

Drainage Plans Halted In Sioux Falls

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Residents along a backyard creek in southeast Sioux Falls have halted a drainage project by showing that the city does not have access to their land.

The Sioux Falls *Argus Leader* reports that the city had planned to work on an erosion issue in the Otonka Trail area, where increased flows have cut steep banks and threaten to topple trees.

A lawyer working for residents in the neighborhood says the city has no easement rights to develop the drainage channel.

Officials with the city's public works department say they're researching the issue and plan to update residents on their plans. Department director Mark Cotter says the city wants to work with the neighborhood.

S.F. Residents Join Suit Against Colleges

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Three Sioux Falls residents are among five plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit against the for-profit colleges Globe University and the Minnesota School of Business.

The *Argus Leader* reports that the complaint was filed last week in Minnesota state court. It accuses both schools of consumer fraud, unlawful and deceptive trade practices, and false advertising.

Sioux Falls residents Sarah Beck, Melissa Beck and Reginald Holmes are plaintiffs in the suit.

The complaint says Globe deliberately misrepresented the potential value of a degree and credits from the school.

A spokeswoman for Globe says the university is saddened by the lawsuit and is committed to defending the reputations of the current students, faculty and staff.

Globe and Minnesota School of Business are owned by the same organization based in Woodbury, Minn.

Meeting Planners To Meet In Sioux Falls

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls officials are hoping that a national conference of meeting planners could help bring convention and other events to town.

The Small Market Meetings Conference that began Sunday includes about 100 people from around the country who plan corporate, government and other types of meetings.

Organization president Joe Cappuzzello tells the *Argus Leader* that planners are interested in seeing top-notch convention centers like the one in Sioux Falls.

Previous conferences were held in Shreveport, La., Little Rock, Ark., and Jacksonville, Fla. Next year the event is slated for Mesa, Ariz.

The conference wraps up Tuesday.

Neb. Drivers May Notice Pump Changes

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The options Nebraska drivers find at the gas pump are changing because of a shift in the fuel supply.

Nebraskans have been used to the mid-level 89-octane fuel with ethanol being the cheapest option. Now the regular 87-octane fuel will generally be cheaper.

The change is happening because oil companies have switched what fuel they pump into terminals in Lincoln, Omaha and Doniphan. Instead of bringing in 87-octane fuel, the oil companies are delivering 84-octane fuel.

Drivers elsewhere have likely already seen similar changes at their gas stations, but oil companies are just now making the switch in the Midwest. So gas stations in the region will be deciding over the next few months which gasoline blends to carry and what prices to charge.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension educator John Hay said either ethanol or premium gas is mixed with the lower octane fuel to make the 87- and 89-octane fuels offered at the pump.

"This sub-octane fuel needs to be blended with other fuel types to make it the 87-octane level or above we need at the pump," Hay said. "So basically, 87 with ethanol replaced the 89 with ethanol, and our low-cost option at the pump is now 87 with ethanol."

Hay said most cars will run fine on 87-octane fuel, but drivers should check their owner's manuals to be sure.

"To take advantage of higher octanes, you need a car with higher compressions, such as a high-performance sports car," Hay said.

And using 87-octane fuel shouldn't have any effect on gas mileage.

Utah Mountain Goats Released In S.D.

RAPID CITY (AP) — Mountain goats from Utah have been released in South Dakota's Black Hills.

The 22 mountain goats captured from Utah's Tushar Mountains were released as part of a study to increase the genetic diversity of South Dakota's population.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Regional Game Manager John Kanta says the goats were vaccinated, measured and tested for diseases. All yearling and adult mountain goats received ear tags.

Kanta says the mountain goats will be monitored for survival and transplant success. He says the information also will be used to enhance an aerial survey to develop estimates of the goat population.

Kanta says the Midwest Wild Sheep Foundation and the Greater Dacotah Chapter of Safari Club International provided money to help capture the mountain goats and fit them with radio collars.

Nebraska

Demand Strong For 'Angel' Tax Credit

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Demand is holding strong for a state incentive program designed to nurture startup businesses in Nebraska that cost the state more than \$2.8 million last year.

Nebraska issued the tax credits last year to investors in 22 fledgling companies, according to a new report by the Department of Economic Development. The \$2.8 million in credits was up from \$2.3 million in the program's first year. The program received 134 applications last year, an increase from 73 in 2011.

Supporters contend the credit promotes investment in high-tech startups that could lead to economic growth, but opponents have questioned whether the tax incentives work.

The report comes as Nebraska lawmakers conduct a review of both the state tax system and the tax incentives that are designed to spur economic growth. The Legislature's Performance Audit Committee is working on ways to evaluate whether the incentives work as intended. In February, the committee reported that Nebraska has no clear way to measure whether its tax incentive programs have succeeded in attracting new

businesses, or whether the businesses would have come anyway.

The incentive program is aimed at so-called "angel investors" who provide capital for risky, undeveloped businesses, often those involving new technology. In Nebraska, the tax credits have gone to software publishers in Omaha, data processing and surgical supply companies in Lincoln and a winery in Pawnee City, among others.

It awards a tax credit to an "angel" for 35 percent of the initial investment, and 40 percent if the business is located in an area that is considered economically distressed. By guaranteeing that investors will get at least 40 percent of their money back, the credit is intended to reduce their risk and boost their return if the business succeeds.

"By offering this incentive, it loosens the purse strings a little for investors," said Joe Lauber, who administers the program for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. "It certainly has been a factor in some businesses located here, but by and large, it has benefited Nebraska startups."

The department limits the amount of tax credits it approves, and once that threshold is reached, the state places investors on a waiting

list for next year, Lauber said. In 2012, the department started wait-listing companies in July. This year, they instituted the wait list in April.

"The dollar amounts for the investments are getting larger, and we keep allocating credits until we're out for the year," Lauber said.

The Angel Investment Tax Credit Act applies to individuals who invest at least \$25,000 a year in a startup businesses, or funds with at least three members who collectively invest at least \$50,000 annually. The companies need to employ 25 workers or fewer, and more than half of the employees have to conduct business in Nebraska.

The \$3 million cap is down from the \$5 million originally proposed. The Department of Economic Development is required to submit yearly reports to lawmakers and the governor specifying the number of investors and their location, the total amount invested, a breakdown of the industries that have benefited, and the number of jobs created. The law is scheduled to end in 2017 unless renewed by lawmakers.

Companies also have to stay in business at least three years, or the state reclaims the credit. At least two of Ne-

braska's neighboring states, Iowa and Kansas, offer similar tax credits.

One of the first companies to benefit was PitchBurner, a 2 1/2-year-old technology company in Lincoln that works with universities and other organizations. The tax credit helped secure investors for the startup firm who might otherwise have been reluctant, said Joseph Knecht, the managing director of PitchBurner's parent company, i2rd.

"It entices the investors to invest, which is our greatest challenge," Knecht said. "This makes it more feasible for individuals to invest in new ideas."

The law was introduced on behalf of Gov. Dave Heineman and approved by the Legislature in 2011. It came one year after a study identified a shortage of capital for high-tech startups as a weakness in Nebraska's push for economic development.

Sen. Pete Pirsch of Omaha introduced a bill last year that would have increased the cap to \$5 million. Pirsch argued that the additional money was needed to help the program succeed, but the bill has remained in committee so lawmakers could conduct a broader study of Nebraska's tax system.

Sioux Falls Showing Off To The NCAA

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls officials are hoping to convince the NCAA to bring some of its postseason events to South Dakota's largest city, which is finishing construction on an events center that's set to open next year.

This week, three representatives from the governing body of major college athletics are scheduled to tour the city's athletic venues and area colleges. Their stops will include South Dakota State and the University of South Dakota — both Division I schools.

Sioux Falls is hoping to land NCAA events like a Division I women's basketball playoff, Division I women's volleyball regional, Division II men's and women's basketball Elite Eight tournament, and others.

Sioux Falls Sports Authority Executive Director Wes Hall told the *Argus Leader* that while it's unlikely the city will be chosen when bids are announced in December, he believes Sioux Falls will give the NCAA something to think about.

"Percentage-wise, it's extremely low that we'll get anything," Hall said.

Being new to the NCAA bidding game could help Sioux Falls, an NCAA representative said, because it's

an opportunity to bring championship events to a new region.

"The goal of each sport committee is to determine first and foremost what venue and city has the most potential to put on the best experience and championship atmosphere for the student-athletes participating," NCAA spokesman Cameron Schuh said.

Hall said Sioux Falls has event experience. The city has been home to the Summit League men's and women's basketball tournaments since 2009, events that determine the qualifiers for the NCAA tournaments.

The Sioux Falls Sports Authority was founded in 2006 and has been funded largely by Sanford Health.

Neb. Court System Allows Video Hearings

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Lancaster County prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges are getting used to a new system that's allowing initial criminal court appearances and arraignments to be held via video.

The switch is allowing the hearings to be held in the Lancaster County Courthouse, rather than four miles away in a tiny courtroom connected to the county's old jail, the Lincoln Journal Star reported Saturday.

The move means officials no longer have to drive inmates from the new jail to the old one. Instead, defendants remain in the new jail and appear in court on a 32-inch TV screen.

Deputy County Public

Defender Elizabeth Elliott, who has been charged with getting defense attorneys up to speed on the changes, said the switch has gone well for the first week, and county and district judges seemed to agree.

There was some initial concern about the switch, Elliott said. From a defense attorney's perspective, there was concern that, among other things, losing in-person access could unintentionally lead defendants to underestimate the seriousness of what's going on in the courtroom.

District Court Administrator Jennifer Borgerding Kulwicki said long-range plans call for adding cameras to at least one district courtroom, as long as the initial trials go well.

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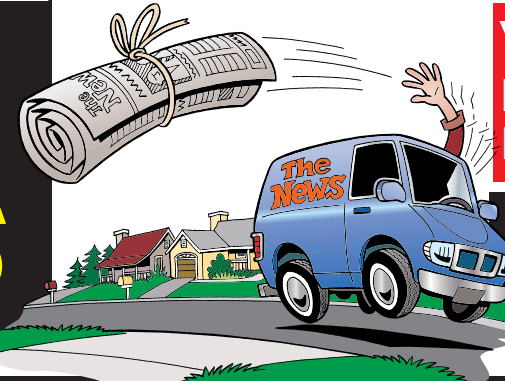
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