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Drought Still Bearing Down

One-Fifth Of Land In Lower 48 Classified As Extreme Or Exceptional

BY JIM SUHR
AP Business Writer

ST. LOUIS — The nation's worst drought in decades is showing no sign of letting up in several key Midwest farming states, worrying farmers harvesting the summer's withered corn crop in record time that their winter crops may also be at risk.

Overall drought conditions in the lower 48 states held steady over the seven-day period ending Tuesday, with about one-fifth of the total land area in extreme or exceptional drought, the two worst classifications, according

to the U.S. Drought Monitor's weekly update of its drought map released Thursday.

Conditions worsened, though, in Kansas and Iowa, the nation's biggest corn producer, and nearly 98 percent of Nebraska was still deemed to be in one of the two worst categories.

The unrelenting dryness won't have much effect on the region's corn and soybean crops, which are already being plucked from the fields. But it could hurt other crops, such as winter wheat.

According to the map, which is put out by the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Ne-

braska in Lincoln, 75 percent of Iowa is enduring extreme or exceptional drought. That's up roughly 10 percentage points from the previous week.

Just over 93.25 percent of Kansas was in the same predicament, which was an increase of roughly 5 percentage points.

As of Monday, 54 percent of the corn crop had been brought in from the fields — the fastest pace in at least 17 years due to early planting and nearly three times the previous five-year average of 20 percent by this time, the

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Al Neuharth Media Award

Neuharth: Winner One Of My 'Best Bosses'

BY TRAVIS GULBRANDSON
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VERMILLION — When Marilyn Hagerty first met Al Neuharth in the 1940s, she never would have guessed that one day she would be a recipient of the annual journalism award that bears his name.

And, she definitely would not have guessed she would receive it "because I wrote a review of the Olive Garden."

"You just never know what's going to happen," she said.

Hagerty officially received the Al Neuharth Award for Excellence in Media in a ceremony Thursday night in Aalfs Auditorium on the campus of the University of South Dakota.

The award is presented jointly by USD and the Freedom Forum, and has been given to 25 journalists and media representatives since Walter Cronkite was its first recipient in 1989.

"My name is going right there," Hagerty said, pointing to the list of winners on the back of the award statue. "Under Katie Couric, Walter Cronkite, Garrison Keillor. And now it's going to be, 'Marilyn who?'"

Hagerty came to national prominence in March after she reviewed the Olive Garden for the *Grand Forks Herald*, a publication for which she writes five columns per week.

At USD she served for a time as editor of the campus newspaper, *The Volante*. Upon graduating in 1948, she wrote for newspapers and worked in radio, and signed on as a full-time reporter for the *Herald* in 1961 — eventually becoming its features editor.

Hagerty officially retired from the publication in 1991, at which point she became a columnist.

"It's just been a wonderful ride, and tonight, to me, is the frosting on the cake," she said. "It's the greatest honor I could imagine. I thank Al Neuharth, and I thank the University of South Dakota because it was here when I was young and I needed a place to go to school, and there were people here I could ask for help."

In turn, Neuharth thanked



Marilyn Hagerty addresses the media as Al Neuharth looks on Thursday afternoon in Vermillion. Hagerty was presented with the Al Neuharth Award for Excellence in Media on the campus of the University of South Dakota.

Hagerty Reflects On Unexpected Spotlight

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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VERMILLION — When she wrote her food column last March, Marilyn Hagerty only intended to review the new Olive Garden restaurant in Grand Forks, N.D.

To her shock, she became an Internet sensation.

The 86-year-old columnist was stunned at the reaction to her straightforward article on the franchise restaurant's menu, decor and service.

That day's article had spread far beyond her regular readership in North Dakota and western Minnesota. Like wildfire, the *Grand Forks Herald* column had drawn more than one million hits.

"They said my story went viral, but I didn't know what that meant," she said. "I called my son to see if it was a good thing."

It not only was good, but it thrust her into the international spotlight. She has appeared

on numerous television shows, including NBC's "Today" and Anderson Cooper's syndicated talk show.

She even met with renowned food personality Anthony Bourdain, initially one of her harshest critics. As a result of their meeting, she signed a contract so Bourdain could use material from her *Herald* columns.

On Thursday, Hagerty returned to her alma mater, the University of South Dakota, for yet another prestigious honor — the 2012 Al Neuharth Award for Excellence in the Media. She became the 26th person honored by the Freedom Forum and USD since the Al Neuharth Award program began in 1989.

During Thursday afternoon's press conference, Hagerty expressed modesty at her selection.

"I don't feel that I quite fit the category or the stature of people (receiving the award) before me. (Other) people in print, they do the same work I do and are worthy of this re-

ward," she said. "I see it as a recognition of the people who work at the medium-sized newspapers and who enjoy it."

Hagerty sat next to Neuharth at Thursday afternoon's press conference. The occasion marked a 65-year reunion, as Hagerty — the 1947 editor of the *Volante* campus newspaper — gave Neuharth his first writing job at the time. He used the *Volante* role to launch his career, including founder of the nation's largest newspaper, USA Today.

Unlike Neuharth, Hagerty's fame came after she was officially "retired" — and the attention was unexpectedly thrust upon her.

Her March 7, 2012, "Eatbeat" column in the *Grand Forks Herald* simply described her visit to the newly-opened Olive Garden in the city of 50,000 residents.

"In Grand Forks, it was big news. We had waited for Olive Garden for years," she said.

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KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Frank Fritz of The History Channel's hit series "American Pickers" spoke to a crowd of approximately 160 people Thursday at the NFAA Easton Yankton Archery Complex in Yankton during the inaugural Wire Me Awake conference.

Conference Puts Emphasis On Midwest Ingenuity

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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Are you a Midwesterner who believes that cool things only happen on the East or West Coast?

If so, the speakers at the Wire Me Awake conference Thursday have a message for you: Think again.

Perhaps the strongest advocate of that message at the NFAA Easton Yankton Archery Complex was 23-year-old Emma Peterson. The Des Moines, Iowa, resident is the CEO and founder of Tikly, an online event ticketing site, as well as the tour manager for indie rock band The Nadas.

"I don't like that we have to communicate that, not only do I choose to stay

in Des Moines, Iowa, but there are reasons for it," she told the crowd of approximately 160 people. "There are good, tangible reasons for why we choose to stay. It's not just because you can raise a family. It's not just because, 'Oh, the people are so nice.' It's because the people are smart. It's because the people are go-getters. It's because the people are empowered by the people they surround themselves with."

The Midwest, she said, has something "very cool" going on that perhaps many of its residents haven't even begun to see.

That was part of the point of the inaugural Wire Me Awake conference, which aimed to help small businesses and startups, creatives and community

leaders gain new insight into innovation and collaboration, leadership and risk-taking.

The organizers wanted to draw attention to people in the region who are doing unique things and get attendees thinking — and chatting — about other possibilities.

"Everyone was talking during the breaks, which is exactly what we hoped would happen," said Ben Hanten, who founded the conference with Chad Ekroth, Thomas Ritchie and Dan Specht. "The real goal was to connect people. I think that was accomplished."

Peterson said after her speech that she doesn't feel defensive about the Midwest and its reputation as "flyover country." Instead, she wants to inspire

residents here to recognize their potential.

"I don't think it matters if people on the coasts think we're super cool or that they now think they need to move to Iowa or South Dakota to start their businesses," Peterson said. "What I care about is activating the people we already have and empowering them to accomplish their goals."

"Let's focus on the land of no coasts, own it and have fun," she continued.

However, in his address to attendees, Dan Hall advised that those who see their potential being fulfilled by forming a startup company should not go in with blinders. Startups are compa-

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