

South Dakota

Enrollment Down At 2 Of 3 University Centers

BY DIRK LAMMERS
 Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Enrollment at two of South Dakota's three off-campus state University Centers fell in 2011, declines officials mainly attribute to spring flooding around Pierre and the relocation of a Sioux Falls nursing program.

Capital University Center in Pierre saw a 28 percent drop in credit hours last summer after the Missouri River swelled over its banks in early June 2011. The disruption also affected the subsequent fall and spring semesters at the center, which moved to its own \$3.5 million site in 2009, with credit hours down about 14 percent in each, said director Ron Woodburn.

"We saw some folks who had to withdraw from the summer session because of the flooding, just because they didn't know how they were going to be affected," Woodburn said. "With a non-traditional student base, something like that can be really disruptive to lives. So there was probably some carry-over from that."

South Dakota's University Centers in Pierre, Sioux Falls and Rapid City, which deliver courses through the state's public higher education system, have shown steady growth over the past few years.

But University Center-Sioux Falls served 270 fewer students this past fall, as the University of South Dakota's nursing program moved to the Sanford USD Medical Center campus, said executive dean Mark Lee.

The school in Vermillion is also transitioning its Sioux Falls nursing program from an associate's degree to a bachelor's degree, which is likely having a short-term effect on pre-nursing enrollments, he added.

Lee said if the center adjusted for the move, it would have shown an enrollment loss between 1 percent and 2 percent.

The dean says the school is looking into more education and science courses, as well as more undergraduate options.

University Center-Sioux Falls was created to serve residents of the state's largest city, who faced 60-mile drives on Interstate 29 to get to either South Dakota State University or University of South Dakota. People working in the city wanted a local site where they could work toward degrees, yet South Dakota was the only state whose largest city didn't have a public university presence, Lee said.

The center began offering classes on leased space on the Southeast Technical Institute campus.

"Clearly there was pent-up demand, because enrollment growth was really quite remarkable in those first four or five years," Lee

said. "That really signaled to the regents that we were onto something."

In 2006, state legislators approved the establishment of a dedicated campus in northwestern Sioux Falls, which has grown to two classroom buildings with about 110,000 square feet of space and a 21,000-square-foot research center. The center still uses about 13,000 square feet of leased space at Southeast Tech for SDSU's nursing programs.

Rapid City's University Center, which moved into its own \$13.4 million facility in April 2011, added 49 students this past fall for an enrollment of 1,758, said dean Craig Johnson.

More than half of the center's students take classes offered by Black Hills State University, also in Rapid City.

The new 59,000-square-foot building, which houses 21 classrooms, 2 science labs, two computer labs and a 100-seat lecture hall, is spurring growth, said Craig Johnson, the center's dean.

"Courses were a little spread out prior to the building opening up," Johnson said. "Students love having a place to call their own, to be able to come and study."

The heads of three centers made their annual reports to the state Board of Regents this past week.

Nebraska

Controlled Burn Helped Save Forest, Ranger Says

BY GRANT SCHULTE
 Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A fire that scorched more than 1,000 acres of Nebraska's hand-planted national forest would have caused more damage if not for a precautionary controlled burn that removed tinder-dry trees from the path of the blaze, a forest ranger said Wednesday.

Tim Buskirk, a district ranger overseeing firefighting efforts at the Nebraska National Forest, said the flames did not spread far enough to damage any park structures, outbuildings, or private land. The fire is now nearly 95 percent contained, having burned an estimated 1,043 acres of timber and grasslands, he said.

"We were really lucky on this one," Buskirk said. "It burned through an area that we had thinned, and recently done a prescribed burn."

A lot of trees survived the fire, which "stayed on the ground and out of the canopy in a lot of places," he said.

The fire started with a lightning strike Saturday at the federal forest and grasslands in the north-central Nebraska Sandhills. Strong winds, triple-digit heat and rugged, sandy terrain complicated efforts to contain the blaze and temperatures were forecast

to reach 96 to 101 degrees on Wednesday — cooler than previous days but still hazardous for firefighters.

Officials hope to have the fire completely contained by Wednesday night, Buskirk said.

"We're just mopping up some hot spots right now, watching for flare-ups," he said.

Two engines remain on the scene, down from 25 when firefighting efforts began, along with two crews from the Soldier Creek Pine Ridge Jobs Corps in northwest Nebraska. Other crews have been sent to help fight the wildfires in South Dakota. At least 10 other central Nebraska fires that were sparked by lightning at the weekend have been contained.

Investigators will assess the damage to see whether the U.S. Forest Service needs to replant trees and an emergency response team will start tallying the damage to roads and trails on Thursday, Buskirk said.

The 142,000-acre national forest is divided into two ranger districts: The Bessey Ranger District in the rolling, prairie-grass-covered Sandhills in north-central Nebraska, and the Pine Ridge Ranger District in far northwest Nebraska. The 105-year-old, hand-planted forest was the largest of its kind in the nation, and second only to a manmade forest in South Africa.

Drought conditions in western, central and southeast Nebraska prompted Gov. Dave Heineman to declare a state emergency on Monday, which frees up state workers and resources to help with the effort. The Nebraska Games and Parks Commission imposed a fireworks ban in state parks over the Fourth of July holiday, and fireworks are already banned in national forests.

Smokejumpers Help With Black Hills Wildfire

RAPID CITY (AP) — Smokejumpers who parachuted into the Black Hills have helped douse a wildfire in near Edgemont, but a second fire continued to burn just a few miles away Wednesday.

The Parker Peak Fire was contained Tuesday night with the help of about a dozen smokejumpers from Rawlins, Wyo., fire spokesman Brian Scott said.

"Those smokejumpers are a pretty polished bunch," Scott said. "The fire is 100 percent contained and now we're in the heavy mop-up mode."

The fire, located about five miles northeast of Edgemont, was sparked by lightning on Sunday and charred about 800 acres. It is one of several wildfires that have scorched thousands of acres in southwestern South Dakota and northeastern Wyoming.

About a dozen miles northeast of Edgemont, the White Draw fire was 60 percent contained Wednesday morning, Scott said. That fire has blackened about 7,800 acres, or about 8 square miles.

Some of the personnel on scene used bulldozers and other heavy equipment Tuesday to create a line to stop the blaze. Intentional fires were then set to burn back into the wildfire, he said.

The approach appeared to be working Wednesday, Scott said, and efforts included crews in tankers and helicopters, as well as more than 20 fire vehicles on the ground.

"We're having a good day," he said.

Scott also said the fire was ignited by a "malfunctioning motor home."

"It was human-caused. The vehicle started a fire on grass along the highway and it was off to the races after that," he said.

Four people died and two were injured Sunday when an Air Force tanker that was battling the White

Draw fire crashed, the military said Tuesday. The tanker was based out of North Carolina.

Rain was not in the forecast for the area Wednesday, and it appeared the hot, dry weather would continue. Most communities in western South Dakota had called off Fourth of July fireworks displays, not only because of the fire danger but also because local firefighters were helping battle the wildfires.

Great Plains Fire Information spokeswoman Sheila French said other fires in the region include the Highlands Fire, which has scorched about 400 acres between Newcastle, Wyo., and Custer, S.D., and is 95 percent contained; and the Soldier Fire near Beulah, Wyo., west of Spearfish, S.D., which had spread to about 5 acres and was 50 percent contained.

"In the Black Hills area, we are making progress," French said.

Meet Dr. Maska, Rheumatologist

YANKTON MEDICAL CLINIC, P.C. IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE ASSOCIATION OF
Leann Maska, M.D.

Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Board Eligible in Rheumatology

Dr. Maska is a graduate of Sanford School of Medicine of The University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD. She completed her Internal Medicine residency training, at Sanford School of Medicine of The University of South Dakota, Sioux Falls, SD; and her Rheumatology Fellowship at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, NE. Dr. Maska is Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Board Eligible in Rheumatology.

Dr. Maska will treat arthritis, including rheumatoid, osteoarthritis and complex forms such as gout; certain autoimmune diseases, such as lupus and vasculitis; as well as musculoskeletal pain disorders such as fibromyalgia.

The Clinic is pleased to bring a Rheumatologist to our medical community as well as to the many patients she will serve.

Dr. Maska began seeing patients at the Yankton Medical Clinic on July 2, 2012. For an appointment please call 605-665-1722.



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