

**Weather Affecting Farmers' Planting**

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Cool and wet conditions are continuing across South Dakota and have limited farmers' ability to complete fieldwork.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture says in its weekly crop report that producers had on average only 4.2 days suitable for fieldwork.

Winter wheat was jointed at 65 percent and headed at 8 percent. This is behind last year's pace of 95 percent and the average of 49 percent. Winter wheat conditions were rated 37 percent very poor, 19 percent poor, 32 percent fair, 12 percent good and 0 percent excellent.

Ninety percent of cattle were reported as moved to pasture compared to 84 percent the week before.

Pasture and range conditions rated 1 percent very poor, 11 percent poor, 30 percent fair, 47 percent good and 11 percent excellent.

**Fire Officials Respond To 2 Wildfires In SD**

RAPID CITY (AP) — The South Dakota Wildland Fire Division responded to two small lightning-caused fires over the weekend.

Officials say the Powerline Draw Fire was a single-tree snag in a remote area of Custer State Park.

The Curt Fire was less than a tenth of an acre on the Argyle road in the Hot Springs area.

Jim Strain with the Fire Division says that while the area has received rain and vegetation is starting to turn green, larger trees still suffer from the effects of the drought and are ready to burn.

**Murder Trial Begins For Lincoln Man**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A jury has been selected for a Lincoln man charged with murder in the stabbing death of a man last summer.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports the jury was chosen Monday and opening arguments were expected in the afternoon in the trial of 28-year-old Joshua Albright. He's charged with second-degree murder, first-degree assault, second-degree assault and three counts of using a weapon to commit a felony.

The charges stem from an Aug. 10, 2012, argument in which police charge Albright with stabbing to death 30-year-old Benjamin Miller. Police say the confrontation was about a woman both men dated.

Albright could face up to life in prison if convicted.

**Senator: Funding Will Aid Center Expansion**

GERING, Neb. (AP) — A Scottsbluff senator says funding from the Legislature will give a boost to expansion plans at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center near Gering.

KNEB radio reports Sen. John Harms noted Monday that the Legislature approved \$1 million in funding for an expansion of the center.

Harms says \$500,000 will come from Game and Parks and another \$500,000 from the general fund. He says the state funding will be matched by \$500,000 in private donations.

The money will finance work to double the size of the current facility, including a large conference room and more space to store exhibits from one of North America's biggest digs.

Some of the money won't be available until the middle of next summer, so construction won't start until 2014.

**Neb. Company Fined For Asbestos Removal**

FALLS CITY, Neb. (AP) — A Nebraska company has been fined \$25,000 for illegally disposing of asbestos in an effort to save money.

U.S. Attorney Deborah Gilg announced Monday that Vision 20-20 Inc. pleaded guilty to an offense involving the illegal abatement and disposal of asbestos.

Investigators say Vision 20-20 hired an asbestos removal firm in October 2010 to work on a building that the company planned to demolish for a new motel. The firm was paid \$24,000 for services to the roof, but additional work remained on floor tiles and flooring underneath the tiles.

When the firm returned several months later, the building had been demolished.

State officials determined Vision 20-20 illegally removed the asbestos and demolished the building in order to save \$14,000.

A message for the company was not immediately returned Monday.

**Masons Dedicate New Lincoln Headquarters**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska's Freemasons have celebrated their new state headquarters in Lincoln with a ceremony that involved pouring corn, oil and wine over a cornerstone.

Sunday's ceremony included a color guard of men clad in red, white and blue Revolutionary War uniforms, the *Lincoln Journal Star* reported. The color guard was surrounded by dozens of men in tuxedos, wearing ceremonial aprons at their waists and jewels around their necks. They had come from across the state to participate in or observe the centuries-old cornerstone ceremony.

The pouring of corn over the cornerstone was a symbol of plenty, the wine was a symbol of joy and the oil was symbolic of peace.

In the United States, Masons have been holding such ceremonies since the Revolutionary War. The Masons say one member, President George Washington, in 1793 laid the cornerstone for the U.S. Capitol.

"History is still very alive and well in our society," said the grand master of Nebraska, Thomas Hauder, who presided on Sunday.

The Freemasons are commonly referred to as Masons. The organization is believed to have evolved from English and Scottish guilds of stonemasons and cathedral builders in the Middle Ages. The organization evolved into a fraternity for "moral edification, intellectual recitation, benevolent service and gentlemanly socialization," according to the Masons' website. Members are active in charity events, and a Masonic subset, the Shriners, is well-known for its burn centers and children's hospitals.

The Nebraska Masons had outgrown their old Lincoln headquarters building in downtown Lincoln. The new headquarters location is a renovated building about four miles east that will better serve the 12,000 members and 137 Masonic lodges in Nebraska, officials said.

**South Dakota**

**Retirement System Prospering**

BY CHET BROKAW  
Associated Press

PIERRE — The South Dakota Retirement System is in good shape with a cushion of nearly \$1 billion after earning 19.8 percent on investments through the first 11 months of the fiscal year, officials said Monday.

The system's assets peaked at about \$8.2 billion in 2007 and then plummeted during the recession, but the assets have now grown to about \$9.1 billion.

If the investment returns hold until June 30, the system will end the fiscal year about 103 percent funded, in much better shape than the 75 percent funded average for other state retirement systems nationwide, said Rob Wylie, executive director of the Retirement System. That means the South Dakota system's assets are about 103 percent of all future potential future benefits to be paid to retirees in state and local government agencies, he said.

"We have more money today than we anticipate paying into the future, a wonderful situation," Wylie told the Legislature's Executive Board, which handles administrative tasks for the Legislature, including oversight of the state office that invests state money and the

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Retirement System's assets.

The numbers reported to the legislative panel provide only a snapshot of the Retirement System's financial condition. The system's official condition and the cost of living increases granted in benefits to retirees are based on its status on June 30 each year.

The system has 75,000 members, and most of them are still working. It includes employees of state government, cities, counties and school districts.

State Investment Officer Matt Clark said the 19.8 percent investment return was due to strong performance by stocks held by the Retirement System. About 56 percent of the system's money is in stocks, and that portfolio gained from a rise in bank stocks and housing-related stocks that had been depressed during the financial crisis, he said.

"They came storming back," Clark said after the meeting with lawmakers.

After system's assets peaked at about \$8.2 billion before the recession, they fell to \$5.6 billion by June 2009. After substantial gains in 2010 and 2011, it earned only modest returns in the year ending June 30, 2012.

Clark said he believes stocks have rebounded to their fair-market value, so it's likely they will earn a more modest return of about 7.25 percent in the future. The system is managed with a goal of averaging a 7.25 percent return on investments.

The approximately \$1 billion cushion provides some confidence that the Retirement System can withstand fluctuations in the stock market, Clark said. The stock market goes up and down from year to year, but the Retirement System's assets are managed for the long-term, he said.

"It's good to see long-term strategies do eventually work out in the end," Clark said.

When the Retirement System is fully funded, pension payments increase by 3.1 percent the following year. Because it was only 93 percent funded last June 30, benefit payments will rise by only 2.1 percent on July 1 this year.

**Nebraska**

**Former Lt. Gov. Sheehy Is Fined \$1,000 For Improper Phone Use**

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press



Sheehy

LINCOLN, Neb. — Former Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy has agreed to pay Nebraska \$1,000 after an investigation by the Accountability and Disclosure Commission found that he improperly made thousands of personal calls using his state-issued cellphone.

The commission launched the investigation after the *Omaha World-Herald* reported that Sheehy, a Republican, had made more than 2,300 calls to four women other than his wife over the past four years. One of those women has acknowledged the two were conducting an affair.

"Mr. Sheehy was very cooperative during the course of the investigation, and wanted to resolve the matter," Frank Daley, the commission's executive director, said Monday.

Nebraska law allows public officials to use phones for state business or essential personal business such as calls to children at home, babysitters, doctors and daycare centers. The phone in question was on a flat-fee plan, so the personal calls did not increase the cost to the state.

"It seemed to us that \$1,000 was appropriate to make the point, since there was no financial loss to the state," Daley said.

Sheehy had faced a maximum civil penalty of \$2,000. He has separately reimbursed \$500 to the lieutenant governor's office for use of the phone.

Sheehy resigned in February and bowed out of the 2014 governor's race following the newspaper's revelations.

His former wife filed for divorce in 2012, and it became final April 30. In February, Gov. Dave Heineman selected former state lawmaker and University of Nebraska Regent Lavon Heide-mann to replace Sheehy as lieutenant governor.

Sheehy acknowledged that the commission had "sufficient evidence" to rule his phone use went beyond what was allowed in state law. According to phone logs released by the governor's office, Sheehy called some of the women several times a day, with the conversations lasting anywhere from a few minutes to more than an hour.

The calls "appeared to be outside the scope of essential personal business," Daley said.

Sheehy signed the agreement on May 16, according to the commission settlement papers. His attorney, Robert Parker, said he could not discuss whether the former lieutenant governor has yet paid the fine.

Sheehy has declined repeated interview requests since his resignation. Parker said Monday that he would pass along another request.

State officials have said it's impossible to calculate what the exact reimbursement should be, because state phones are on unlimited use plans and, therefore, are not billed per minute. The governor's chief of staff, Larry Bare, determined that \$500 was an appropriate amount.



PHOTO: STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

**Former South Dakota Secretary of State Alice Kundert died Monday in Moberge. She served as Secretary of State from 1979-1987, and later served in the state House.**

**Former SD Secretary of State Kundert Dies At Age 92**

MOBRIDGE (AP) — Former South Dakota Secretary of State and lawmaker Alice Kundert died Monday. She was 92.

Kundert died in Moberge, Secretary of State Jason Gant announced.

"Our hearts go out to the family and friends of Secretary Alice Kundert and all the South Dakotans who benefited from her devoted service to the state over several terms," Gant said. "She has touched the lives of many and will be greatly missed."

Kundert was secretary of state from 1979 to 1987. She served in the South Dakota House of Representatives from 1991 to 1994.

Kundert was born on a farm in Campbell County and graduated from Java High School. She attended Northern Normal School, which is now called Northern State University. She taught in various county schools.

She was first elected to office as the deputy superintendent of schools in Campbell County. She served on the town board and the school board and later served as Campbell County's Clerk of Courts and Registrar of Deeds.

She served as state auditor from 1969 to 1979. She ran for governor in 1986.

Funeral services will be Thursday at 10 a.m. at the Mound City Community Center.

**South Dakota Officials Say State GDP Up 1.9 Percent In 2012**

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota officials say a preliminary estimate indicates that the state's gross domestic product rose by 1.9 percent last year.

GDP statistics are released by the U.S. Commerce Department as a measure of comprehensive economic activity. GDP is the sum of all goods and services produced.

Pat Costello, commissioner of the

Governor's Office of Economic Development, says South Dakota's increase in 2012 was not as high as it was in the previous year. But he says South Dakota's manufacturing sector had the fifth highest increase in the nation.

Costello says the agricultural sector's GDP was down by 16 percent last year in South Dakota, mostly because of the drought that hit the entire state.

**Stohtert Taking Over As Omaha's Mayor**

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Jean Stohtert is taking office as the new mayor of Omaha, Nebraska's largest city, with budget challenges and what she says is a voter mandate for change.

After her inauguration on Monday evening, Stohtert said in interviews, she'll be talking to her new staff about her vision and goals and then will spend more time with constituents.

The Republican told Omaha station KETV that her May 14 victory over the Democratic incumbent, Jim Suttle, showed that voters wanted change after four years with Suttle at the helm. She said she wanted to set up town hall meetings and "let people know what is important to them is important to me."

She takes office with budget challenges that have developed before and during her time as a member of the City Council.

This year's budget started out balanced, she told the *Omaha World-Herald*, but "it is not balanced now, and it's estimated that at the end of the year it's going to have about a \$13.5 million shortfall."

She said most of that is a result

of higher-than-forecast sales tax refunds due to the state for business incentives and an estimated \$8 million in overspending by the Fire Department.

Next year's budget is forecast to

be \$16.5 million in the red.

But tax increases such as those sought and employed during Suttle's four years in office are not the way she'll address the city's problems, she has repeatedly said.

It's too early to say exactly what solutions she and her staff will devise, Stohtert said, but at least, she told KETV, "We must make sure city departments stay within budget."

*I refuse to... give up my swing*

Matt Dvorak, PT  
Michelle Valencin, PT

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