

Knox County Landowners Urged To Thin Out Trees

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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CROFTON, Neb. — Dave Kinnamon, park superintendent at Lewis and Clark Lake State Recreation Area (SRA), hopes he doesn't need to use the grass rig acquired from the Crofton Fire and Rescue unit for \$1.

In the meantime, Kinnamon strongly urges landowners by Lewis and Clark Lake to consider thinning out trees near their property. Cedar trees, basically fuel, can burn wildly if left unchecked, according to a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission news release.

"Same scenario, just different types of trees," he said in the release. "We had ponderosa forests out in Chadron (his previous state park assignment), but there are many cedars here and many beautiful estates and homes built inside them. It's just another matchbox ready to go."

The Lewis and Clark Lake SRA carries a number of fire-fighting challenges, Kinnamon told the *Press & Dakotan*.

"We have homes that are located on winding roads. Or they may be located in trees or on steep hills," he said. "Those homes may also be located in areas with just one trail for reaching them, which can make it hard for hauling a full truck of water for fires."

Crofton Fire and Rescue has considered using all-terrain vehicles (ATV) for reaching some areas, he said.

In addition, firefighters may go from home to home to alert residents during a fire because of uncertainty whether the structure is occupied, Kinnamon said.

"We have so many cabins where people live as seasonal homes. They are often here in July and August, when we have some of our greatest fire danger," he said. "We also have a number of new homes. We have two or three new houses going up, and I don't know who lives there."

When it comes to targeting a fire, a Global Positioning System (GPS) doesn't work in

some locations, Kinnamon said. Firefighters can use smoke as a guide during the day, but blazes may not be visible at night, he added.

In addition, 911 calls may go "There to the Knox County dispatch center in Center, Neb., or the Yankton County dispatch center on the South Dakota side," he said.

The current fire danger has heightened because of the dry conditions and high winds, Kinnamon said.

"This has been such an unusual winter, with so little snow," he said. "Then, you have times like the other day, where it was 80 degrees and you got a breeze (that really created a fire danger)."

Crofton Fire and Rescue benefits from holding mutual aid agreements with more than a dozen departments, including Yankton, said Crofton volunteer firefighter Paul Schoenberner.

"We have agreements with 15 or 16 departments, including Yankton. I know Larry Nickles well," Schoenberner told the *Press & Dakotan*, referring to the Yankton deputy fire chief.

"The different departments get together, and we're there for each other when it's needed. We've helped each other with fires in the last week," Schoenberner added.

While other departments can be called for assistance with fires, area residents are urged to remain cautious as Knox County remains in a burn ban, he said.

Dangerous situations could range from a discarded lit cigarette to a farmer whose disc hits a stone that creates a spark, he added.

"We ask people to be very, very cautious. One little spark could make all the difference," he said. "We need people's help in these matters and ask they bear with us. We hope things straighten out."

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.



Rockin' Results



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Center held its first "Rockin' for Meals" fundraising event Tuesday, March 17. Nine pairs of celebrities battled it out in rocking chairs to raise money for the "Meals on Wheels" program. The event raised \$8,103. The Center serves nearly 47,000 meals a year, 17,000 of which are delivered by volunteers with the support of many area churches to those who are disabled and homebound thru our Meals on Wheels program. Pictured are: Top Left: Our legislators, Mike Stevens (\$325) and Bernie Hunhoff (\$319), get involved even though they were busy in Pierre. Left Middle: Center members getting ready for the days festivities. We raised \$8103, with 9 pairings. Left Middle Bottom: The city takes on the county both getting impressive results. Mayor Carda raised (\$711) and Todd Woods raised (\$378). Bottom Left: The Center staff worked hard and our top cooks, Margaret Sarringer (\$617) and Delores Bohlman (\$341), rocked raising just at \$1,000. Top Right: Marge Becker, with Mike Stevens, dresses the part for our first ever Rockathon.

Gala

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"He is amazing," Elder said. "His impromptu is just astonishing. He interviews all these make-believe actors and just does a great job of making things up on the spot."

Ted Powell will be performing with the Mike Hilson Band for the show's musical performances, all under the direction of Terry Winter.

"Mike Hilson and Ted Powell, who will be on the piano, can do magic together," Tasa said. "They play anything and everything."

According to Tasa, with the Gala's actors, the event wouldn't have lasted as long as it has.

"Chris, Mike and Terry are all the backbone to this show," she said. "The actors, actresses and singers are also very important. We couldn't do this without all of them. It is just fall off your seat funny. We open the doors at 5:30 p.m., but most of the time the party keeps going until midnight."

Auctioneer Jim Payne will be donating his time to handle the live auction.

"Auction items are donated from members of the (LCTC) and people in the community," Elder said. "This year when we went around asking for donations, everybody helped out. They never said no."

Some of the live auction items include a "Phantom of the BBQ" party for 12-14 people donated by Steve Hoff, "Dinner With the President of USD" for six people donated by Jim and Colette Abbott, and four tickets to a Kansas City Chiefs game donated by Riverfront Broadcasting.

Elder, along with Doyle and Carolyn Becker, will also be donating a Chilean dinner for 6 people.

"Lelia and her family make amazing Chilean food," Tasa said. "It is usually one of our top sellers."

Area artists such as Scott Luken and Joann Lambertz have also donated some of their works for the special occasion.

A silent auction will also take place during the evening with items such as two tickets to the Chanhasen Dinner Theatre in Minneapolis and "Out on the Town" packages.

"After dinner, we will have a dessert auction," Tasa said. "We have about 20 different desserts that people have donated."

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MAKING A DEAL

The firetruck arrangement — and fighting blazes — isn't new for Kinnamon. During his career, he's had his share of experience with fire, according to a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission news release.

Before accepting his current position in late 2013, Kinnamon served as park superintendent at Chadron State Park in western Nebraska, where he helped to combat the 2012 forest fires.

Prior to leaving Chadron, Kinnamon helped the park obtain a surplus fire truck from the City of Seward Fire and Rescue unit. The move allows park staff to stamp out future fires in the park and surrounding areas.

"My hometown was Seward, and the guys with the Seward fire department said it was too bad that Chadron was having the problems with fires while I was there (at the state park)," he told the *Press & Dakotan*. "They wanted to do something to help us (at Chadron)."

At the time, the Seward firefighters were going to sell their truck. Rather than auction the vehicle to the highest bidder, the Seward unit looked at ways of transferring the truck to Chadron.

A deal was worked out, and the Seward truck was

sold to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and delivered to Chadron State Park. The sale price was negotiated at slightly below the \$2,000 level at which the GPC would require putting out a request for bids.

DOING IT AGAIN

The experience served Kinnamon well when he moved to Knox County for his current position.

When he arrived at Lewis and Clark Lake two years ago, one of the first problems he noticed was the high density of cedar trees, according to the GPC news release.

With his experience with fire out west, Kinnamon was invited to speak to Lewis and Clark Lake area landowners. At the meeting, he spoke with Schoenberner, who told him Crofton Fire and Rescue was looking to surplus its old grass rig fire truck.

"It crossed my mind (to sell the rig to Game and Parks), and it seemed like a good thing to do," Schoenberner told the *Press & Dakotan*.

Kinnamon agreed, noting that arranging the details went smoother because of his regular on-the-job contact with Schoenberner. "Paul works here with me, which makes it easier to

coordinate all of this," he said.

Soon, Crofton Fire and Rescue transferred the truck to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for \$1.

"We worked with the community," said Kinnamon, who hopes to utilize the newly acquired grass rig similarly at Lewis and Clark SRA, Crofton and surrounding communities.

A new sticker that reads "People Partnerships Prevention" can be seen on the truck's side. The grass rig will also be available to Nebraska Game and Parks Commission staff during controlled burns to open up habitat for wildlife, according to the news release.

"And if we have another fire out west, it could be called upon out there as state equipment," Kinnamon said in the release.

Kinnamon told the *Press & Dakotan* he's never far away from his newest fire-fighting asset.

"I live only 200 yards away (from the truck). If the (fire) chief needs me, he can call me," he said. "It's all about being part of the community."

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Truck

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However, area residents shouldn't consider the GPC rig as a substitute for calling their local fire department, Schoenberner said.

"People should still make 911 their first call (for fires)," he said. "That's not our primary purpose (at the state park), to handle everyday fires with this pump rig. We try to help out, but the local fire department is still the lead instrument."

Kinnamon agreed. "For me, my priority is to protect my park. I want to be ready to go if I have a problem with a burn. I want to be able to respond," he said.

The 1983 grass rig will come in handy for covering the large area around Lewis and Clark Lake, which is Nebraska's second largest lake.

Lewis and Clark Lake straddles the northeast border with South Dakota, about 7 miles north of Crofton on Nebraska Highway 121. The lake is about 16 miles long.

This state recreation area includes five areas on the south side of the lake: Weigand-Burbach, Miller Creek, Bloomfield, South Shore and Deep Water.

OBITUARIES

Leona Mehlhaf

Leona Mehlhaf, age 93, of Menno, SD passed away early Tuesday, March 17, 2015 at the Freeman Medical Center, Freeman, SD.

Funeral services will be 10:30 a.m. Friday, March 20, 2015 at Zion Reformed Church, Menno, with Rev. Travis Grassmid officiating. Burial will be in the Menno Cemetery, Menno, SD.

Visitations will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday evening at the Zion Reformed Church, Menno, SD with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the church.

The Aisenbrey-Opsahl-Kostel Memorial Chapel, Menno, SD is assisting with the service details. Leave an online condolence at www.opsahl-kostelfuneral-home.com/.

Pallbearers will be her



Mehlhaf

grandsons: Brian Mehlhaf, Michael Mehlhaf, Kent Mehlhaf, Bret Schortzman, Jared Schortzman and Nathan Mehlhaf. Honorary pallbearers will be her granddaughters: Darla Anderson, Heidi Mehlhaf, Angela Sedlacek and Lisa Lindeman.

Leona (Herr) Mehlhaf was born to Gottlieb and Lydia (Schnabel) Herr on June 16, 1921 northeast of Tripp, SD. She was baptized by Rev. William J. Krieger as an infant. On April 21, 1935, Leona was confirmed by Rev. K.J. Stuebbe at Tripp Reformed Church. She was united in marriage to Ruben Mehlhaf on September 12, 1943 by Rev. Walter Odenbach in the Friedens

Reformed Church in Tripp. Leona and Ruben made their home and farmed northeast of Menno until 1977. They retired from farming and moved into Menno. In 2009, they moved into the Menno-Olivet Care Center. Ruben passed away on October 4, 2012. Leona enjoyed quilting and loved her roses.

Leona's memory will be cherished by her children: Harley (Janet) Mehlhaf of Hurley, SD, Myron (Linda) Mehlhaf of Freeman, SD, Diane (Merit) Schortzman of Scotland, SD and Dale (Earla) Mehlhaf of Freeman, SD; grandchildren: Brian Mehlhaf, Michael Mehlhaf, Kent Mehlhaf, Bret Schortzman, Jared Schortzman, Nathan Mehlhaf, Darla Anderson, Heidi Mehlhaf, Angela Sedlacek and Lisa Lindeman; great grandchildren: Devin, Jacob, Riley, Kaitlyn, Morgan, Elias,

Kacey, Cole, Cade, Brianna, Erica, Abbey, Mason, Kenna, Sadie, Grace and Tori; her sister, Ida Saylor of Scotland, SD; brothers-in-law, Victor Mehlhaf and John (Darlene) Mehlhaf; sisters-in-law, Ruth Mehlhaf and Caroline Roth, all of Menno and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Ruben, her parents, her siblings and spouses: Hulda (John) Vilhauer, Beatha (Reinhold) Hirsch, Theodore (Maggie) Herr, Otto (Edna) Herr, Emil Herr, Lenora (Edwin) Oswald, Alfred (Ruby) Herr and Richard Saylor.

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March 19, 2015

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Thursday, March 19
7:40 am Yankton Conv/Vis Bureau (Stephanie Moser)
8:20 am Yankton Chamber (Carmen Schramm)
Friday, March 20
7:40 am Vermillion Chamber (Nathan Welch)
8:20 am United Way (Lauren Hanson)

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