

USDA Says S.D. Saw Some Temperature Relief

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Temperatures eased slightly this past week in South Dakota, but hot and dry conditions were still prevalent across much of South Dakota. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says in its weekly crop and weather report that nearly the entire state is listed in the moderate drought category. Still, there were 6.5 days for field work last week. The USDA says major activity included harvesting of small grains, cutting silage and cutting hay. Cattle conditions were rated 66 percent in the good to excellent range, while sheep conditions were rated 78 percent good to excellent.

Neb. Crop Conditions Continue To Decline

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The condition of Nebraska's crops continues to deteriorate because of this summer's hot and dry weather. The U.S. Department of Agriculture said Monday in its weekly report on Nebraska's crops that some damaged corn fields are being cut for hay because of the drought. Little precipitation fell in the state last week, and temperatures averaged 4 degrees above normal. About 35 percent of the corn crop is in good or excellent condition. That's well behind the 78 percent average. The USDA says 24 percent of the soybean crop is in good or excellent shape. That's behind the 75 percent average. About 3 percent of the state's pastures are in good or excellent shape. And livestock producers who are short on feed are culling their herds.

Feds To Provide Oglala Sioux Tribe Trailers

PINE RIDGE (AP) — The Oglala Sioux Tribe says it has received notice that the federal government will provide temporary and permanent trailers for families recently displaced from their homes because of storm damage. Tribal spokeswoman Donna Salomon says in a news release that the Bureau of Indian Affairs notified tribal officials that 39 short-term FEMA trailers and six to eight permanent trailers will be made available soon. The federal government is also reprogramming funds to cover the costs of transporting and setting up the trailers. The tribe says nearly 20 mobile homes were damaged or destroyed when a storm tore through the reservation community of Oglala more than a week ago.

Nebraskan Dies Nearly Week After Accident

BROKEN BOW, Neb. (AP) — A 21-year-old man has died nearly a week after the pickup he was driving collided with a semitrailer in central Nebraska. Lexington radio station KRVN reports Brett Kramer, of Litchfield, died Sunday. Custer County Sheriff Dan Osmond says the accident occurred on July 23 about four miles south of Broken Bow. Osmond says Kramer was trying to cross a highway when his pickup was struck broadside by the big rig. Kramer was taken to a Broken Bow hospital and then transferred to a Kearney hospital.

Court Reinstates S.D. Homicide Conviction

PIERRE (AP) — A federal appeals court has reinstated a vehicular homicide conviction for a South Dakota man. Attorney General Marty Jackley announced Monday that the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated the conviction for Oakley Engesser. Engesser of Belle Fourche had been serving a 25-year sentence in prison for a July 2000 traffic crash on Interstate 90 that killed one person and injured two others. But a district court judge in October concluded that Engesser's attorney was ineffective, and Engesser was released from prison. The state has appealed the ruling and sought to keep Engesser in prison. Jackley says the decision by the federal appeals court "gives important recognition to the deference that is owed to jury verdicts and state court decisions."

Neb. Wildfires 100% Contained

By The Associated Press

SPRINGVIEW, Neb. — Authorities kept watch over parched grass and vegetation near the site of three contained wildfires in north-central Nebraska as the fire danger remained high. Firefighter spokeswoman Susan Ford said 100 percent containment was declared Sunday night. A couple of fire engines and some firefighters would remain on duty, however, watching for flare-ups. "It's pretty dangerous out there," Ford said Monday, citing low humidity and expected temperatures approaching 100 over the next few days. "When you walk in the grass, it crunches like potato chips," she said. The National Weather Service said isolated

thunderstorms were possible Monday evening for western and north-central Nebraska, including some storms capable of producing gusty, erratic wind and dry lightning that could touch off range fires and whip them out of control. Linda Hecker, another spokeswoman, said Sunday that because of the drought, people should remember that threat of fire will remain high throughout the region for at least several more weeks. "Fire season is still far from over," Hecker said. Lightning sparked the three fires on July 20. They destroyed at least 14 homes and 17 outbuildings. Only three injuries were reported. The main blaze, which officials called the Fairfield Creek fire, burned more than 104

square miles north and south of the Niobrara River in Keya Paha and Brown counties, and part of Cherry County. To the east, the Wentworth fire covered nearly 10.6 square miles, while the Hall fire blackened more than 4 1/4 square miles. The fires and the effort to contain them interfered with one of the region's important businesses: tourism. Tens of thousands of people visit the Niobrara River each summer to float down the river in a canoe or tube. Fire officials shut down part of the Niobrara River for several days last week because helicopters were dipping large buckets into the river. Outfitters hope tourists will return in large numbers with the fires contained.

Lakota Language Revitalized Through Dance

BY KRISTI EATON
Associated Press

ROSEBUD — With the Lakota-speaking population rapidly aging and decreasing, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota is trying to encourage young children to take an interest in a language that is, in many ways, secondary to English. The tribe's Child Care Service's Song and Dance Project aims to teach families how to make colorful, detailed dancing regalia and teaches the intricate dances to the children so they can perform in the annual wacipi, or powwow. The hope is that the song and dance will help re-energize both parents' and children's excitement about their culture. It also encourages parents to take an active role in their kids' lives. "It's putting identity and pride back into the people," said Gale Spotted Tail, director of the Child Care Services. She said that as the tribe looked at ways to identify how to revitalize the language, they no-

ted that many tribal members had little interest in learning the Lakota language or taking part in cultural activities. There are fewer than 6,000 Lakota speakers — less than 14 percent of the Lakota population in North and South Dakota, and the average age of a Lakota speaker is 60. One of the biggest challenges to learning Lakota is that there is no agreed-upon orthography, or conventional spelling system. "We're really looking at what does it take to get people to want to learn and want to be who we used to be?" Spotted Tail said. "A lot of it is instilling that pride and going back into history." The project also seeks to create unity among the different bands of the Lakota tribes that now live on different reservations, she said. A handful of employees for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's project travel to the reservation's various communities for short dance workshops several times a week to teach the kids — from newborns to 17-year-olds — dancing techniques for the an-

nual Wakanyeya Okolakiciye Wacipi. Children can attend one workshop or more. The dances performed at the wacipis often tell the story of a warrior or hunter searching for enemies. While the babies may not take part in any Fancy Dances — a style of dance that requires stamina and agility because of intense footwork — moving their body, or even just their head, to the beat of a drum comes naturally to many of the youngsters, Spotted Tail said. The wacipi has traditionally played a significant role in Lakota culture as a way to celebrate. Many of the Lakota tribes in South Dakota hold several multi-day wacipis throughout the sum-

mer that include singing, dancing and other activities to honor their culture. "They're the next generation," instructor Jeremiah Holly Bull, 27, said of the kids he works with. "They're the ones that are going to carry on our tradition from what our ancestors taught us. We're the ones teaching our little kids so they can teach their kids." Hundreds of kids dressed from the various tribes are expected to take part in this year's children wacipi, scheduled for Aug. 14 and 15 in Rosebud. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, who will be visiting the reservation then, is expected to attend.

Drought

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tion has predicted that the drought will persist or intensify in South Dakota and much of the nation through October, Today said. About 20 percent of the state, including counties in southeastern and western South Dakota, is in extreme drought, the second-worst category. Another 39 percent is in severe drought, the third worst drought designation, with most of the rest of the state in moderate drought. A few counties are rated only as abnormally dry. Much of the corn crop has been damaged in southeastern South Dakota, where farmers are cutting the corn for silage because it has lost its potential to produce much grain, Today said. Soybeans are stressed, but some fields could recover if they receive rain soon, he said. The drought now covers two-thirds of the continental U.S., stretching from Ohio west to California and running from Texas north through the Dakotas. The hot temperatures and lack of rain also have dried up pastures, hurt hay production and threatened water supplies for livestock in South Dakota. The U.S. Agriculture Department has authorized emergency haying and grazing on land in the Conservation Reserve Program, which pays farmers to take land out of production to guard against erosion and create wildlife habitat — though wetland areas are excluded. Craig Schaunaman, South Dakota director of the federal Farm Service Agency, said he is working to persuade USDA officials to approve emergency haying and grazing on those wetland areas. "We're still working on it here. We haven't given up on it yet," Schaunaman said when asked about the chances that haying and grazing would be allowed in wetland areas. Jon Farris, deputy state agriculture secretary, said officials are checking into reports that trucks hauling hay from Canada have been prevented from entering South Dakota because the state restricts the height of such loads. Jay Esperance, director of the South Dakota Wildland Fire Suppression Division, said some locally heavy rains helped put out some recent fires, but the fire danger will not drop until long gentle rains cover the state. Firefighters have been busy in recent weeks with dozens of fires started by lightning strikes. "Overall, we're still in dire straits," Esperance said.

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