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Rain helping harvest

By Jan Katz Ackerman
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Area professionals are keeping a close eye on the weather and predict more moisture is on the way.

"There is some good news on the horizon," said Jerry Killingsworth, meteorologist with Goodland-based National Weather Bureau.

Killingsworth said the months of June through August are "typically the wettest months of the year" and northwest Kansas can expect more moisture in the near future.

"We just got done with a La Nina cycle and that influences the global climate and is connected to lower precipitation, so since we just finished that cycle precipitation is likely to increase," Killingsworth said.

La Nina stands for below normal sea surface temperatures on the Pacific Coast, Killingsworth said. He said the end of the La Nina cycle, coupled with moving into the wetter months, the outlook is good for an improvement of drought conditions.

Killingsworth monitors precipitation levels through data provided by the Climate Prediction Center in Washington, D. C. He said moisture in the Colby area is below normal for the year, but recent rains have improved the drought situation.

Moisture levels in and east of Colby increased this past weekend, with some weather stations reporting large amounts of rain. Thursday, Friday and Saturday totals included from less than an inch at Goodland with .63 inches; Colby with 1.08 inches to Norton Dam receiving 5.05 inches of rain. Lenora reported 4.98 inches, followed by Hoxie with 4.01 inches; Hill City with 3.41 inches and Quinter with 3.16 inches, according to the National Weather Bureau at Goodland.

"From January through April, Colby had 2.04 inches of precipitation," he said. "The normal is 3.97 inches for the year. That's not even half, using a 10-year average from 1998 to 2008."

Killingsworth said in 2007, Colby received an average of 6.26 inches of moisture from January to April.

"January through April in 2002 was the height of the big drought with 1.41 inches in Colby," he said. "The year 2002 was the worst, but 2008 is only slightly better."

Clint Milliman, Thomas County's Extension Agent, is also watching the weather.

"Wheat harvest could be a little bit behind," Milliman said. "But it all depends on the weather from now to June. We could be about a week behind."

Milliman said farmers are planting fall crops and that most of the corn is in, but little of the soybeans have been planted. He said cool temperatures in April delayed the planting season.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

ABOVE: Seated veterans were among more than 75 people attending Monday's Memorial Day Service at Beulah Cemetery in Colby. BELOW LEFT: Members of the VFW and American Legion Auxiliary also recognized their members by laying a wreath. BELOW RIGHT: Senior Vice Commander of the VFW Jim Griffin, right, was this year's speaker.



Crowd honors fallen soldiers

By Patty Decker
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Senior Vice Commander Jim Griffin with the Veterans of Foreign Wars spoke to more than 75 people attending this year's Memorial Day Services Monday at Beulah Cemetery in Colby.

Cold and windy conditions kept his presentation short, but Griffin said he wanted to emphasize Memorial Day is a day to pay tribute to those who gave their lives defending their country.

"We are here to honor the men and women who died for freedom," he said.

Following his remarks, a 21-gun salute was made to the fallen military members and both the VFW and American Legion Auxiliary laid a wreath.

The service began with the posting of the colors by the VFW Color Guard, accompanied by a rifle squad.

At Goodland's cemetery, Rev. Chet Ross, a retired Air Force chaplain, told a crowd of about 200 people that Memorial Day is dedicated to those who have served and are serving around the world.

He said as a young man, he traveled to New York and saw the Statue of Liberty, and that was a profound experience for him.

"Memorial Day is more than a day to honor those who have served and died," he said.

"It has become a day when we honor all of our friends and family who have died."

In addition to services at Colby and Goodland, a Memorial Day tribute was held at Sacred Heart Cemetery and Brewster Cemetery.

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Colby also invited everyone to coffee and rolls after the services.

Employment center on wheels to visit Colby

The Kansas Department of Commerce and Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce have partnered to exhibit the KansasWorks Mobile Center, a custom-built recreational vehicle designed as a traveling workforce services office. The vehicle will be at the Thomas County Office Complex in Colby from 1 to 6 p.m., Friday.

"The mobile center is like a workforce center on wheels, allowing us to go where we are needed," said Stacy Horinek,

"We are looking forward to showcasing this unit . . ."
Stacy Horinek, KansasWorks representative

representative. "We are looking forward to showcasing this unit in our community and encourage anyone and everyone to stop by."

The 38-foot mobile center, which was unveiled in June 2007

and sent to tornado-stricken Greensburg, includes 11 Internet-ready computer stations to assist job candidates and employers; an internal public address system and interactive Smart Board for pre-

sentations inside the Center; and high-definition TV and external speakers for presentations outside the Center. The Mobile Center staff will be available to offer employers tip sheets on how to be a successful recruiter in preparation for the upcoming job fair. Area business owners are encouraged to stop by and list current positions online and use the center for information regarding recruiting and retaining employees, apprenticeship programs, and interviewing tips.

Job candidates who plan to attend the Employment Expo the following day are encouraged to stop by the unit to update their resumes, register with KANSASWORKS.com, do online job searches and to visit with staff about the guidelines available outlining how to successfully attend an Employment Expo.

For questions, call Holly Stephens, executive director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at (785) 460-3401 or Horinek (785) 462-6862.

Briefly

Tractor, car show Sunday

Selden's Main Street on Sunday will be the site of the 15th annual Antique and Tractor Show starting with registration at 9 a.m. for tractors and cars. Activities will include a horseshoe pitching competition at 10 a.m.; antique baler demonstrations, 10:30 a.m., noon, and 2 p.m.; basketball free-throw contest, 11:30 a.m., for young people in grades third through eighth; and kiddie tractor pull, 1 p.m., for ages 5-6, 7-8, and 9-10.

Other events include a barrel roll contest at 2:30 p.m., craft show throughout the day and a parade at 3:30 p.m.

The show is sponsored by the American Legion and everyone is invited to participate in the show or view the antique and classic tractors, cars, small engines and more, organizers said. For questions, call (785) 386-4481, 386-4331, or 386-4536.

Commissioners to meet

The Thomas County Commissioners will hold a special meeting starting at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday to start work with Overland Park-based Custom Energy. Custom Energy will assist the commissioners in finding ways to cut energy consumption at county-owned properties. The commissioners will also hold their regular end-of-the-month meeting Friday. Colby City Manager Carolyn Armstrong and Police Chief Randy Jones will talk about the communications contract between the city and county at 9 a.m. From 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. the commissioners talk with Don Hartman about wind energy and from 10:30 to 10:45 a.m., with Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan about the title of a trailer. Clair Schrock, county roads supervisor and representatives of Martin Tractor are scheduled from 10:45 to 11 a.m. to sign paperwork for purchase of

new road graders. Schrock will also talk to the commissioners about the 2008 noxious weed agreement. From 11:05 to 11:30 a.m. Health Administrator Lisa Molstad will talk about finding a replacement following her resignation last week. At 11:30 a.m. the commissioners will meet with Darrin Bell to talk about cleaning matters within the courthouse.

Picnic in the Park June 4

The annual "Picnic in the Park" events begin at noon, Wednesday, June 4, at Fike Park and will continue through Wednesday, July 30, said Holly Stephens, executive director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce. Kicking off the event is Larry Booth. Other entertainers include "Pieces of Pieces of Eight," with members of Howard Culver's band, but not all of them, June 11; The Bugbee Sisters (Monica and Karla), June 18; Scott

Cameron, June 25; Shannon Myers, July 2; The Jeff Wagoner Family, July 9; Sappa Strings (Wayne and Millie Lauritsen), July 16; Dan Keller, July 23; and Larry and Taylor McLemore, July 30. The event is sponsored by the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau and Colby Free Press.

Ice-cream social Sunday

The Thomas County Relay for Life Committee is having a come and go ice-cream social from 2-4 p.m., Sunday, at Fike Park to celebrate National Cancer Survivors Day, said Diane Stithem, publicity chair. Cancer survivors in Thomas County are encouraged to attend the social, complete with ice cream and all the toppings. "Bring a lawn chair and an appetite," she said. A booth will also be available for anyone wanting to sign up for this year's Relay for Life scheduled for Friday, July 25, at Fike Park.