

Colorado releases water, but lake will not be drained

By Tom Betz
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Water is draining out of Bonny Reservoir north of Burlington to replay Colorado water debts to Kansas and Nebraska, but the release will not drain the lake as had been rumored.

"As far as draining Bonny, that is not what is happening," said Steve Ronshaugen, acting area manager for the Bureau of Reclamation area office in Grand Island, Neb., on Tuesday.

"We received an order on Monday from the Colorado state engineer to begin releasing up to 2,200 acre feet of water. This is being done in compliance with Colorado water law."

Ronshaugen said the release began on Tuesday at a rate of 50-55 cubic foot per second, and estimates it will take three weeks to bring the lake level down to about 9,800 acre feet. Before the release, the lake was 19.25 feet below the normal level and after, officials said, it should be 21.25 feet below normal, down about two feet.

He said Bonny Reservoir held about 12,000 acre feet after the win-

ter. It will be brought down to the level it was last year, about 9,800 acre feet.

Howard Paul, Bonny Park Manager, said Thursday the two-foot drop will make it hard to use the boat ramp in about three weeks, but hand launches boats will be allowed. He said shore fishing will be open.

He said fishermen are catching catfish and walleye, which have remained stable despite the lower water levels, but the crappie, white bass and wiper numbers have fallen off.

"They are still catching all of those species," he said. "There have been some very nice bass caught this week."

Ken Knox, chief deputy state water engineer for Colorado, said Tuesday the office ordered the discharge partly because of a 1998 lawsuit by Kansas.

"We are taking the action to help meet our Republican River compact compliance with Nebraska and Kansas," Knox said. "It will help... to draw Bonny Reservoir down to the level it was last year. The compact is a contract, and we intend to meet our obligations."

"The unfortunate issue is the natural drought that has caused the decline in reservoir levels. We are coming out of the drought, and can say we hope to refill Bonny after we have complied with the compact."

"We have a ways to go." The Republican River Compact, signed by Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas in 1942, specifies how the three states will divide water in the basin. The annual compact meeting in August will review how each state has done in compliance with the compact rules.

The Prairie Dog, Sappa and Beaver creeks in Sherman County are part of the Republican River system. Bonny Reservoir is on the South Fork of the Republican above St. Francis and north of Burlington.

The 1998 Kansas lawsuit, which went to the U.S. Supreme Court, claimed the increasing number of wells in Colorado and Nebraska were sapping the river and its tributaries, resulting in overuse by the upstream states. The compact accounts come due at the end of the year, and Nebraska and Colorado expect the numbers to show they're using more water than they should.

A big reason is the drought that has plagued Colorado's eastern plains for more than seven years.

"We've been in deficit every year," said Mike King, deputy director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. "We need to come up with a long-term solution."

Colorado's share of the Republican River dropped to 25,000 acre feet of water a year after the drought hit. The state's annual use has ranged from about 35,000 to 37,000 acre feet, Knox said.

An acre foot of water is about 326,000 gallons, or enough for two households for one year.

Bonny Reservoir was completed on May 4, 1951, at a cost of \$13 million. The dam was dedicated on June 1, 1952.

Couple plan their wedding

Tara Brooke Neitzel of St. Francis and John Simmonds of McDonald plan to be married on Sept. 1.

They will be having in a fall-garden wedding at Goodland's historic Gulick-Cooper House, which was the life-time home of the bride's great-grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. A.C. Gulick.

The bride to be, a graduate of St. Francis Community High School, received a degree in general studies from Fort Hays State University in May. She has been employed at Little Sprouts Preschool in Hays.

Miss Neitzel is the daughter of Karen Neitzel of St. Francis.

The groom-elect, a 2003 graduate of Cheylin High School, went on to attend Fort Hays State Uni-

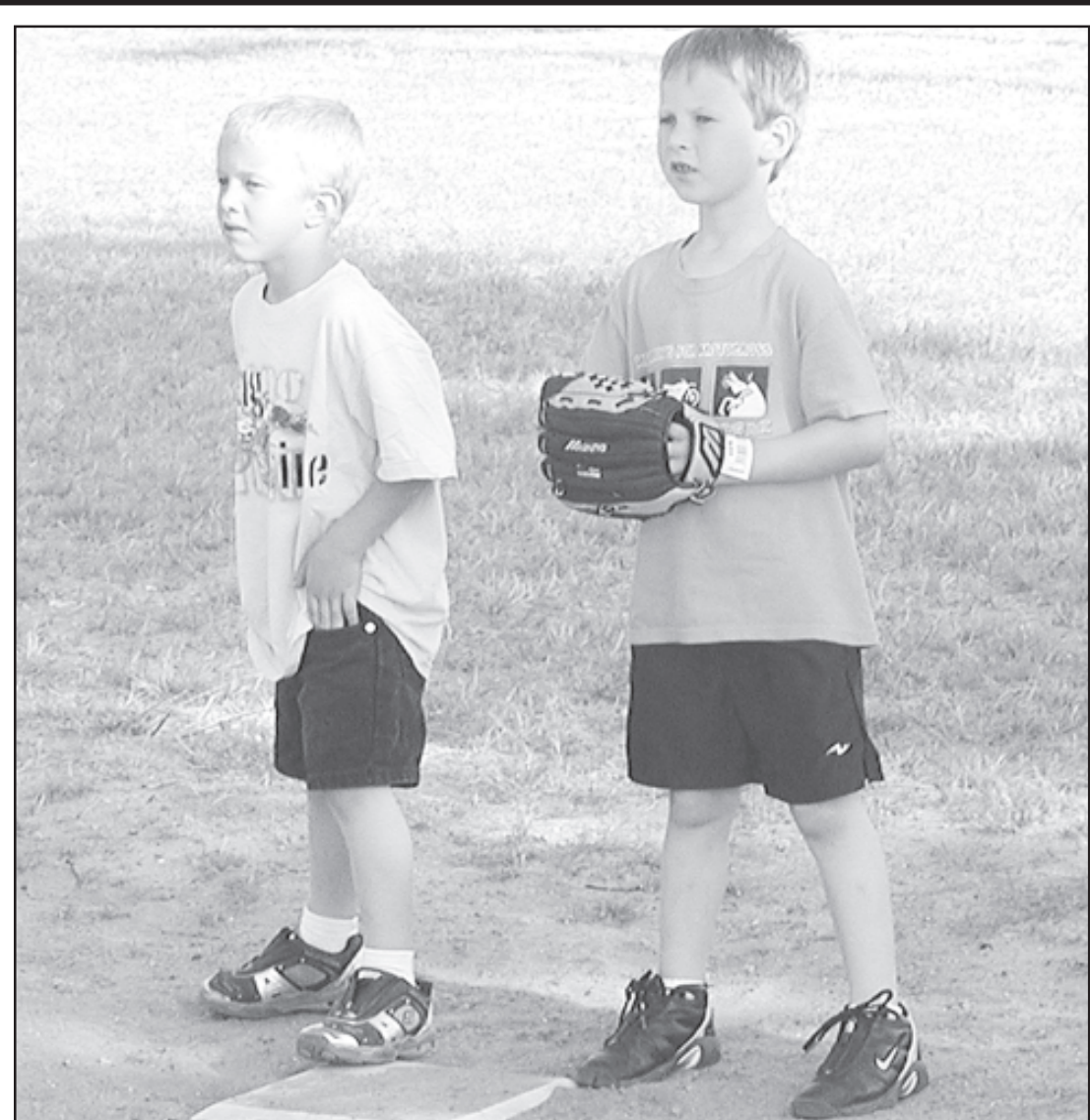


Neitzel — Simmonds

versity as a communications major and was active in the university's theatre activities. He is employed at NEW in Hays.

He is the son of Kelly and Diane Simmonds of McDonald.

Check out the couples website www.theknot.com/ourwedding/TaraNeitzel&JohnSimmonds.



T-BALL HAS STARTED — Cody Baxter, left, waits for a hit and Draven Houtman protects the base.

Herald staff photo by Betty Jean Winston

Family celebrates many birthdays

A backyard dinner party was held at the home of Chris and Lara Firman in Denver on May 25 celebrating the birthdays of Linda Gutsch and Lance Gutsch. Others helping them celebrate were Wilma Lampe, Barb Stevanson of Austin, Texas, Annie and baby Gatsby Gutsch, Larry Gutsch, Leah Gutsch and Mike Lehrburger and baby Ella Grace Firman.

The next day, Barb and Wilma were joined by Gina and Afton Krien and the four flew on to Seattle, Wash., to the home of Dennis and Debbie Floyd.

A big surprise birthday party was carried out on Saturday evening in honor of Debbie's 50th birthday. Debbie's family from Houston, Texas, also arrived along with about 50 local guests to surprise Debbie and join in the festive catered celebration.

Then on Monday, the 28th, a birthday barbecue shrimp supper was held at the Floyd's to celebrate Barb's birthday.

Tuesday, the 29th, the four ladies went on a drive in the Cascades to Leavenworth, Wash., a Bavarian-style village for a Bavarian lunch

and sightseeing. Upon returning to Seattle in the evening, a big surprise birthday party was set up and waiting for them as it was Wilma's birthday. A balloon bouquet, flowers, gifts and grilled steaks with all the trimmings were enjoyed by 15 family members around a long dining room table. A cake with candles (too many to count!) and ice cream topped off the meal.

In all, five family birthdays that occur the last weeks of May were celebrated, along with enjoyingsome daytime sightseeing adventures.

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Honor Roll - Grade point avg. 3.0

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