

Parks

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cess to boat ramps will remain open at Riverview, Pelican Point and Sutherland's Hershey Beach. Alexandria SRA will close Oct. 7 and reopen May 1.

State historical parks (SHP) that closed Monday and will reopen May 1 are: Ash Hollow, Buffalo Bill and Fort Hartsuff. Arbor Lodge SHP will close Sept. 23 and reopen April 23, and Fort Atkinson SHP will close Oct. 7 and reopen May 1.

Park areas in northeast Nebraska that are not affected by the closures include Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area and Niobrara State Park.

Even though the closures only affect Nebraska parks and the similarly named Lewis and Clark SRA isn't on the list, Van Meeteren said confusion still exists about whether South Dakota's Lewis and Clark Recreation Area remains open.

Such misunderstandings are common, he said.

"It's happened before, where (other areas) were closed, and everybody assumed that it was our park," Van Meeteren said. "A lot of times when people hear the words 'campground' and 'closing,' they associate it with us."

Adding to the confusion is the fact that both Lewis and Clark Recreation Area and Chief White Crane Recreation Area are undergoing significant maintenance projects, he said.

"People see the construction and just assume they can't camp, but they still can," Van Meeteren said.

At Lewis and Clark Recreation Area, workers are finishing up a \$1.3 million project to repair and preserve the park's roads.

Some areas have been paved, but the bulk of the work includes the placement of seal coating on the roads' surfaces, Van Meeteren said.

"Some people might hear \$1.3 million and think that's a lot for what we're doing," he said. "But we have over \$10 million worth of roads here, so you have to consider how much it would cost to replace

everything if we didn't work to preserve and maintain them for the long haul."

Van Meeteren said the park remains open, although some sites might be closed for roughly a day while the work is being done in that specific area.

"It's a pretty quick process, and it's been pretty seamless for the public," he said.

The project, which began approximately a month ago, is expected to be completed by the end of September.

At Chief White Crane Recreation Area, contractors recently began a \$200,000 electrical upgrade.

According to district park supervisor Shane Bertsch, the primary focus of the project is to replace the outdated 30-amp pedestals in the first three loops with new 50-amp pedestals.

"With all the bigger units we're seeing today — some of the campers have two air-conditioning units on them and things like that — they need a lot more power than they did in the past," he said.

Bertsch added that new primary and secondary wiring also is being installed.

"Most of the wiring was done in the '70s, so we were having a lot of ground faults," he said.

Officials are hoping to complete the project by Nov. 1, but some work might be finished in the spring.

Bertsch said. Until then, the fourth loop (sites 89-122) will be open to campers, as well as cabins 1-10, he said.

While the primary camping season is over, Van Meeteren encouraged people to visit the parks this fall and to take advantage of the fact that the areas are still open.

"The temperatures cool down at night, and it's great sleeping weather. And for the most part, you've got your choice of sites," he said. "It's just a really nice time to camp."

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Company About To Make First Space Station Run

BY MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer

A Virginia company is all set to make its first-ever supply run to the International Space Station.

On the eve of its premiere rendezvous mission, Orbital Sciences Corp. said everything looked good for Wednesday's launch from Virginia's Eastern Shore.

An unmanned Antares rocket was scheduled to blast off from NASA's Wallops Island Facility at 10:50 a.m. EDT, carrying 1,300 pounds of food, clothes and other items as part of a test flight. A Sunday delivery is planned.

A launch demo of the rocket in April went well. If this latest mission succeeds, Orbital Sciences will start launching more Cygnus cargo ships under a \$1.9 billion contract with NASA. The commercial effort began more than five years ago.

The California-based SpaceX already is shipping goods from Cape Canaveral, Fla., under a separate \$1.6 billion contract. Its first trip was in May last year.

Formally known as Space Exploration Technologies Corp., the company founded by billionaire Elon Musk of PayPal fame has the only unmanned vessel capable of returning space station items to Earth. The SpaceX Dragon parachutes into the Pacific off the Southern California coast.

The smaller Cygnus capsule will be filled with space station trash following its monthlong visit and burn up upon descent. That's the same fate as the Russian, European and Japanese supply ships.

Elevators

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heat before that, we were about out of water. If we hadn't had that 5 inches of rain in August, it would be a different story."

In stark contrast, last year's corn yields ranged from zero to 100 bushels and stood overall at about 25 percent of normal. Some bean yields ran as low as 10 bushels an acre.

RECORD FORECAST

Cutts' optimism for the current harvest is bolstered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) crop forecasts for both South Dakota and Nebraska.

The USDA has raised its yield forecast for South Dakota's corn crop while lowering its soybean yield estimate.

The average yield for the state's corn crop is forecast at 145 bushels per acre, an increase of seven bushels from the August estimate

and the second highest of record. South Dakota's corn crop is forecast to hit a record high 769 million bushels, up 44 percent from last year.

Meanwhile, the state's soybean forecast calls for yields of 35 bushels per acre, down a bushel from the August forecast but still five bushels higher than last year. South Dakota soybean farmers are predicted to produce 163 million bushels in 2013. That figure is down 3 percent from the August forecast but still the second highest of record.

According to USDA estimates, Nebraska's crops are also expected to rebound from last year's devastation.

Based on Sept. 1 conditions, Nebraska's corn crop is forecast at 1.61 billion bushels, up 24 percent from last year. Acreage harvested for grain is estimated at 9.80 million acres, up 8 percent from a year ago. Average yield is forecast at 164 bushels per acre, up 22 bushels from last year.

Nebraska's soybean production is forecast at 223 million bushels, an increase

of 8 percent from last year. The 4.75 million acres for harvest is down 5 percent from 2012. The yield is forecast at 47 bushels per acre, an increase of 5.5 bushels from last year.

Cutts doesn't foresee problems with handling a record harvest, despite media reports that storage could be a major problem at many elevators.

Farmers Elevator holds a storage capacity of 450,000 bushels. The capacity was bolstered three years ago, when two 50,000-bushel bins destroyed in a storm were replaced with 125,000-bushel bins.

"We'll be full at Mission Hill, but I don't think we have to turn anybody away," he said. "I'm not sure if we'll have extra room, but for our regular customers, we've got plenty of room. A lot of guys haven't sold ahead like they usually do, so I think we will store more than usual."

The Mission Hill elevator generally sells its corn to seven ethanol plants within a 50-mile radius, Cutts said. Its beans generally are shipped to Sioux City.

"We have pretty strong demand (for corn) from ethanol plants. I don't see it going down in the general area," he said. "They are devising new methods to take more out of the corn kernel, to make it profitable, one way or another. If they can be profitable at (the former) \$6.50 corn a bushel, they should be even more profitable with (the current) \$4.50 corn."

Soybeans prices should hold steady or possibly increase, Cutts predicted.

"Soybeans should make a push to \$12.75 and even \$13.25 a bushel," he said. "The processors want them now, and they still need beans."

A RETURN TO NORMAL

Last year found many area farmers harvesting their corn before their beans, which was unusual, Cutts said. The corn harvest was completed during early October, when the bean harvest would normally first start, he said.

This year, the region has returned to a more normal

harvest schedule, Cutts said.

"We had a later start (this year). The spring was cool and wet, and not a lot got planted," he said. "Now, we're running about a week or two later than normal. The harvest is just getting started. It will probably be two weeks before they really get into the soybean harvest."

Even an early frost shouldn't greatly hurt the corn, Cutts said.

"I think the majority of it is mature enough that a frost won't hurt it much. I think 85 percent of it will be fine," he said. "We usually get our first frost in late September, and that's usually more of a concern for the soybeans than corn."

Despite the excellent harvest prospects, the region hasn't totally pulled out of last year's drought, Cutts said. Southeast South Dakota and northeast Nebraska were classified as exceptional drought, the most severe category, with some areas running 12 inches below normal for precipitation.

This year's wet spring,

which even saw snow May 1, provided badly needed precipitation, Cutts said. In addition, he noted the Winner and Dante areas are looking at excellent yields because of July rains they don't normally receive.

This year's greatly improved conditions have lifted the spirits of area farmers, he said. "People are much more optimistic," he said.

As both an elevator manager and a farmer himself, Cutts uses a personal barometer to measure each harvest's progress.

"My wife's birthday is the 26th of September, so it's about a 50-50 chance that I'll be working with the harvest," he said.

If the harvest is well under way, does that mean a delayed birthday party for his wife?

"Nah, we'll just celebrate it in the combine," he said with a laugh.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.



- Have another person present when loading or unloading hay or equipment.
- Remove junk piles and store raw materials safely.
- Establish an emergency water supply of at least 2,500 gallons.
- Never permit smoking in barns or near any flammable materials.
- Fuel should never be stored inside a building.
- Learn basic first aid and CPR techniques.
- Review and enforce basic safety rules for employees and family members, and set the example by following them yourself.

We are grateful to our nation's farmers for the important role they play in supporting our economy and prosperity. Farmers face a variety of challenges every day, and we want them to be safe and healthy always!

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