

Weather Corner



National Weather Service
Tonight: A chance of freezing drizzle after 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 21. Northeast wind between 10 and 15 mph.
Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 35. East wind between 5 and 10 mph.
Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 11. North wind between 5 and 10 mph.
Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 34. North wind between 5 and 10 mph.
Wednesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 14.
Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 42.
Thursday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 16.
Friday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 48.
Friday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 25.
Saturday: Sunny, with a high near 53.
Saturday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 25.
Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 55.

Friday: High, 74; Low 20
 Saturday: High, 37; Low 21
 Sunday: High, 62; Low 23
 Precip: Friday 0.00 inches
 Saturday 0.00 inches
 Sunday 0.00 inches
 Month: 0.00 inches
 Year: 0.64 inches
 Normal: 2.15 inches
 (K-State Experiment Station)

Irrigation meeting looks to future need

Speakers at a two-day meeting of the Central Plains Irrigation Association at the City Limits Convention Center talked about many topics, including wind energy, conservation and surface drip irrigation.

The meeting, which rotates among towns in the Tri-State area of Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska, was held Feb. 24 and 25 this year.

WIND ENERGY

Robert Johnson, executive manager of engineering for Sunflower Electric Power Corp. of Hays, spoke at a general session. He gave encouraging information about how wind farms are helping power plants decrease their load during peak times on hot summer afternoons.

"Wind energy is not constant," he said, "so it has to be assisted by generators from the power plants using coal, steam generated by boilers fired by gas or No. 6 fuel oil, or gas turbines.

"Coal is the cheapest, so it is used with the wind energy during low-capacity times like at night and early in the morning. Steam is next as far as cost is concerned, so it is used later in the morning or in the early evening also with wind. The big gas turbines are put into use in the middle of the afternoon with wind when we have our peak loads, because they can be fired up quickly. The wind energy helps a great deal in decreasing the load.

"As for the smaller wind units some farmers already have, or are thinking of purchasing for use on their farms, they may become more cost effective in the future, but for now they are very expensive and payback is nonexistent or a long time in coming. Do your homework before considering this type of unit right now. Some farmers have referred to this type of thing as 'just an expensive hobby.'

"At the present time, we don't have net metering in Kansas. That is a system where individuals or businesses producing renewable energy receive credits for each kilowatt hour they produce beyond their own needs. When they produces more electricity than they need, their power meter runs backwards and sends the excess electricity to the power grid. They receive credits for the electricity they send to the grid, which counts as payment towards any electricity they draw ... when their turbine can't provide enough power."

(Note: The Kansas Legislature just passed a power plant bill which would allow net metering for both wind and solar energy. Many large power companies don't much care for this setup, since they are essentially buying the individuals producer's wind power at retail price instead of at the wholesale price they would be paying the wind farms.)

When asked if there was such a thing as a clean coal-fired power plant, Johnson responded by saying, "The Holcomb coal-fired power plant is a clean plant, and the new plant we want to build will be even cleaner.... One experimental technology that shows promise in producing even cleaner emissions is the algae-based carbon-capture technology that might be even more cost effective than

what is being used at present to cut down on carbon dioxide emissions. It looks very hopeful."

SUBSURFACE DRIP IRRIGATION

Freddie Lamm, agronomist at Kansas State University's Northwest Kansas Extension Center in Colby, spoke at one of the technical sessions about the best ways to know when to start and stop irrigation each season. He also talked about research on subsurface drip irrigation at the center.

"We have been working with this for 20 years now," he said, "and it looks good. In this type of irrigation, tubes are laid along under the ground. There is no evaporation and water is dispersed evenly throughout the field.

"The downside is that it is expensive and needs a lot of management. However, those who use it seem to be satisfied with it."

WATER CONSERVATION

Wayne Bossert of the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 4 in Colby, discussed northwest Kansas conservation efforts and steps farmers are taking to improve it in this area.

"The first subject I discussed was the state's Water Transition Assistance Program," he said. "It is an effort to retire some of the ir-



Robert Johnson, executive manager of engineering for Sunflower Electric Power Corp., spoke at the Irrigation Conference at the City Limits Convention Center on, Feb. 24. He explained how wind generators can help decrease the loads on power plants during times of high demand.

MARJ BROWN/Colby Free Press

rigated fields back to dry land and dryland crops.

"Next was the forming of a Conservation Project Alliance of all entities having water interests, such as county commissioners, cities, ... businesses....

"This commission will come up with a list conservation projects ... to be financed by the Republican River settlement money (which courts have ordered Nebraska to pay to Kansas).

"The law says two-thirds of that money must go back to the Republican River area for conservation projects, so we are working together ... so we can present one list of combined projects agreeable to all concerned.

"Also, members of the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Corp., a tax-exempt foundation, are assessing ourselves in an effort to put money into a matching funds plan with the U.S. Department of

Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"This program was authorized under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program in the 2008 Farm Bill. Nationally, \$58.4 million is available for the Agricultural Enhancement Program proposals. They have said they will give higher priority to proposals located in several regions, including the Ogallala Aquifer, which includes our area."

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Deere shop moves digs

From "DEERE," Page 1

trucks to keep the average down time for farmers to three to four hours," said service technician David Oren. "We can add to our mobile services in busy times."

Besides farm equipment, the dealership will carry a full line of construction products, utility tractors and lawn and grounds equipment, Ortner said. They have a wash and detail bay and plan to upgrade existing services.

As for the former location, he said it is for sale. Right now the staff is focusing on moving around \$20 million worth of inventory, though.

"Planning for the new facility began two years ago," Ortner said, "and one of the most exciting things is that business and contractors in a town of this size could put together a project of this size. It speaks extremely well of the community, and of the city, that they were able to develop and willingly put the infrastructure together... and it is good that we were able to purchase locally and use local installers."

Stephens Construction of Colby was the general contractor.

Ortner expressed a huge appreciation to his employees, his staff, customers and community that the business is able to not only stay, but to grow.

He said they plan to have a customer appreciation day and open house sometime in July, and he hopes the John Deere Vice President of Sales John Lageman will be here to see the new store and the town and to meet the customers.

Water plans aim at saving

From "FARMING," Page 1

"We feed 2,500 head of cattle and haul corn ..." he said. "In fact, we usually haul around 21 1/2 million bushels of corn each year. Last year, we had to really scrounge around to find enough corn. We are just looking for a cheaper ... form of irrigation that will have more efficiency in application and deliver a better yield. Efficiency is important because our wells are checked by the state every year, and ... our water source is depleting."

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