

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Dialogue needed for Kansas water

From The Hays Daily News

Kansas should watch Colorado and other Western states carefully as they figure out how to manage scarce water resources, which is a scenario facing our state.

Colorado, for one, is taking a new approach to ... the tug-of-war between fast-growing metro areas thirsty for water and other groups protective of water for farming and recreation.

Kansas does not have this dynamic, because its metro areas generally have water. The population density is in the eastern part of the state, where water is relatively plentiful.

Still, Colorado's experiment explores a rather radical approach: Getting residents of different water basins to dialogue and potentially broker existing water. The Colorado legislature last year passed a law that set up the process. Now lawmakers are debating a charter that provides for compacts between water users and providers.

Colorado, not so incidentally, also has another issue, and that is the demand for water from Kansas and nine other downstream states. That conflict has led to litigation brought by Kansas.

While the disparity of water needs seems far less severe in Kansas, some of the same disagreements exist. We have, for example, a clash of interests between recreational and municipal, and between irrigation farmers and, well, just about everyone else.

We also have had occasion to consider the possibility of transferring water across river basins.

The dialogue between diverse water interests should happen in Kansas, too.

But Kansas may have a problem that Colorado does not. We don't know about Colorado, but by the way the aquifer is declining clearly in Kansas, the state over-appropriated water rights.

In western Kansas seems to be a situation where the state not only must refrain from issuing new water rights, but it needs to retire some of what already has been issued.

That is one way Kansas must attack its water issue. Meanwhile, getting different water interest groups together would seem extremely constructive.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail [jvanostrand@nwkansan.com](mailto:jvanostrand@nwkansan.com) or [pdecker@nwkansan.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansan.com).

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## I know it's not mine, but should it be?

I need your help.

I am trying to be as honest and moral about the situation I have been in the past three weeks.

My kids and I were walking to a Colby High baseball game in early April and I found a wallet on the ground. The wallet had some valuables in it and identification of who I thought owns the wallet. When I returned home after the game, I called the person in the Colby phone book that had the same name as in the wallet. Whoever answered said nobody is missing a wallet and did not know who it was even though the last name matched.

Strangely, the organizations behind the identification did not help either. I was told personal information about the person are not kept or released without the approval of the person.

The next day at work, I put in the typical classified ad for finding such an item. I just wanted the person who owned it to call me at work and correctly describe the items to avoid giving it to the wrong person. No one called me.

I did get a call at home from a person, who I already knew, was missing their wallet. But I knew the wallet I had did not belong to that person.

After the classified ad ran, I called the Colby Police Department and asked if anyone had told them of a missing wallet. The officer said they



**John Van Nostrand**

#### • Line in the Dust

did not have any reports of a missing wallet at that time.

So the wallet still sits unclaimed.

I've been in this situation before. While in high school, I found a wad of cash in the grocery store I worked at. I took the cash to the customer service desk hoping the owner would eventually realize the money was gone and would trace it back to the store. But the owner never came back to the store. Store management eventually agreed to let me have the money. The timing was good - paying for Christmas shopping was easy that year.

I have known of others finding things. One year on a family vacation, my dad found a purse at Flintstone's. (It is a neat amusement park in South Dakota based on the classic television cartoon). He quickly took the purse to the front desk and was eventually claimed.

## What goes up



**Jay Kelley**

#### • Speaking MyMind

Isn't it interesting and a little frightening when you actually think about how quickly we have become used to nearly \$3 gasoline? The first time fuel prices shot up there was a hue and cry, but now we are become used to it, so there is less complaining.

That is not to say we aren't making adjustments. Several friends have recently bought smaller cars and those of us who can't trade for whatever reason are driving less and walking more.

I find myself driving below the speed limit on the Interstate these days because my car gets much better mileage at 60-65 than at 70. Most of my old friends don't believe I could ever drive that slow (there was a time when I considered 70 slow) but I guess middle age will do that.

Of course, several Congressmen are vowing investigations into the profits of big oil which will probably have the same results of most congressional investigations.

The big guys will pay some small fines and Congress will pass laws with the purpose of keeping greed in check that will instead put the little guys out of business and effectively give the big guys an even bigger share.

Oh, and the Congressmen will get to brag about being tough on corporate greed while prices continue to go through the roof.

Oil prices aren't going down anytime soon for a couple of reasons. First, there is too much demand and too little production and refining ca-

capacity. Refining capacity is an especially big problem in America where no one wants one of those smelly things in their backyard, but everyone wants one in someone else's.

Even if we had the refining capacity to handle the surges, there is not enough production capacity to handle projected increases in demand over the next several years and, since some people make money by betting on future purchases of a product, the prices will continue to rise.

Is price gouging going on? I would bet on it. I can't think of a time in history when someone wasn't making more than an honest buck off someone else's misfortune or need.

However, price gouging isn't the entire problem. Besides the production and refining limits, there is the gluttony of the United States. In 2003, the latest figures I was able to get quickly, we consumed more than one-fourth of the world's oil production and more than three times as much as the next country in line.

My dad has found various things while on the job. He once found a necktie in perfect condition and gave it to me.

It is tempting to take the valuables in the wallet and use it for my own benefit. But I just can't bring myself to do it because I know it's not mine. So how long do I leave the wallet alone? Murphy's Law is after the valuables have been used, the owner will show up.

Maybe I'm supposed to keep the wallet as a reminder for me not to get greedy?

What more can I do to find the owner?

Congratulations to Colby Community College and the committee behind creating the lecture series for another great, diverse year of speakers. (See our front page stories about the last speaker of the year and the work behind scheduling those people.)

When I first heard of the lecture series, I could only think of the public relation savvy behind it all. The lecture series adds a level of intellect to the college. Committee member Cathy Gordon said it also informs some of the speakers. She said some people asked to speak have no clue where Colby is on the map.

Now they do.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Those figures are three years old, but they are probably not very far off in terms of our place among world consumers. China may have surpassed Japan as number two, but I suspect we are still number one in oil consumption.

We are still among the great producers, but we are also among the great consumers. We have families with more gas-guzzlers than people and our manufacturers tout larger engines, more power and four-wheel-drive, but they don't say much about economy.

Perhaps equally important, but not as often considered, is our trade deficit and the whole concept of free trade. How much oil consumption in other countries is for the purpose of manufacturing goods for Americans to consume?

Also, how many foreign companies have the jump on us in building economical cars because they can cut wages and we can't (and shouldn't). Americans still build the best cars in the world and the Japanese must know it or they wouldn't build their larger cars here.

High oil prices combined with a destructive trade deficit and an equally bad stance on free trade are destroying our economic infrastructure.

We are fast becoming the prodigal son and when the money runs out, so will the friends.

Jay Kelley is a local minister and writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is [jkelly@st-tel.net](mailto:jkelly@st-tel.net).

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• Bruce Tinsley



### Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

