



Other Viewpoints

Republican basin water use evolving

Did J. Sterling Morton get it all wrong? We won't go that far, but a recent report delivered to local natural resources districts does seem to indicate that attempts to reinvent the prairie in the image of the father of Arbor Day's native, tree-covered Michigan are misguided.

The use of water is a zero-sum game, and consumption of precipitation by grassland and trees leaves less for crops and, more importantly for legal purposes, less to send down the Republican River to Kansas.

The Republican River Basin Water Balance Study report presented at the Middle Republican Natural Resources District recently showed just that.

Riparian forests – wooded areas near rivers, about the only kind that exist in southwest Nebraska – and woodlands use more water per acre than any other land use, including crops, according to the study.

Riparian forest and woodlands use 4.26 acre-feet of water a year or 51.2 inches of average annual consumption.

By comparison, irrigated corn uses 2.34 acre-feet of water, or 28.1 inches of average annual consumption.

An acre-foot is the amount of water it takes to cover an acre of land one foot deep in water, or 325,851 gallons.

It shows that trees, especially those with root systems that reach deep, consume a lot of water," said Frank Kwapnioski of H2O Options Engineering LLC of Lincoln.

The study seemed to show a link between water consumed by trees and grass and the overall decrease in surface water, he said.

"In the 1930s, the landscape was different than it is now, which may describe the change being seen in overall surface water," he said, "though there are many factors, not just one."

The problem is, the Republican River Compact conflict, which threatens agriculture in southwest Nebraska, was signed – by the state of Nebraska, we must add – with that 1930s landscape in mind, rather than modern conditions that exist following decades of conservation efforts and growth of trees and underbrush.

We enjoy trees and feel they add much to our communities. However, a new river agreement should be negotiated with modern conditions taken into account.

– McCook Daily Gazette, via The Associated Press

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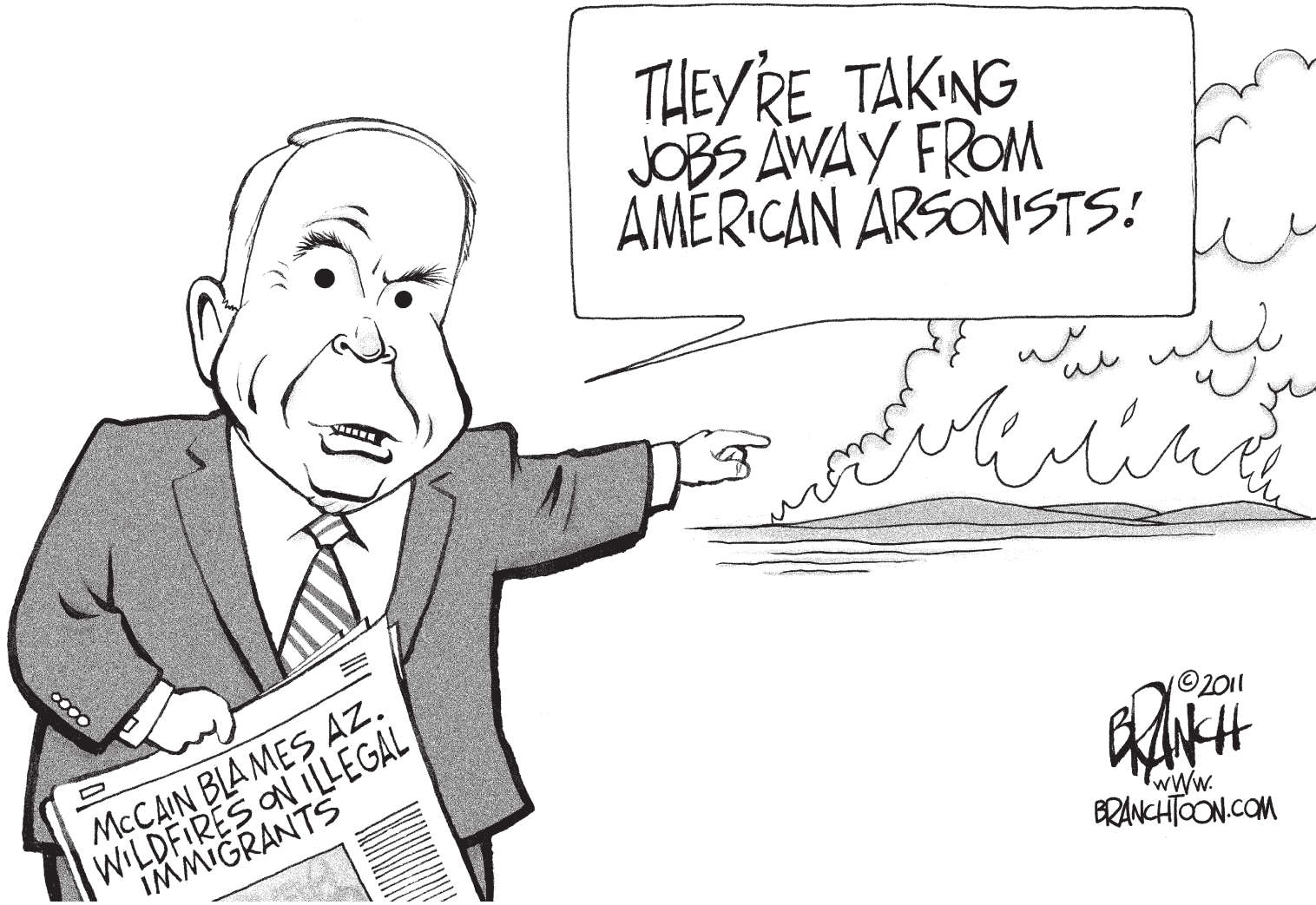
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That college paid off for Arkansas girl

"You're a d*&^m fool, Jeff Ellis," his friends told him.

And maybe he was. Maybe it was a big waste of time and money to send a girl to college for four years.

After all, when she graduated, she would just get married. But he and Pearle had always believed that it was important to give their children the best education they could afford.

So he sent his youngest daughter to college, and here she was marrying as soon as she graduated. Not just marrying, but marrying a Yankee and moving to Kansas.

She came home to visit and eventually brought little Cynthia, his third grandchild, for a visit. But Jeff died before his Emma ever used that expensive four-year college education to teach school.

It had been tough getting married and moving to Kansas. It was so cold there in the winter. Not like Arkansas.

On the trip north, she'd asked her new husband what those funny looking little red fences were along the road. She'd laughed with disbelief when he had told her they were snow



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

fences.

Then there were the people up here. Her father-in-law barely spoke English! And relatives, my goodness, there were a lot of relatives – aunts and uncles and cousins by the dozens. These people bred like rabbits!

It took a while to get used to joining such a big family. Buford had 16 aunts and uncles and several of them spoke nothing but French or a mixture, like her father-in-law, of French and English.

But they were welcoming and tried to be helpful, and she soon learned their language and their strange customs. She even got used to the cold, snowy winters. And when the call came, she took her four-year college education

and got a teaching certificate and went into the classroom, even though Cynthia was just a little girl. She taught for several years that time.

After her second daughter was born, she returned to the classroom, and this time it was more than 25 years before she got out of school.

There was the great need for teachers as the baby boomers clogged the classrooms. Then it was her girls' turn to go to college. As Cynthia went through five years of pharmacy school and Marie four of nurses' training, all she earned went to paying the tuition, fees, room and board of her girls.

It was payback time, a thank-you to her parents for giving their daughter the best education they could afford.

After all, only a d*&^m fool would send a girl to college during a war – and after the worst depression the country had ever seen.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

Brain drain has reversed its flow

Until recently, the United States has lured away the brightest students and researchers from other countries.

This "brain drain" crippled third world countries and developing countries in Asia that lost this talent. It gave U.S. science a foreign accent, especially in engineering, physics, medicine, chemistry and molecular biology.

But the drain reversed this last decade. Now the United States is losing American-trained scientists, engineers and researchers to other countries.

The causes appear two-fold: continued decline in U.S. science education and a dramatic increase in foreign students returning to home countries that now offer better opportunities.

The shortcomings of U.S. science, technology, engineering and mathematics education are accelerating. We continue to cripple American students by not adopting the metric system. U.S. education reforms continue to promote "less science, not more," with an anemic science curriculum teaching less than half the science of other developed countries.

Many veteran science teachers have left the classroom. And few in the next generation of college students have chosen to teach science. Much of this is due to the last decade of oppressive teach-to-the-test reforms.

According to the Lumina Foundation, the U.S. will be 22 million college degrees short by the year 2025, with the most critical shortage in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Until recently, "imported" foreign scientists and students made up the shortfall of internal production. But in 2010, for the first time, the 65,000 H1N1 visas released each year in April



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

for foreign researchers to fill industrial and university vacancies were not grabbed up.

Now, data for 2010 show that foreign students attending U.S. universities are choosing to return to their home countries after graduation, and in massive numbers likely to cause near-term shortages in physics, engineering and other critical fields.

Peggy Blumenthal, co-author of the report "Higher Education on the Move" by the Institute of International Education writes: "When I started in this field 25 years ago, you pretty much assumed 91 percent of Taiwanese would stay; now 91 percent have returned."

"Developing countries are now generally in better financial condition than the U.S. and have established their science infrastructure. Taiwan built science industrial parks. Their equipment and expertise is no longer inferior to the U.S. And they offer more financial stability and opportunity for advancement."

A Rutgers University study released in March found only 8 percent of foreign graduate students in the U.S. want to remain in the U.S. after graduation. South Korea and China in particular are seeing a massive increase in returnees.

Tony Chan, president of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, says that

"Asian countries are pumping more money into education." Meanwhile, University World News reports that "... 80 percent of researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, 54 percent at the Chinese Academy of Engineering and 72 percent of chief scientists ... are graduates who decided to return home after studying abroad."

China has hired away Nobel Laureate Luc Montagne, discoverer of the AIDS virus from the Pasteur Institute in Paris. And "... three out of four university vice-chancellors in Singapore are from Europe or the U.S."

A few, but only a few, U.S. legislators are aware of the accelerating brain drain and considering measures to alter immigration policies making it easier for skilled researchers to come to the U.S. A call to issue a green card – the first step toward U.S. citizenship – to every foreign student who graduates from a U.S. university in science has gained little traction.

Despite massive building of university capacity in China, the overflow of Chinese students has kept the number of international students in U.S. increasing, although numbers from other countries are in decline.

Foreign students have become a major way to subsidize U.S. student tuition at public universities – for now – and in many fields are the backbone of our science programs. But new figures showing that most foreign students will go back home to better jobs suggests this reverse brain drain is already eroding U.S. capacity.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

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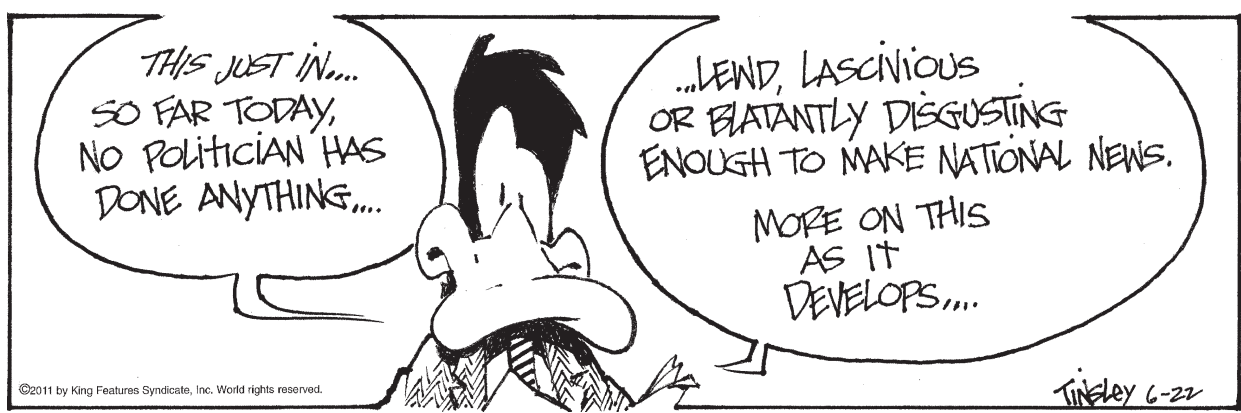
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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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