of water around, which is a real safety consideration all around. So far, it seems like we haven't had any (flood-related) fatalities."

But a Yankton man who helped with the Springfield rescue believes the incident nearly resulted in one or more fatalities — both the woman and girl trapped in the water and those who sought to save them.

RESCUE | PAGE 12

## ALL BROKEN UP



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Road buckling like this instance, which was reported along Highway 52 Monday evening, is a common occurrence during a heat wave. Similarly, authorities received a report Sunday afternoon that a motorist had popped a tire near 31st Street and Broadway Avenue due to road buckling. Monday's high reading in Yankton was 99 degrees. However, Yankton did set an unofficial record for the warmest low reading for July 18, with the mercury dropping to 81 degrees, breaking the old mark of 79 set in 1926. The forecast calls for hot and humid conditions to continue into the weekend. For more weather details, see page 2.

## Heat Hitting The Poorest Communities The Hardest

### Sweltering Heat-Index Readings Stretch From Border To Border

BY JUAN CARLOS LLORCA  
Associated Press

HORIZON CITY, Texas — The cinderblocks that make up Maria Teresa Escamilla's new home will do little to shield her from the triple-digit heat that has been scorching West Texas. She has no electricity yet, and the roof is not properly attached, leaving the interior exposed to the elements.

Escamilla has been living in an air-conditioned apartment that she can no longer afford. But when the lease ends in two weeks, she has to move — a day she dreads because it means she'll have no escape from the searing temperatures.

"This is what I have to look forward to," she said. There will be no air conditioning and an unbearable number of mosquitoes at night.

With much of the nation in the grip of a broiling heat wave, few people are hit as hard as the poor, and few places are poorer than the ramshackle communities along the Texas-Mexico border known as "colonias."

The misery was widespread Monday, with the worst conditions blanketing a broad band from Texas to Minnesota and Dakotas. Seventeen states issued heat watches, warnings or advisories. And the

heat index easily surpassed 100 degrees in many places: 126 in Newton, Iowa; 120 in Mitchell, S.D.; and 119 in Madison, Minn.

The high temperatures were nearly certain to persist for the entire week. Forecasters expected the extreme discomfort to spread soon to the East Coast.

In towns large and small, the withering heat was cruellest to those who could not afford air conditioning.

Built at the edge of the desert, the colonias often lack electricity and running water. People bought the land before zoning regulations were adopted, hoping that utility services would follow.

To finance her house, Escamilla, who is 62, had to take out a loan against her funeral services and buy building materials recycled from demolition sites in Ciudad Juarez, across the border from El Paso.

Norma Salazar, who shares a tiny trailer home with her husband and six children in Horizon City, on the outskirts of El Paso, has to rely on an evaporative cooler, a cheap alternative to air conditioning that sucks the hot, dry desert air

HEAT | PAGE 2

## Area Native 'Flattered' By Draft Movement For House

BY NATHAN JOHNSON  
nathan.johnson@yankton.net

Rather than being alarmed about an effort to draft him, Yankton-area native Matt Varilek is flattered.

The "Draft Matt Varilek for Congress" page was started on Facebook early this month and, as of late Monday, had 458 "likes." A group of 11 people, including Democratic political strategist Steve Hildebrand of Sioux Falls, have their names attached to a letter on the site urging South Dakotans to encourage Varilek to run against Republican Rep. Kristi Noem in 2012.

Varilek, 36, a Democrat, currently lives in Sioux Falls with his wife, Maggie, and their two daughters, Willa and Mae. He

works on economic development issues as a staffer for Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson and is the son of Irene (Hejl) Wolf of Sioux Falls and Dave Varilek of Tabor.

"The truth is, I had been thinking seriously about the whole idea of running for Congress in 2012 before this draft developed," Varilek told the *Press & Dakotan* during a recent phone interview. "I work for an admirable and effective member of Congress, and I get to see every day the kind of impact he can have on South Dakotans lives. The idea that some people think I would be a good person to serve in Congress and could help people in that way is quite flattering."

To see so many people from across the state offer their support has been encouraging, he stated.



Varilek

economic development issues for Sen. Johnson and the state. We will keep everyone's encouragement in mind as we think carefully about the idea of running."

In their letter to potential supporters, the 11 drafters write that Varilek would not engage in the politics of the Tea Party movement.

"On the other hand, the notion of actually making a decision to run is a very big one and not something I want to rush into," Varilek continued. "My wife and I are going to give it careful consideration. But my immediate focus is going to continue to try to do a good job on economic development issues for Sen. Johnson and the state. We will keep everyone's encouragement in mind as we think carefully about the idea of running."

"The reason we're really excited about his potential candidacy is who he is as a person, and the kind of member of Congress that he would be: a strong progressive," they write. "From supporting affordable healthcare care for all, to family-scale agriculture, and a tax system where everyone pays their fair share, Matt Varilek's values align with yours and ours. He's also the kind of guy who's hard not to like, and he could help to restore a sense of civility that's all too rare in politics these days."

The draft effort has drawn the attention of South Dakota's political blogs. Kevin Woster, a journalist for the *Rapid City Journal*, wrote on the newspaper's blog

VARILEK | PAGE 12

## KEEPING IT COOL



CLAY STODDARD/P&D

Matt Hilson of Yankton cools down with the help of a misting fan during a Yankton Grey Sox teener baseball game with Tabor on Monday night at Riverside Field. The temperature climbed to 99 degrees Monday, and with the high humidity, many people were taking it easy and staying out of the oppressive heat. But baseball players — and their fans — still flocked to the park for the ballgame. However, the end of summer may be in sight for the Boys of Summer: Postseason play begins in Nebraska this week, with South Dakota's postseason looming just ahead. For more area baseball coverage, see page 8.

## Area Counties Designated As Primary Natural Disaster Areas

From P&D Staff Reports

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated 15 counties in Nebraska as primary natural disaster areas due to flooding that began May 1, it stated Monday.

"This action provides help to hundreds of producers who suffered significant losses to corn, soybeans, dry beans, sugar beets, wheat, and forage crops, as well as serious damage to farm structures," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in a press release.

Cedar and Knox counties are part of the designation, which also covers Boyd, Dixon, Otoe, Burt, Douglas, Richardson, Cass, Sarpy, Lincoln, Thurston, Dakota, Nemaha and Washington counties.

Farmers and ranchers in the following counties in Nebraska also qualify for natural disaster assistance because their counties are contiguous: Antelope, Hayes, McPherson, Cuming, Holt, Pawnee, Custer, Johnson, Perkins, Dawson, Keith, Pierce, Dodge, Keya Paha, Rock, Frontier,

Lancaster, Saunders, Gage, Logan and Wayne.

Also, farmers and ranchers in the following counties in South Dakota also qualify for natural disaster assistance because their counties are contiguous: Bon Homme, Clay, Union, Charles Mix, Gregory and Yankton.

All counties listed above were designated natural disaster areas July 18, 2011, making all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

USDA | PAGE 3

YOU DESERVE MORE. Comfort, Detail & Power. The most powerful MRI in the region.

Avera Sacred Heart Hospital



If you want more, visit www.AveraSacredHeart.org or call (605) 668-8150 to schedule an appointment.



REGION 2 | WORLD 3 | OBITUARIES 3 | VIEWS 4 | LIFE 5 | MIDWEST 7 | SPORTS 8-9 | CLASSIFIEDS 10-12

TOMORROW: Yankton Firm Cuts Ribbon On Bigger Things

YANKTON RECYCLING THIS WEEK: SOUTH OF 15TH STREET