

## Issues to work out before drilling continues

When the ultra-liberal Obama administration advocates opening up whole new oceans to offshore drilling, you know we need the oil. So what do we do now?

Good question. The spill, already big, will get bigger before oil-company officials find a way to shut it off. The gusher, which killed 11 and eventually sank the drill rig Deepwater Horizon, is pouring around 5,000 barrels of crude oil a day into the Gulf of Mexico.

As oil disasters go, it's big, maybe as big as the Exxon Valdez grounding in Alaska in the 1980s. Coastal towns and fishermen there say they're still dealing with the effects of that spill.

But apparently it could be much bigger. British Petroleum officials estimate the well's total flow at 40,000 to 60,000 barrels per day. The company thinks the blowout preventer, a valve designed to shut down an out-of-control well, may be working, just leaking a little. At 50,000, the spill would be 10 times bigger than it already is.

At the current rate, it will take nearly two months to equal the size of the Exxon spill, and experts still expect to have it shut down by then. The company has been using remote-control submarines to try to shut valves, tweak equipment and control the well at the wellhead, but that is 5,000 feet under the surface.

The firm tried to lower a containment dome over the well over the weekend, but it's another world down there, literally. It's dark, cold and the pressure is enormous. Natural gas turns to slush under those conditions, or worse yet, combines with water to form a kind of ice.

It was the hydrate crystals formed by the gas that gummed up the dome, keeping it from working. Slushy gas, expanding as it rose up the pipe, blew out the well and destroyed the drill platform.

The company has another dome ready to go and might shoot junk, ground up tires and the like, into the blowout preventer to jam the valve. Maybe one of its plans will work.

So right now, there's no thought of "Drill, baby, drill," despite what the administration was saying just a few weeks ago about expanded offshore drilling.

British Petroleum – the firm's U.S. operations used to be Amoco, or American Oil Company, originally was Standard Oil Co. of Indiana – already is paying claims for loss of income along the Gulf, but thousands more will come in. It's an economic and ecological disaster.

But what for the future? We still need more oil, no matter what. We'll have to open up those drilling areas. But first we need to understand what happened on the Deepwater Horizon and why the blowout occurred. We need to know how to change drilling methods to prevent a repeat.

We need to study rig safety and formulate techniques to deal more quickly with the next blowout. We need to understand the special problems and issues of drilling in ever-deeper water. In short, we need to learn a lot.

Drill, baby, drill? Not so fast. First we have issues to work out.

But we still need oil. Even the president agrees.

– Steve Haynes

## Praising Eisenhower

As we wrap up the last of our packing and get ready to head east, we wanted to thank you and all of the staff at Eisenhower Elementary School for everything you all have done for our children.

Our kids loved that school and it will be tough to find the same level of quality in their next school than they had here at Eisenhower Elementary School.

Overall, everyone was great with our kids and really gave them a great foundation of academic excellence to build upon.

But we want to single out the ECD staff and sing their praises! The difference they made with Andrew and Asher was amazing and we can't say enough good things about the ECD program at Eisenhower Elementary School and the staff there. You and your staff have our heartfelt thanks and respect.

Eisenhower Elementary School was a big part of why we tried to stay in this community for as long as we did, and I do



think it was a worthwhile thing to do.

Just watching how great our kids have done in school and seeing how far Andrew and Asher have come is proof that it was worth our efforts.

We are sad that those efforts are no longer enough and that we have to move, but you guys have given our kids some great tools to work with in the upcoming school year.

Thank you all for the positive difference you made in the lives of our kids,

Joe and Brandy Leroux  
Norton

Letters to the Editor:  
e-mail [ebradley@nwkansas.com](mailto:ebradley@nwkansas.com)  
or write 215S. Kansas Ave. 67654

### Office hours:

8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.  
Phone: (785) 877-3361  
Fax: (785) 877-3732  
E-mail:

[nortontelegram@nwkansas.com](mailto:nortontelegram@nwkansas.com)

### STAFF

Dana Paxton.....general manager  
advertising director/  
email: [dpaxton@nwkansas.com](mailto:dpaxton@nwkansas.com)  
Dick Boyd.....Blue Jays sports  
Erica Bradley.....managing editor  
Harriett Gill.....society editor  
Sherry Hickman.....bookkeeping/circulation  
Vicki Henderson.....computer production



THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654. Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002



## Books, other materials needed

Dear Editor, The Kansas Association of School Librarians is partnering with Gary LaGrange to support the Help us Learn...Give us Hope project. As a member of KASL,

I am collecting books and materials for U.S. soldiers to deliver to Iraq and Afghanistan school children.

Used school supplies being discarded by students at the end of the school year can be sent to these children.

Crayons, pencils, notebooks partially used, glue, rulers, calculators, erasers,



backpacks, etc. will be accepted.

New items are also greatly appreciated. Items can be left at either Eisenhower Elementary school or Norton Community

High school.

Information on this project can be found at <http://helpuslearngiveushope.org>

If you are discarding the used supplies your child brings home at the close of school, please consider donating to this charity.

I would like to conclude this drive June 1.

Jane Burton  
USD 211 Librarian

## I learned something new

I learned something new this weekend. If you want/need something done...ask.

If you've followed the Plotts family saga for any time at all, you know that our house remodel is "a work in progress."

You also know that I am expecting a long-time friend, Galene, to stay with me for a few days to attend our 45th high school class reunion.

What you don't know is that, until Saturday, I didn't exactly have a place for her to sleep. Oh, we had a spare bedroom, but it had slowly, over the years, turned into a storage room. Come on, admit it. You might have one of those in your house.

Anyway, my goal has been to make it guest-ready. And, Saturday was "D-Day." Right after breakfast I asked Jim and son, James, "Could you guys, please, give me 45 minutes of your time before you start your day?"

"To do what?" was their first question.

As innocently as I could sound, I replied, "Just carry the boxes in the east room to the basement. Shouldn't take long at all."

Well, two hours later it was done. The basement is not a pretty sight, but the

## Out Back Carolyn Plotts



bedroom is empty, except for the bed that was hiding in there and some sheet rock needed to finish the ceiling and one wall. At least, I see the possibility of Galene having a private room during her visit.

– ob –

Jim has been wanting me to wean the calves off the bottles and teach them to drink from a bucket for two weeks.

My hesitation: I had a friend with two little girls who wanted to help feed them. And it's not nearly as much fun to pour milk into a bucket as it is to hold a bottle for a hungry calf. So, I vowed to keep the calves on the bottle for a few more days.

The girls came and fed the calves and were duly excited by the whole thing. For an added bonus they got to "pick the

eggs" too. And, take the eggs home to eat for breakfast. They thought they had a great time. I guess if our own grandkids can't be here, we'll just "rent-a-kid."

– ob –

Speaking of the calves, Jim has made the cutest little stanchion apparatus for them. It has four openings with a "feed bunk" in front. Holes have been cut for milk buckets to set in. This way, each will get the proper allotment and one can't "hog up" while another gets less.

They each have their own personality. April and Junior are the most aggressive. May is right behind them, but Julio, who was very weak when he came to us, still stands back. He needs a little protection and the stanchions guarantee he will get his fair share.

– ob –

This has been a wet spring and flowers are popping. Tulips are almost done and iris is starting to bloom. Roses are budding and spirea is full-blown.

The only down-side is there may not be any cutting flowers left by Memorial Day.

It could be land office sales for the florists and greenhouses.

## Overall optimism

### Insight

John Schlageck

One thing is somewhat certain; this year's Kansas wheat harvest will be early. Some producers will probably pull a machine in the field sometime around June 7.

Overall soil moisture remains good across Kansas. The only really dry areas are in extreme southwestern Kansas and east along the Oklahoma border.

Few disease problems exist at this time although the tour group found some rust and a little bit of mosaic in the southern tier counties of the state. With continued cool weather and moisture in some regions of the state, rust could become a real problem.

Today's Kansas producers keep a close watch on the possibility of disease in their wheat fields. Still, when faced with the disease problems they have to consider carefully the decision of fungicide usage and weigh the difference between additional costs and return.

Two significant differences in this year's crop were apparent on this year's Wheat Quality Tour, Nelson says.

Those acres during the regular planting period seem to be doing well – great tillering, large heads in some cases and

tremendous potential.

On the other hand, those wheat acres planted late, generally because of a wet fall are behind in maturity.

The crop is shorter and Nelson believes the yield potential will be also be less than the crop that went in on time.

Some producers were asked if they planted all the acres they wanted last fall and most replied, "No."

"That may be one reason we saw a drop-off in acres planted from 9 million in 2009 to 8.6 million this year which is the lowest number of acres in Kansas since 1957," Nelson says.

"We're a long way from putting this crop in the bin however, if this crop can get one more good drink and temperatures remain cooler the upside potential for this wheat crop looks good."

How good?

No one knows until the last combine leaves the last field and the crop is safely in the bin. Nelson predicts that like any typical Kansas year, yields will vary from 20-bushels-per-acre and less all the way to 80-bushels-per-acre and more.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.