

Hail Damages Hundreds Of Cars At Dealership

MITCHELL (AP) — About 300 cars at a Mitchell car dealership have been damaged after severe weather pelted the area. KELO-TV reports that strong winds, rain and golf-ball-sized hail blew out windows and caused dents in hundreds of cars at the Iver-son Chrysler Center in Mitchell early Saturday morning. General Manager Tim Hurl says employees were able to save 15 cars. He estimates the damage could be more than \$1 million. Hurl says the dealership will offer discounts on the damaged cars starting Monday. Other towns in southeast South Dakota also saw damage. KSFY-TV reports that wind blew the roof off a church in Flandreau and several basements were flooded in Madison.

Omaha Hospital Treats Victim Of Zoo Scuffle

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Medical Center could have been mistaken for a zoo after a special patient was brought in for treatment of fractured jaw. A 27-year-old silverback gorilla named Motuba was brought in Saturday for a CT scan after a scuffle with another gorilla. Doug Armstrong, director of animal health at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, says the zoo doesn't have the capability to perform the scan. Motuba is among four silverbacks that socialize together at the zoo. Armstrong says Motuba and one of the younger gorillas appar-ently got into a physical confrontation that left Motuba with a frac-tured jaw that pushed three of his teeth outward. Amstrong says that after surveying the extent of the Motuba's injuries, surgery was done to remove the piece of fractured jaw and the askew teeth.

Noem Graduates From S.D. State University

IOUX FALLS (AP) — Nearly 20 years after dropping out of col-lege to help out at her family farm, Rep. Kristi Noem has received her political science degree from South Dakota State University. Noem graduated with hundreds of other college students during SDSU's commencement ceremony Saturday in Brookings. The Republican congresswoman left SDSU while in her 20s so she could take care of the family farm following her father's death. Nearly two decades later, Noem earned her political science degree through a combination of traditional classes and online classes. "I've always felt a little disappointed that I had spent that much time and energy and money on getting a degree and, yet, didn't finish it out," Noem told KELO-TV. In addition to graduating Saturday, Noem gave the student speech during the commencement ceremony. "Honestly, I know at the end of the day, they wanted to hear from my heart," Noem said. "They wanted to hear a little bit of my story, but most of all, that life will be challenging. But if they stay true to themselves and really take on those challenges, they'll be success-ful." Noem, who is considering getting her master's degree, said most of her colleagues in Congress didn't even know she was taking col-lege classes until she told them she was graduating in the spring.

Nebraska Family Fishing Days Scheduled

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The state will open several of its parks and recreations areas to the public for free later this month. Free Fishing and Park Entry Day has been set for May 19. The Ne-braska Game and Parks Commission says no fishing or park entry permits will be required on that day, but all other fee requirements, laws and regulations will be in effect. The state sites participating are Alexandria State Recreation Area, Fort Robinson State Park, Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area, Louisville State Recreation Area and Mahoney State Park. Also partic-ipating are Platte River and Ponca state parks and Two Rivers and Victoria Springs state recreation areas. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission will host fishing clin-ics at those sites. Fishing gear will be available for children.

Interest In S.D. Oil, Gas Leases Continues

BY JUSTIN JOINER  
Capital Journal

PIERRE — Similarities in underlying rock formations continue to fuel speculation that South Dakota might have petroleum reserves like those now fueling the oil boom in North Dakota. But recent auctions of South Dakota oil and gas leases don't necessarily indicate oil com-panies will start digging test holes any time soon, people in the industry say. "My reasoning behind acquiring the leases for my company ROC Oil and Gas Land Man-agement Co. — you can consider it my charita-ble contribution to the state of South Dakota," said Randy Coleman, who purchased the vast majority of the lease acres in April's auction. He said his company would do extensive research before investing in expensive test drilling. He said he purchased the leases to keep the option of exploring open. "It is a land play," he said. "It would be ridiculous to pull in a rig on a piece of prop-erty when you haven't done your homework as far as interpreting seismic data or reviewing well controls of existing wells that have been drilled and looking at logs." That research will take time, and Coleman added that it is not unusual for companies to buy large numbers of leases but never drill. "It is a process. The oil and gas business is all a process," he said. "It isn't like Jed Clam-pett in the Beverly Hillbillies. You just don't poke a hole and out gushes oil and gas. It is a process and it is a detailed process. It takes a lot of time to justify any merit if there is any merit." Extensive exploration is needed to deter-mine how much oil is to be had in the state. But not much has happened in recent years. Bob Townsend, administrator of South Dakota's Minerals and Mining Program, said the department issues about 20-25 permits a year for drilling, exploratory or otherwise, and that has been the case for a while.

In an April auction by the South Dakota Of-fice of School and Public Lands, oil companies snatched up 75,289 acres of oil and gas leases. Most of these leases were for acres in the northwest corner of the state. It is the second big auction in a row for the state department. In the fall, it auctioned off about 67,000 acres, the most in a number of years. Steve Benson, professor of petroleum engi-neering at the University of North Dakota, said the auction of the leases is most likely an indi-cation the oil companies see the area as an op-portunity, but he added that many oil companies are very secretive about ex-ploratory efforts. South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands Commissioner Jarrod Johnson said he hopes the auctions are a sign more explo-ration will be done in the future. "Who knows how big a volume they will find in our resources," he said. "Right now we are not even sure if we have oil in those re-sources. We are hoping we do; we should, but until we have proven production, woulda, shoulda, coulda is invoked." Coleman also highlighted the need for ex-ploration, but said not only is it a risky and ex-pensive process, it is a catch-22. Oil companies that take the risk to explore and gain more knowledge about the state's petro-leum reserves could help lessen the risk for fu-ture exploration. But few companies are willing to take such risks. "Who doesn't play it safe?" Coleman asked. "If you just say, 'I am Evel Knievel and I am just going to get a rig and drill it,' you will be out of business by Thursday." South Dakota State Geologist Derric Iles said time could play a factor in how much ex-ploration oil companies do in South Dakota. Right now, North Dakota exploration efforts are seeing a high success rate. "The real gorilla in the room, if you will, is the success rate they are currently enjoying in North Dakota with their drilling," Iles said. "I be-lieve it is in the 99 percent range for success."

Until drilling in North Dakota becomes more risky or there is some other change, there is lit-tle reason for drillers to take a chance in South Dakota. "That is the problem that we have to over-come," Iles said. However, as more land is leased out and more exploration completed, Iles is seeing the drilling edge centered on western North Dakota expand. Alison Ritter, a spokeswoman for North Dakota's Oil and Gas Division, said she is also seeing drilling move south toward South Dakota. "But that development is still in very early stages," she said. Ron Ness, president of the North Dakota Pe-troleum Council, disagrees that oil exploration is moving south out of North Dakota. However, he said, more exploration could be coming South Dakota's way if it continues to increase the information — about wells, geology and other items — available to potential drillers. "That is something that North Dakota has been doing a tremendous job of for many years now and it has just gotten better," he said. "I think South Dakota has been working on a few of those initiatives." In the last year, South Dakota rolled out its oil and gas initiative map. The map — online at http://denr.sd.gov/ — packs several tables of in-formation into the interactive feature. It high-lights information on the state's permit files for oil and gas drilling, well completion reports for private water wells and more. As the possibility of more oil exploration looms, various groups in the state are trying to prepare. "Everyone I've talked to in North Dakota, from government officials to business leaders, every one of them said the oil boom happened almost overnight and no one was prepared for it," said Branden Bestgen, with a Sturgis firm that hosted a recent oil conference. "We have a tremendous advantage because we can be pre-pared. We can start planning now so we don't get mowed over."

Nebraksa Resources District Reconsiders Nitrates Options

YORK, Neb. (AP) — The Upper Big Blue Natural Re-sources District is reconsidering ways to control nitrate contami-nation of groundwater. The district's water and regu-lations committee will be examin-ing the options at its Tuesday meeting. A plan that would re-quire farmers to use nitrification inhibitors was heavily criticized at a board hearing in March, ac-cording to the *Lincoln Journal Star*. "The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality testified in favor of it," said district manager Rod DeBuhr. "Nobody else did."

The inhibitors are chemicals that slow the rate at which anhy-drous ammonia, a fertilizer, is broken down into nitrates. Ex-perts say nitrates pose health hazards when they seep into groundwater supplies. Among the hazards is a condition called "blue baby syndrome," in which an infant's blood can't keep up with the required oxygen deliv-ery to cells. Mike Nuss, chairman of the water committee, said inhibitors likely won't be the answer. "I guess there's not any good science out there that really proves that works," Nuss said.

The district's nitrate readings are near, on or more than the fed-eral safety standard of 10 parts per million. The district covers all of York County and parts of Adams, Butler, Fillmore, Hamil-ton, Polk, Saline and Seward counties. A state monitoring program kicks in when nitrate levels reach five parts per million. In 2001, 139 public water systems had one or more wells that exceeded that threshold. By 2011, the num-ber had increased to 305. The Central Platte Natural Re-sources District, based in Grand Island, has a combination of

methods in place: nitrogen in-hibitors, deep soil testing to monitor residual nitrogen levels and a ban on fall fertilizer appli-cation. Central Platte district project manager, Milt Moravek, said the measures have led to a drop in nitrate levels. DeBuhr said the issue boils down to encouraging practices for Upper Big Blue that decrease the potential for the water con-tamination. If that doesn't work, DeBuhr said, requirements could follow.

National Hunger Awareness Week

This week, May 7-12, 2012, is National Hunger Awareness Week, the grassroots movement to raise awareness about the solvable problem of hunger in America. This week serves as a platform for domestic hunger-relief organizations to raise awareness about hunger in America, and more specifically, in Yankton.



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