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**Little Things Can Be Big On 'Make A Difference Day' USA Weekend**

# Drought May Hang On Until Spring

## Yankton Region Remains At Most Severe Drought Level

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
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The Great Plains will likely remain in drought going into next spring, South Dakota state climatologist Dennis Today said Thursday.

Today spoke at a national conference call of meteorologists, media and other interested parties. All of southeast South Dakota and northeast Nebraska remains in exceptional drought, the worst level.

"I see no way for us to resolve this drought before next spring. I don't see any way for it to happen," he said. "The soil is so dry, I don't think we can put enough moisture into it before it freezes up."

Today noted Thursday's rainfall across the Great Plains, which measured about a half-inch in Yankton. However, he said it's far too little, too late to make any difference this year.

"What we are finally beginning to see right now, it's a bit of a change to a pattern in the west that's bringing a little bit of moisture," he said. "We may get another couple of shots (this fall). I wish we would have had this moisture a month or six weeks ago. There would have been more opportunity for this to happen during the fall."

While this year's crops are long determined, any upcoming moisture would still be crucial in laying the groundwork for next spring, Today said.

"What I tell people needs to happen, we need to get another couple of (moisture) events like we're seeing now, before the soil freezes up," he said. "We really need it before we



Today

DROUGHT | PAGE 12A

## NOT GONE WITH THE WIND



JEANNINE ECONOMY/P&D

The Yankton area was raked by ferocious winds Thursday, with a peak gust of 57 miles per hour reported at Chan Gurney Airport at 1:35 p.m. Winds were clocked at 40 miles per hour or more through much of the day. It also forced some accommodations: This tractor was deployed at Cork 'N Bottle on Broadway in Yankton to help stabilize the canopy that was rocking in the violent winds. At least the strong cold front brought some rain with it, as Yankton unofficially received .45 of precipitation. Chilly and windy conditions are expected to continue today (Friday) before things settle down and warm into the 60s for the weekend. For details, see page 2B

## Pheasant Opener Looks Bright

BY DEREK BARTOS  
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For hunters throughout the region set to enjoy South Dakota's pheasant season opener Saturday, the outlook is as bright as the blaze orange vests that will soon decorate area fields.

The statewide pheasant population is estimated to be up 18 percent from last year, with population increases in the James River valley and eastward ranging from 40 to 70 percent, according to the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GF&P) 2012 pheasant brood survey.

The increase is mostly due to a mild winter and ideal weather during the nesting and brood-rearing season, said Travis Runia, senior upland game biologist with the GF&P.

"Before last winter, we had two, arguably three, pretty bad winters in a row over much of the state, and we saw populations decline each year," he said. "It seemed like each one of those years we had the bad winters, it was also followed by a cool and wet



### A Mild Winter And The Lack Of Cover Crops In The Fields Figure To Help Hunters

spring, which also suppressed the pheasant production. This past year we finally had a brown winter, and pheasants responded pretty well in most of the state."

While much of the eastern part of the state is seeing large increases in pheasant population, Yankton's "city area" numbers remained mostly unchanged, Runia said. This is likely due to a lack of

PHEASANTS | PAGE 12A

## Decision 2012

# Noem And Varilek Talk Issues In Vermillion

By The Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota Democratic U.S. House candidate Matt Varilek says Republican Rep. Kristi Noem supports tax policies that protect the wealthy and changes in Medicare that would hurt many retired people.

Noem counters that Varilek supports increasing taxes on many middle-class South Dakotans and cutting Medicare to support President Barack Obama's health care overhaul.

The two candidates for South Dakota's lone seat in the U.S. House clashed on many issues Thursday night in a debate televised



Rep. Kristi Noem and challenger Matt Varilek squared off in a televised debate Thursday at the AI Neuharth Media Center on the University of South Dakota campus in Vermillion.

statewide by South Dakota Public Broadcasting. Each accused the other of using untrue attacks in the campaign, and both sought to portray themselves as best able to understand the hopes and fears of the average South Dakotan.

Noem and Varilek have only one more scheduled debate before the Nov. 6 election.

Noem, a rancher from the Castlewood area, is seeking her second term in House of Representatives.

Varilek, a native of Yankton, is running for office for the first time.

Both candidates have made campaign appearances recently in southeastern South Dakota.

## Varilek Returns To YHS To Offer Students Insights

BY NATHAN JOHNSON  
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A unique Yankton High School (YHS) alumnus spoke with current students Thursday afternoon and encouraged them to pursue their dreams, even if they come from humble beginnings.

Democratic candidate for the U.S. House Matt Varilek graduated from YHS in 1993. He announced in December 2011 that he would run for Congress. After winning the Democratic primary, Varilek is now challenging Republican Rep. Kristi Noem for the lone South Dakota House seat in the Nov. 6 general election.

Varilek's stop at YHS came on the heels of similar visits by Noem and Sen. John Thune in recent weeks.

Recalling his high school days, Varilek told teacher Doug Haar's students that he remembered speakers coming into the classroom with interesting stories.



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Democratic candidate for the U.S. House Matt Varilek spoke with students at the Yankton High School Thursday afternoon about his decision to run for Congress and the changes he would like to see government make.

"They would tell me they came from a background kind of like mine," he stated. "What I

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