

Drought Worsens After Weeks Of Improvement

BY JIM SUHR
AP Business Writer

ST. LOUIS — Overall U.S. drought conditions have worsened for the second week in a row, reversing a recent easing in dry conditions in some areas and keeping the country mired in its worst drought in decades with no immediate relief expected for key Plains farming states.

The weekly U.S. Drought Monitor report released Thursday shows that 62.7 percent of the land in the lower 48 states was in some form of drought as of Tuesday, up from 60.1 percent the previous week. The area in extreme or exceptional drought — the two worst classifications — also rose, to 20.12 percent from last week's 19.04 percent.

Before the recent downturn, overall conditions had gradually eased over five weeks, offering short-lived encouragement to some of the hardest-hit areas.

Wednesday's update showed that the dry conditions intensified sharply in Oklahoma, where 90.5 percent of the state is in extreme or exceptional drought — a spike of 19 percentage points. The amount of South Dakota in those two classifications rose more than 8 percentage points to 63.32 percent, reflecting the fact that rainfall from south-central Nebraska northward to mid-South Dakota has been less than 25 percent of normal over the past three months.

Little changed in much of the rest of middle America, where 96 percent of Nebraska and nearly 78 percent of Kansas remain gripped by extreme or exceptional drought, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Eric Luebehusen wrote in Wednesday's update.

The stubborn drought isn't likely to relax its grip any time soon, with light showers expected in the Mississippi Valley and southern Texas later this week, Luebehusen wrote. "Otherwise, dry, warm conditions are expected across the remainder of the contiguous U.S., affording

most drought areas little — if any — relief over the next five to seven days," he said.

After a summer in which farmers watched helpless as their corn dried up in the heat and their soybeans became stunted, many are now worrying about their winter wheat.

Most of that crop has emerged, though the parched conditions continue to punish it. Twenty-six percent of those plantings are considered in poor or very poor shape, twice the status from the same time last year, the USDA said this week.

In Kansas, the nation's top wheat producer, 97 percent of the latest crop has germinated, but one-quarter of those plantings are considered poor or very poor. The situation is far worse in South Dakota, where intensifying conditions have allowed just 60 percent of its winter wheat to emerge, with nearly two-thirds of that crop rated in those two worst classifications.

Residents Battle High Water In Small S.D. Town

BY DAVE KOLPACK
Associated Press

WAUBAY — Standing along a South Dakota waterfront shored up with boulders, Kevin Jens peered at the placid lake and reminisced about a road that led to a popular place to fish and picnic nearby but now lies underwater after being swallowed up by rising waters.

"There's an island under there," the mayor of Waubay said, breaking into an uncomfortable laugh and pointing to a grove of dead trees jutting from the water about a mile away.

At a time when much of the Upper Midwest wrestled with the worst drought in decades, residents in this northeastern South Dakota community that sits among a chain of glacial lakes are raising roads, draining fields, moving their homes or leaving town. The dry weather has stabilized lakes, but homeowners in the town of about 550 are still dealing with a wet cycle that started in the early 1990s and has slowly gobbled up houses and land.

Waubay has seen its population drop by more than 100 since 2000, and residents fear losing the town that was founded as a railroad stop 130 years ago.

"What really makes them worry is where is our tax base and where is our revenue going to come from in the future," Jens said.

Waubay native Rick Breske said residents are "trying hard to do the best we can to deal with the situation."

"I give a lot of credit to the people who aren't picking up and leaving," he said.

Waubay is in the middle of what is believed to be a closed basin, with no natural outlet. The

10 major bodies of water in the chain are: Bitter Lake, Blue Dog Lake, Enemy Swim Lake, Hillebrands Lake, Minnewasta Lake, Pickerel Lake, Rush Lake, Spring Lake, Swan Pond and Waubay Lake.

The water has no place to go other than from one body to the next. Bitter Lake, south of Waubay, has grown from about 5 to 32 square miles in the last two decades. Waubay Lake, north of the town, has ballooned from about 8 to 27 square miles.

On a recent ride through Waubay, Jens called attention to a row of vacant, boarded-up modular homes surrounded by weeds. The 16 units were built for low-income Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe members, but residents have scattered to other communities and there are no plans to revive the development.

"Nobody has lived in here for well over a year now," said the mayor, who also grew up in the town. "It's depressing. It was beautiful down here. Kids used to play behind these houses, in nice green, cut grass."

Breske estimates the flooding has cost him as much as \$90,000, from building berms and moving rock to money lost on land. He eventually moved his house to higher ground on the west side of town.

"A lot of people took buyouts. We decided to move," he said. "We've spent a lot of money remodeling over the years and like our house."

Jens made water his No. 1 issue when he ran for mayor in 2000, but not because residents were worried about too much of it. He promised better water quality and infrastructure, and delivered with a water and sewer project

soon after being elected.

The area was facing a wet cycle, but a stretch of dry weather in the early- to mid-2000s had most residents thinking the worst was over.

"We let our guard down," Jens said.

Minor flooding hit in 2009 after a winter of heavy snow, but the major water struggles started in 2010. The main lift station has since flooded and one of the town's two motels has gone out of business. Houses have moved or been demolished or placed on stilts, and thousands of acres of farm and pasture land are underwater.

U.S. Geological Survey hydrologist Dan Driscoll said there was no way to predict the abrupt changes in the last decade. He compares the chain flooding to that of Devils Lake, N.D., though Waubay's is on a smaller scale. Devils Lake has grown from about 46,230 surface acres to more than 200,000 acres and has risen more than 30 feet in the last 20 years.

Devils Lake residents have been dealing with a steady catastrophe for two decades, and Waubay has been more of a roller-coaster ride with the worst coming in the last few years. And while Devils Lake has received more than \$1 billion from federal, state and local agencies to store water, build up roads and dikes and add a second outlet, Waubay has gotten less than \$150,000 in state and federal help.

"As far as what the future holds, obviously none of us really have that answer," said Driscoll who's based in South Dakota. "As far as advice, I guess that's not really my business, but if I lived alongside that area I certainly wouldn't count on (the water)

going down."

About 20 Waubay homes remain below the federally established minimum flood plain level of 1,810 feet above sea level and will be bought out or moved. Census figures show the estimated median house value in Waubay in 2009 was \$46,259, compared to \$126,200 statewide.

The lift station serving the southern part of town sits 25 feet below lake level, next to a road that has been raised 7 feet. The station has been reinforced with concrete so it won't become buoyant and pop out of the ground. Huge boulders surround the facility to ward off wind and waves.

The high water has brought some prosperity, with many seasonal residents from Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska spending money to flood-proof their cabin property and much of the construction work going to local firms.

Tourists also have not stayed away. Gary Peterson, owner of the town's only remaining hotel, said business is good. Outdoor enthusiasts make up half of his occupancy.

The fishing has never been better.

"Bitter Lake, for example, was just a big slough for many, many years," Peterson said. "Now it is a huge lake with walleyes in it now and the fishing is wonderful."

The lakes including Bitter Lake, which has dropped a foot, have been stabilized because of the dry weather. But that's little solace for many residents. Breske, for one, said he won't be fooled again.

"They all feel really good because it's a dry cycle and the water is going down," he said. "We've still got plenty of water. And it will rise again."

Report: S.D. Breaks Child-Protection Laws

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A new report says South Dakota has violated federal law by removing too many American Indian children from their homes and placing them in foster care with non-Indian families.

The report was approved by the state's Indian Child Welfare Act directors during a Thursday meeting. It will be sent to the tribal councils for approval before being sent to Congress.

The report is in response to a National Public Radio series last year that said the state routinely broke the Indian Child Welfare Act. Federal law requires that Native American children removed from homes be placed with relatives or put in foster care with other Native American families except in unusual circumstances.

A spokesman for Gov. Dennis Daugaard says officials could not comment because they hadn't seen the report.

Details Released On 4 Killed In Rapid City Fire

RAPID CITY (AP) — A preliminary autopsy report says a grandmother and three grandchildren killed in a house fire in Rapid City died from smoke inhalation.

The Pennington County Coroner's Office released the details on preliminary autopsy reports for 51-year-old Marcia Rock, 9-year-old Thomas Rosado, 5-year-old Dustin Rosado and 3-year-old Marquez Hawk Wing on Thursday. All four were killed after a late-night fire broke out Tuesday at their home.

Rock was pronounced dead at the scene, and the three children were pronounced dead at a local hospital.

Authorities say early indications indicate human actions may have contributed to the cause of the fire.

The American Red Cross helped 17 displaced people find a place to stay for the night. As many as 21 people may have been living in the home.

First Credit Union On S.D. Reservation Opens

KYLE (AP) — The first credit union on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota has opened its doors for business.

The *Rapid City Journal* reports that the Lakota Federal Credit Union opened Wednesday.

The low-income designation credit union is the first federally insured financial institution on the reservation and will serve approximately 40,000 people.

Tawney Brunsch, board chairman for the credit union, says staff signed up 26 new people within the first 24 hours and made their first loan.

The credit union offers a variety of financial services to the reservation's residents, including unsecured and share secured loans, auto loans, money orders, direct deposits, wire transfers and check cashing.

Lakota Federal Credit Union is sponsored by the nonprofit organization Lakota Funds.

S.D. Man Pleads Guilty To Killing Ex's Beau

RAPID CITY (AP) — A South Dakota man accused of attacking a sleeping man with a baseball bat and beating him to death has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder.

Kyle Yankton, 21, entered the plea Wednesday in federal court in Rapid City. In exchange for pleading guilty, prosecutors downgraded the charge from first-degree murder and agreed to recommend that Yankton serve from 23 to 30 years in prison. The judge could still reject the deal.

Prosecutors say Yankton entered his ex-girlfriend's house in Pine Ridge on June 30 and killed her boyfriend, Pablo Galindo Jr., 23, by beating him over the head with the bat while he was sleeping.

Lorna Galindo, of Scottsbluff, Neb., told the *Rapid City Journal* after the hearing that her oldest son was an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe who moved from Nebraska to Pine Ridge just two months before the incident to help out his grandparents.

Her son had two young daughters and was planning to attend college in the fall, with the ultimate goal of becoming a pastor, she said.

"I don't want him to be forgotten," she said. "He was a good kid."

Omaha Company Settles Over Lead Contamination

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A Nebraska metal refinery has agreed to pay \$500,000 to help cover more than \$275 million in environmental cleanup costs to rid eastern Omaha properties of lead contamination under a settlement that avoided what could have been a more costly court fight.

Aaron Ferer & Sons Co., located on the banks of the Missouri River in northeastern Omaha, will pay \$480,000 to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and \$20,000 to the state of Nebraska. The settlement was filed Monday in federal court in Omaha, along with a lawsuit that could have sought millions from the company.

The company ran a lead refining operation from 1954 to 1963

that used a blast furnace to remove impurities from the lead, which spewed lead particles into the air that settled downwind onto residential areas, according to court documents filed by the U.S. Justice Department.

Ferer, a scrap metal processor and primary metals trading company, did not admit fault for the contamination as part of the settlement.

According to the Justice Department, the Ferer settlement is the final and smallest at the Omaha superfund cleanup site, which encompasses about 27 square miles in eastern Omaha.

Last year, Omaha-based railroad Union Pacific paid a \$25 million settlement following a decade-plus fight with the government. But the EPA determined that mining company Asarco, which op-

erated a lead smelter on the banks of the Missouri River for more than a century before it closed in 1997, was the main source of lead contamination.

Asarco paid \$200 million as part of its settlement. Neither Union Pacific nor Asarco admitted fault in its settlement.

The EPA has cleaned up lead contamination at more than 11,400 properties in eastern Omaha — mostly by digging up and replacing contaminated soil — and plans to excavate about 3,600 more over the next four years. The agency has estimated the total cost of the cleanup is likely to exceed \$400 million.

The state of Nebraska receives some settlement money because it covers 10 percent of the cost of cleanup.

The EPA was first alerted to

Omaha's lead contamination problem in 1998, when the Omaha City Council asked for the agency's help after a large number of children tested positive for elevated blood-lead levels.

Since then, much of eastern Omaha has been considered a superfund site because of the extent of lead contamination, which can endanger children's health, causing decreased intelligence, slow growth and behavior problems.

Matthew Ferer, president of the company, did not return messages left Wednesday and Thursday by The Associated Press seeking comment on the settlement.

The settlement reached with Aaron Ferer & Sons will be subject to a 30-day public comment period. After that, a federal judge is expected to finalize the agreement.

Anderson

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included 19 consecutive years of All-State newspapers from 1973 to 1991.

Under his mentorship, more than 100 YHS students were earned the distinction of All-State Journalists and Photographers.

For 30 years, Anderson taught summer workshops in Brookings for the High School Press Association. He received the association's Founders' Award in 1986 and 2005, the only person to win the award twice in its 50-year history.

For his outstanding work and impact on students, Anderson received the Distinguished Service Award in 2004 from the South Dakota High School Activities Association.

YHS graduate Annie Lanning continues to use Anderson's example as a writer and teacher.

"He taught me that there is no such thing as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to teaching, writing, or living — a lesson I hope my students also take from me," she said.

YHS graduate Jacob Stewart,

who currently resides in Minneapolis, recalls spending most mornings before first period in Anderson's classroom watching "The Today Show" and chatting with the teacher about current events.

"As *Woksape* editor, he graciously offered me the opportunity to write a weekly column. My columns were always controversial and resulted in several 'chats' with the principal," Stewart said.

"I'm certain Mr. Anderson took heat for those columns, but he never once edited them for content or told me to cool off."

Anderson was known for taking home huge stacks of papers to grade each night, Stewart said.

"He could have easily lessened his nightly work load by spending less time during the day engaging students and more time grading, but that wasn't in his DNA," Stewart said. "He gave us 100 percent of his attention, 100 percent of the day."

YHS teacher Bob Beard considered Anderson both "a scholar and a gentleman."

"He served as a meaningful mentor to me, and his daily teaching was a constant reminder of how far a little 'tender, loving care' could go with all students," Beard said.

"As many of Dick's colleagues and students know, his favorite novel was O. E. Rolvaag's 'Giants in the Earth.' Sadly, the Yankton community has lost one of its giants in the earth, a good man of distinctive renown."

Yankton High School teacher Judy Tereshinski didn't have Anderson as a high school teacher while she attended YHS. However, she did have the opportunity to work with him as a classroom teacher. He tackled everything with fervor while offering a smile and word of encouragement, she said.

"He was one dedicated, passionate and professional man!" she added.

YHS graduate Allison Struck considered Anderson patient and fair, even when he still required her to do six pages of daily writing when she missed class to attend a journalism conference.

"When we put together the *Woksape* on Tuesday nights, sometimes we did not finish until midnight," she said. "He would walk us down to the school entrance and make sure we got to our cars safely. There are few teachers who put as much time and energy into ensuring their students' success."

She was one of several Yankton High School graduates who

won the Al Neuharth Excellence in Journalism Scholarship, which she said reflects his excellence in teaching.

Struck also learned from Anderson outside the classroom, often stopping at the Pantry on Saturday mornings to visit with him. After she began college, Struck continued stopping by the Pantry on weekends when she returned home. She became part of the familiar faces filling the tables.

"Mr. Anderson had a heart of gold," she said. "I came back and visited him in the classroom, at the Pantry, and in the hospital not because he expected it, but because he was one of my greatest supporters and always made time to listen."

While she excelled as a journalism student, Struck said she struggled to express Anderson's impact on her life.

"It is difficult for me to put into words just how greatly Mr. Anderson's friendship influenced my life," Struck said. "He was my teacher, mentor, newspaper adviser and, most importantly, friend."

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