

**Weather Corner**



**Tonight...**Mostly cloudy. Lows in the lower 20s. West winds 10 to 15 mph.  
**Friday...**Mostly sunny. Breezy. Highs in the lower 40s. North-west winds 15 to 25 mph. Friday night...Mostly clear. Lows in the lower 20s. West winds around 10 mph.  
**Saturday...**Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 40s. West winds 10 to 15 mph. Saturday night...Partly cloudy. Lows around 13.  
**Sunday and Sunday night...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 30s. Lows around 18.  
**Monday and Monday night...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 40s. Lows in the lower 20s.  
**Tuesday through Wednesday...**Partly cloudy. Highs around 50. Lows in the lower 20s.  
 Wednesday's, low, high: -1, 34

# Conservation reserve burning window opens

By Tom Betz  
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The skies over Sherman County could be a bit more smoky over the next two months as farmers burn off about 7,500 acres of Conservation Reserve Program lands under federal regulations, county commissioners learned on Thursday.

Dennis Mote, county executive director for the U.S. Farm Service Agency; Fred Wedel, district conservationist for the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service here; and Ted Houser, conservationist from Wallace County, met with the commissioners to explain the burning program and what to expect.

Mote said the burning, part of a program to enhance the grass mixture on the land, should make the plantings more vigorous.

Conservation Reserve land is taken out of production and leased to the government to prevent erosion. Farmers can plant trees or native grass.

He said the federal program sets Feb. 1 through April 15 as the time to do the burning, but it is up to the county commissioners to declare a burn ban because of drought or dry weather.

"We abide by their decision," Mote said, "and we would reschedule those for a different year.

We have approximately 7,500 acres this year and the total over the next four or five year is in the range of 21,000 acres."

Mote said across the county, the burn program would involve about 39 farms and that some of those might have multiple fields. He said that is a few of the roughly 920 farms in the county.

He said Sherman County has just over 60,000 acres in Conservation Reserve land, and they will be burning about 12 percent of that each year. He said that is just a fraction of the 519,064 acres of total crop land in the county.

"It is a burn that is going to be conducted in as controlled a situation as possible," Mote said, "but we know what happens when you strike a match. We know people will do their best to keep the fires from getting away.

"We encourage farmers to do burn plans with the help of the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and to have their fire

breaks done."

Mote said aerial maps of the areas to be burned are available from the district office, and that the county is flown and photographed every year — usually in August — to be as current as possible.

He said there are some regulations for fire breaks, but that a farmer can clean till up to 30 feet around the area and can mow an area of up to 300 feet wide as short to the ground as possible to keep the fire from getting away.

"A burn plan is a good tool to have," Mote said.

"That way people come out and look at the situation to consider things that might not be thought about."

He said another thing that helps is neighbors helping neighbors, especially if there are several in an area who have to burn.

Wedel said the Conservation Service can help with the burn plans. He said the grass mixture is

for rare and declining short-grass prairie habitat. He said the areas to be burned are as small as a pivot corner, about 25 acres, up to a quarter section of 160 acres.

"The burn is required because of the types of grasses," Wedel said, "and it encourages the growth of the grasses, which is a benefit to wildlife."

He said the service wants to help make the burns safe.

"We have to follow state and local regulations," Wedel said, "which gets us to the county and the burn permits required.

"As a federal agency, we need to be mindful of those requirements and we wanted the county commissioners to understand the burn program."

He said if a farmer contacts his office, they will help him write a detailed burn plan.

"We will go out and look at the field and estimate the fuel load and what might be out there, like overhead power lines, under-

ground phone junction boxes and what neighboring fields might be involved.

"We include fire breaks and what is required. We include information about wind direction, temperature, soil moisture requirements and who needs to be notified.

"In recent years, we had delayed the burns because of the dry conditions, but as we had good spring and winter moisture last year, we need to get these contracts back on schedule."

Wedel said his office can provide help with aerial maps of an area even if the farmer doesn't ask for a detailed burn plan.

"These maps can help if the farmer asks the fire department to come out and inspect the area before a burn," he said.

The Department of Agriculture offices are at 210 W. 10th, Goodland. The phone is 899-3070 for both Mote and Wedel (extension 35).

## Decatur County to implement E911 addresses

By Kimberly Davis  
 kldavis@nwkansas.com

Letters with the new addresses for most people in rural Decatur County under the Emergency 911 system should be in the mail within the next 10 days, county officials say.

The goal is for the Postal Service to start using the new addresses by the end of February for the beginning of March, said Commissioner Ralph Unger.

Mr. Unger said the letters will tell people in the county what their new address is and give them a place to call if they have any questions.

For months now, the commissioners and Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman have worked on maps for the 911 system, which includes re-addressing all rural homes and some businesses, plus a few in town.

Basically, anyone receiving mail at a rural route will receive a new address.

Mr. Unger said people will have to let anyone they have written

correspondence know that they have a new mailing address. For example, senders of magazines, bills and newspapers which people receive in the mail will need to be notified. So will relatives, friends and people who send Christmas cards.

Oberlin Postmaster Steve Schultz said people with new addresses won't have to fill out a change of address form, but should let people they get mail from know about the change.

For people who receive *The Oberlin Herald* in the mail, said Managing Editor Kimberly Davis, it can take two to three weeks to start receiving the paper at a new address because the labels are printed in advance and sent to the printing plant in Goodland.

One of the reasons the county is implementing the new addresses, said Mr. Unger, is to improve Emergency 911 service. With this system, he said, if someone on a cell phone calls in with an emergency, the computer in the dispatch office can pinpoint where the call came from.

### What does E911 do?

With this system, if someone on a cell phone calls in with an emergency, the computer in the dispatch office can pinpoint where the call came from.

Another thing that prompted this change, he said, is that a lot of businesses won't ship or deliver items to homes with rural route addresses or post office boxes without some hassle. With the change, he said, there won't be any rural route addresses.

Basically all of the north-south roads in the county will be numbered and be called roads. Those will start at 100 and work up to 2900.

The east-west roads will be known by letters and be called lanes. Some of the lanes will have a single letter and some double letters, from A to CC.

The lower letters and numbers will start in the south and west part of the county and increase as you go to the north and east.

The road on the western county line will be known as Rawlins Road on the Decatur County side, while the road on the eastern county line will be known as the Norton Road on the Decatur County side.

## Kansas conservatives concerned about carbon tax proposal

TOPEKA (AP) — Energy legislation already opposed by environmentalists is drawing criticism from some legislators and conservative groups because it would impose a new carbon tax on utilities failing to meet new emissions standards.

The legislation, identical bills before the House and Senate utilities committees, would allow the construction of two coal-fired power plants in southwest Kansas. But it also would set the state's first rules on carbon dioxide emissions, which many scientists link to global warming.

The CO2 standards would apply to new power plants, and utilities that failed to meet them would pay a tax of \$3 on each ton of excess emissions. The legislation would make Kansas among a handful of states to set limits on greenhouse gas emissions.

Critics, including Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, argue that the rules would be so weak that utilities would have no trouble complying without reducing emissions. They also have said companies that have had projects blocked in other states would be encouraged to build them in Kansas.

But some legislators, particularly conservative Republicans, don't want to impose any carbon tax. The Kansas Chamber of Commerce, the state's largest business group, has said it worries a tax would hurt the economy, and it has been joined by anti-tax groups such as Americans for Tax Reform and Americans for Prosperity.

"It's not a precedent that Kansas ought to be setting," Alan Cobb, director of Americans for Prosperity's Kansas chapter, said Wednesday. "California doesn't even have a carbon tax."

The bills were drafted by the chairmen of the two committees and their top Democrats. Both committees continued hearings Wednesday.

The House committee plans to vote Friday, which would allow a debate in that chamber next week. But the Senate committee won't vote until next week so members have more time to ask questions about it, Chairman Jay Emler said.

Emler, a Lindsborg Republican, said if the legislation faces criticism on the same issues from both the right and the left, "It might be the right solution."

House committee Chairman Carl Dean Holmes objected to the description of the proposal as a carbon tax. He said it's a penalty for utilities that don't meet emissions standards.

"I figured we'd have grumbling from both sides," the Republican from Liberal said. "That's not un-

expected."

Environmentalists continued their efforts Wednesday to derail the legislation. About 60 of them had a Statehouse rally to criticize the measure and call on the committees to abandon it in favor of measures they consider more friendly to the environment.

Bob Eye, a Topeka attorney who represents the Sierra Club, said there are some advantages in legislators not acting. He noted a new president takes office in January and predicted that person would embark on new policies to combat global warming by regulating CO2 emissions.

"Carbon taxes are going to be a part of our future, because we want to discourage the use of fossil fuels," he said after the rally.


But Americans for Tax Reform sent an e-mail to legislators this week, arguing that the carbon tax would do "irreparable harm."

### Thomas County Wellness Fair

Thursday, February 7, 2008 ~ 5-7 p.m.  
 Colby Community College Union

Health and wellness booths, area physicians explaining lab results, guest speakers discussing the genetics of cancer and screening guidelines, and activities for children. **Registration cost only \$5.** Children admitted free with a paying adult.

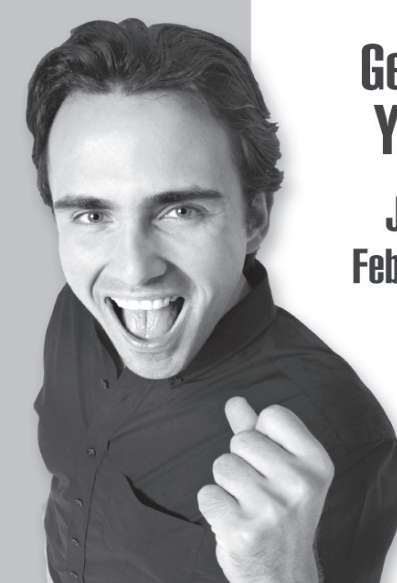
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