

Airspace Expansion A Win For SD

STIOUX FALLS (AP) — An enormous bomber training area over the northern Plains approved this week is likely an economic win for South Dakota, but the benefits could come with a cost for neighboring states.

Advocates of expanding the Powder River Training Complex over the Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming gathered Friday in Rapid City to celebrate its final approval.

The airspace will be used by B-1 bombers from Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and B-52 bombers from Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota.

The move will also likely help shield Ellsworth, which has an estimated \$350 million impact on South Dakota's economy, from potential future closure.

Montana Gov. Steve Bullock wrote in a mid-March letter to the Federal Aviation Administration that the expansion would hurt the economic prosperity of Montana residents.

SD Man Says 'KKK' Scars Case A Victory

RAPID CITY (AP) — An Eagle Butte man whose claims of civil rights violations by Rapid City health care workers were rejected by jurors says he still considers his court battle a victory.

Federal jurors on Friday ruled that Rapid City Regional Hospital is not liable for the "KKK" scars that Vern Traversie says workers carved into his stomach during heart surgery in 2011. Traversie sued the hospital for alleged violations of civil rights, battery and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The 71-year-old Traversie said in a statement that he shared his story only to make sure that no other American Indians are treated in an "uncaring" way.

He says powerful institutions in Rapid City have now learned that American Indians have a voice and are not afraid to call for justice.

Court Dismisses River Irrigation Lawsuit

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A judge has dismissed a class-action lawsuit by Nebraska farmers who say the Department of Natural Resources deprived them of irrigation water to which they were entitled.

But District Court Judge James E. Doyle IV ruled this week that the farmers can amend their lawsuit with new arguments challenging the decision to divert the water to comply with the Republican River Compact.

Doyle ruled that the department's duties to comply with the compact govern how water must be distributed.

More than 150 irrigators who receive water through the Frenchman Cambridge Irrigation District say their crops suffered because they were denied access to water that went to Kansas under the compact. The compact allocates 49 percent of the river's water to Nebraska, 40 percent to Kansas and 11 percent to Colorado.

Lake Oahe Salmon Stock Delayed

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Anglers will have to wait a little longer for a chance to catch Atlantic salmon in Lake Oahe.

South Dakota wildlife officials had wanted to stock the first batch of the new species in the Missouri River reservoir in the Dakotas in the spring of 2016, but a deal to get eggs from a federal hatchery in New Hampshire has fallen through.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service facility in New Hampshire was working on a contract with an electric company that was restoring an Atlantic salmon population decimated by a hydroelectric dam, and that contract wasn't renewed, said Will Saylor, administrator of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department's fisheries program.

"It was certainly a disappointment, but that's the way things go sometimes," Saylor told the *Capital Journal*.

South Dakota is now negotiating for eggs with a private company in Chile. The state hopes to have eggs by next winter that can be raised to young fish in South Dakota hatcheries for release in Oahe. After they're introduced into the lake it will take about three years for them to grow to catchable size.

Chinook salmon have been stocked in Lake Oahe each year since the mid-1980s. Wildlife officials want to boost the salmon fishery with the new species, which can switch to other prey if rainbow smelt are low. Chinooks feed almost exclusively on smelt, a species prone to large population swings.

Exemption For Canadian Cattle Denied

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota's Board of Animal Health has rejected a request to end the branding of imported registered dairy cattle from Canada.

Those cattle are required to be branded with the letters "CAN" so they can be traced in the event of a disease outbreak.

The North Dakota Holstein Association had hoped to end that practice in favor of other forms of identification because members say the CAN brand lowers the value of animals.

Cows also have radio-frequency identification tags, ear tattoos and registration papers indicating their country of origin. The Bismarck Tribune reports (http://bit.ly/1E1NgPm) the board denied the Holstein Association's request by a 4-3 vote because it felt the brand is unalterable and more easily visible.

CAN brands are required in many northern states, but others exempt registered animals.

Nebraska's February Jobless Rate Of 2.7 Percent Was Lowest In The Country

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska's preliminary unemployment rate of 2.7 percent last month was the lowest in the country, a state report showed Friday.

The Nebraska Labor Department report said the February rate was seven-tenths of a point under the February 2014 rate of 3.4 percent and remained well under the new national average rate of 5.5 percent.

Nebraska's rate of 2.7 percent was trailed by North Dakota at 2.9 percent and South Dakota and Utah at 3.4 percent, according to U.S. Labor Department figures.

"Nebraska's nonfarm employment is up nearly 11,000 over last year," said Nebraska Labor Commissioner John Albin.

Compared with February 2014, the education and health services sector was up 3,430 jobs; the leisure and hospitality sector was up 2,080 jobs; and the sector of other services was up 1,920 jobs.

Nebraska listed 991,276 people as



employed last month, compared with 991,014 in January and 987,302 in February 2014. There were 1,019,077 people in the state labor force in February, compared with 1,020,914 in January and 1,022,584 in February 2014, the report said.

Omaha's preliminary unemployment rate was 3.2 percent last month, down from January's revised figure of 3.6 percent. Lincoln's preliminary February rate was 2.4 percent, compared with a revised figure of 2.8 percent in January. The state Labor Department said the revised February 2014 rates for both markets won't be available until April 21.

The unemployment rates for Lincoln and Omaha are not seasonally adjusted, so they cannot be directly compared with the state unemployment rate.

Here are preliminary area labor market unemployment rates for February, followed by revised figures from January:

- Beatrice: 3.8, 4.5
- Columbus: 2.6, 2.8
- Fremont: 3.0, 3.3
- Hastings: 2.9, 3.5
- Kearney: 2.1, 2.4
- Lexington: 3.1, 3.6
- Norfolk: 2.6, 2.8
- North Platte: 2.7, 3.2
- Red Willow: 3.2, 3.7
- Scottsbluff: 2.4, 2.6

UNL Grad Loves Job As Wienermobile Pilot

BY COREY MATTESON
Lincoln Journal Star

LINCOLN, Neb.— Last week, Matt Heng had a little downtime, so he offered to pick up a friend from veterinary school at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus.

She was waiting outside, trying not to smile, when he arrived in the company car — a 27-foot-long hot dog.

"Not everyone gets to take the Wienermobile home," said Heng, who graduated from UNL last year with a degree in advertising and public relations and is in town this week for work.

He's a Hotdogger, one of a dozen young, encased-meat ambassadors who travel the country in one of Oscar Mayer's six Wienermobiles.

Last week, Heng and his co-pilot, Jessica Smith, were outside of Russ's Market, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., one of many scheduled events during their time in town. But Heng also made time to show Smith the Capitol, Memorial Stadium and Honest Abe's.

"I have the best personal tour guide," Smith said.

They were in the area until Monday. Then they closed the passenger-side gull-wing door, put a "Harry Potter" talking book on the sound system and drove the hot dog to Oklahoma City, smiling for every surprised motorist who spotted the vehicle on the interstate.

This is the Wienermobile life.

Smith knew it was for her. When she was a senior last spring, she applied for this job, and no others.

"I was very much looking to travel in a hot dog," she said. "It's definitely my dream job."

Heng's journey to the Wienermobile was a little more winding.

Although the giant hot dog was parked outside the campus Lutheran Center Thursday, UNL is not one of 10 schools where Oscar Mayer recruits future Hotdoggers for the June-to-June job. It was there as part of a food drive for Open Shelf.

When Heng was a senior at

UNL, he happened upon a Reddit AMA ("ask me anything") post from a pair of Hotdoggers. The innuendos got old quick, they told one questioner. The puns, as evidenced by the number of times they used them in responses, clearly did not.

Heng was intrigued.

He found some past hot-dog-drivers on LinkedIn and called them. All the former Hotdoggers gave glowing reviews of the gig. You get to travel the country with room and board covered, and no two days are alike when you drive a hot dog for a living.

He applied and was summoned to Madison, Wisconsin, headquarters of Oscar Mayer, for an interview.

By this point, he was so convinced the Wienermobile was the right post-graduation job for him that he turned down a full-time offer for the chance to drive a hot dog. That went over with his parents about as well as one could hope, he said.

This week, he got to drive the Wienermobile up the driveway of his family's York home. And on Friday, the Wienermobile spent some time in the York Wal-Mart parking lot, the *Lincoln Journal Star* reports.

In each instance, friends and family from his hometown came by to say hi and ask about the footlong drive and what life is like behind the wheel.

When you drive the Wienermobile, Heng said, you get all kinds of questions. Here are some of more common ones, starting with the most frequent.

(asterisk) Can I have a hot dog?

No., the Wienermobile does not contain a grill or even a convenience store-style hot dog roller. You can have a hot dog whistle, though. They take thousands with them wherever they go.

- Can I track the Wienermobile?

As of last summer, there's an app for that. Search for "Wienermobile" on your smartphone or look for (hash)Wienermobile on Instagram and Twitter.

- Can I take a picture?

Of course. Heng said one of his favorite pastimes is checking for (hash)Wienermobile on Instagram and seeing if he can find himself cameoing in the photos of strangers. The Wienermobile, both Heng and Smith understand, is the star of the show.

Now nine months into their Hotdogging, Heng and Smith have been somewhat transformed by the photogenic nature of the vehicle they pilot.

This week, they got to cruise around in Heng's grandparents' gold Honda Accord, and they found that driving a normal car is what feels strange now.

"It's weird," Smith said. "No one waves at you. You wave at people and wonder, 'Why aren't you waving at me?' We're very rarely in a normal car."

"People just think I'm very happy," said Heng.

A brief ridealong through downtown Lincoln Thursday proved that the mere sight of the Wienermobile can make others pretty happy, too.

"This guy's got a selfie; he's ready," Heng said, pointing to a young man who'd just crossed R Street on campus, his back turned to the Wienermobile, his thumb on his smartphone screen. Nailed it.

Others tried to slyly take pictures of it, as if the subject were Ryan Gosling at a family funeral rather than a 14,000-pound motorized hot dog. For them, and plenty of others, Heng flipped a switch on a console to the left of his ketchup- and mustard-colored captain's chair. And out came the "I wish I were an Oscar Mayer wiener ..."

The jingle appeared to make the day of a bunch of kids playing flag football on the Capitol lawn, a construction worker on Eighth Street and plenty more. Heng watched a woman fumble with her phone outside the Federal Building as the Wienermobile headed east on O Street.

"Grab the phone," he said, narrating the struggle. "You got it, you got it, you got it, you got it, you got it, you got it."

Click.
"We try to slow down as best we can," Heng said. "We're in the business of making people happy."

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