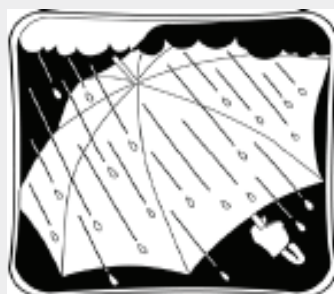


Weather Corner



Tonight...Partly cloudy. A 30 percent chance of thunderstorms in the evening. Lows in the lower 60s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.

Tuesday...Mostly sunny. A 20 percent chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs in the upper 80s. Northeast winds around 10 mph shifting to the east in the afternoon. **Tuesday Night...**Partly cloudy. A 30 percent chance of thunderstorms in the evening. Lows in the lower 60s. Southeast winds around 10 mph.

Wednesday...Partly sunny. A 20 percent chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs in the upper 80s. East winds around 10 mph. **Wednesday Night...**Partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 60s.

Thursday...Partly sunny with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Highs in the upper 80s. **Thursday Night...**Mostly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the lower 60s.

Friday...Partly sunny with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Highs in the lower 80s.

76.
Saturday's low, high: 65, 82, .01 precipitation

Friday's low, high: 65, 77, .32 precipitation

Friday through Sunday, average daily use

1,520,000 gallons

3 Consecutive Days over 3.5 million will put us in a water watch

3 Consecutive Days over 4.0 million will put us in a water warning

A crop dusting plane barely cleared the tops of standing corn on Tuesday as an aerial chemical applicator sprayed a field about 3 miles east of Colby.



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

U.S. disregarded experts over biolab

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Homeland Security Department swept aside evaluations of government experts and named Mississippi — home to powerful U.S. lawmakers with sway over the agency — as a top location for a new \$451 million, national laboratory to study some of the world's most virulent biological threats, according to internal documents obtained by The Associated Press.

Mississippi's lawmakers include the Democratic chairman of the department's oversight committee in the House and the senior Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, which is expected to approve money to build the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility at one of five sites being considered. The two lawmakers said they were unaware of the Homeland Security evaluation system that scored the Mississippi site so low.

The disclosure is the latest example of what critics assert is the Bush administration's politicizing of government decisions, such as efforts to steer science over global warming at the Environmental Protection Agency and hiring and firing practices at the Justice Department.

"It is very suspicious," said Irwin Goldman of the University of Wisconsin, a leader of the unsuccessful effort to build the lab in Madison. His community's offer was among nine sites rejected even though the government scored it more highly than Mississippi's. "We wondered how everybody else did. It's interesting to know that we came out ahead of one that was short-listed."

The states where locations were eliminated despite earning scores higher than Mississippi include California, Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, Texas and Wisconsin.

Government experts originally expressed concerns that the proposed site in Flora, Miss., was far from existing biodefense research programs and lacked ready access to workers already familiar with highly contagious animal and human diseases, such as foot-and-mouth virus, that could devastate the U.S. livestock industry. They assigned the site a score that ranked it 14th among 17 candidate sites in the United States.

But a senior Homeland Security official, Undersecretary Jay Cohen, overruled those concerns

under the theory that skilled researchers would move to Mississippi if it were selected for the new lab, according to a July 2007 internal government memorandum, marked "sensitive information" and obtained by the AP. Cohen accepted the argument that, "When built, they come."

A former Navy officer, Cohen is a political appointee, nominated by President Bush in June 2006.

For Wisconsin, Cohen determined that community opposition to the new lab was too great despite the area's highly respected researchers. Some local officials had threatened to withhold sewer service from the lab.

"It raised my eyebrows a bit when Mississippi was selected," said George Stewart of the University of Missouri, another rejected location that also earned a score higher than Mississippi's. "Obviously, there were factors other than what they were looking in the site visits. The group that did the site visits were scientists and know what they were looking for. I don't know what DHS was looking for."

Stephen Schimpff, who led unsuccessful efforts to bring the lab

to Beltsville, Md., complained that the government's analysis seemed confusing. The department said there were too many skilled researchers near Beltsville, just outside Washington, and the agency worried about competing to hire them.

"We were surprised when some of the things we felt were our strengths were turned back on us as weaknesses," Schimpff said.

Besides Flora, Miss., the U.S. locations under consideration for the new lab are Athens, Ga.; Manhattan, Kan.; Butner, N.C.; and San Antonio.

The nine sites rejected as finalists that also earned high scores than Mississippi's location were: Leavenworth, Kan.; a different location in Athens, Ga.; two other sites in San Antonio; the University of Missouri in Columbia, Mo.; Beltsville; College Station, Texas; Madison; and Tracy, Calif., near the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

NOTICE

The Thomas County Health Department will be **CLOSED** from 08/06/08 until 08/13/08 due to staff shortage and prior commitments. Sorry for the inconvenience.

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Sunday 2:00 & 7:00
Monday - Thursday 7:00

STEP BROTHERS

R 1 Hour, 40 Min.
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