

Free Press Viewpoint

Chances for lake rapidly evaporating

Bonnie Reservoir is on the verge of disappearing, and when gone it will take some great fishing, hunting and a refuge for migratory birds evaporates along with the water.

The reservoir was not built as an irrigation dam, but rather a flood control dam after the 1935 Republican River flood that killed more than 100 people in northwest Kansas, southwest Nebraska and caused damage all the way to Concordia.

Colorado is a unique state having six major rivers with headwaters that flow out of the state. Anytime someone downstream feels they have been shorted they look upstream to Colorado to give them more water.

Growing up in the Arkansas River Valley, the ongoing problems along the river between Colorado and Kansas became a major lawsuit that cost both states millions of dollars in attorney fees, and when the Supreme Court Master was done it cost Colorado more millions in damages.

Drought conditions exist today in the southwest part of Kansas and the southeast part of Colorado, and the major source of irrigation water remains the Arkansas.

A major sticking point in trying to keep water in John Martin Reservoir over the years was the question of evaporation, and Kansas farmers insisting holding the water was costing them more water. The Colorado-Kansas Arkansas River Compact goes back to 1949, and over the past 60 years John Martin has been emptied at least three times we know of.

Built for flood control and irrigation the reservoir can hold about 640,000 acre feet when full. The dam was really tested for flood control in 1965 when thousands of acre feet of water rolled down the Fountain and Arkansas River from a huge amount of rain to nearly fill the empty reservoir in less than a week, taking it from basically zero to about 400,000 acre feet of water.

Some of those who are familiar with the Arkansas River below John Martin will remember the small creeks flooded the river basin in 1965 from Lamar, Colo., to Dodge City, and caused damage in Syracuse and Garden City.

John Martin was drained within a few years of the flood, and again the issue was evaporation as an excuse for both sides of the compact.

Finally a winter storage agreement was reached to allow compact members to "bank" water, and the federal government approved a permanent pool for recreation. The agreement helped bring the lake back and today part of the western portion is a Colorado state park.

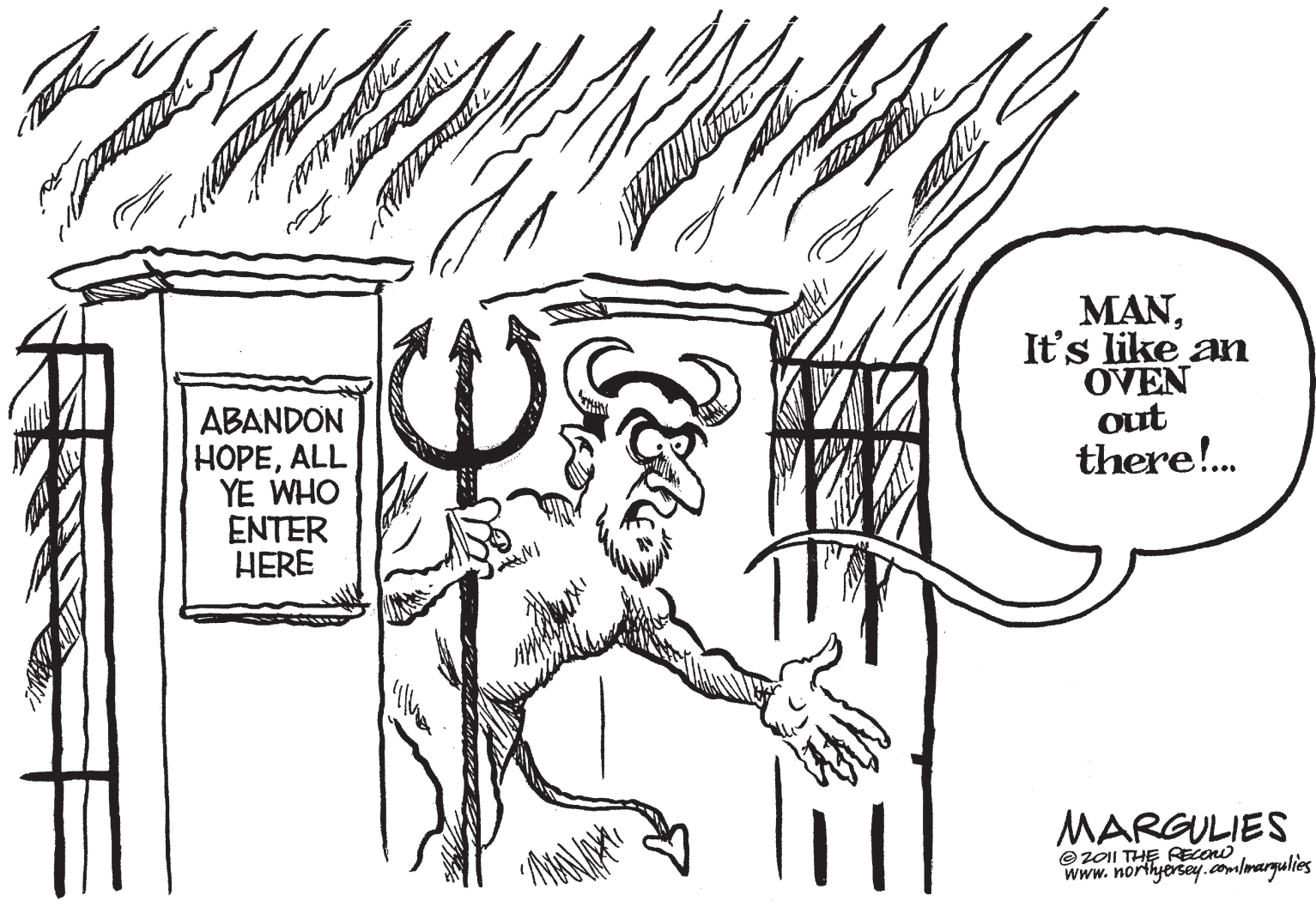
The major difference between John Martin Reservoir and Bonnie Reservoir is the one on the Arkansas has an annual amount of runoff from the Rocky Mountains to the west to provide water for irrigation along the extensive ditch system that reuses the river water several times before it reaches the dam, and again is used and reused several times as it flows downstream to Kansas.

Bonnie Reservoir does not have a major runoff recharge, and must depend on Mother Nature to drop enough moisture to fill the creeks to get water to that part of the Republican River.

Draining Bonnie will not improve the situation in northeast Colorado, and unlike the Arkansas it would take another flood like that in 1935 to remind people why Bonnie was created.

We hope Colorado will reconsider their decision to drain Bonnie, and urge Kansas and Nebraska to solve the evaporation issue before the lake disappears.

- Tom Betz, Goodland Star-News



College project will make it busier place

I continue to be so impressed with our community, though for life-long residents it may sound strange. My son commented the other evening on what an active place Colby is.

Certainly summer is a busy time, with finishing harvest, taking vacations and everything in between. This month alone, we will have had a tremendous Fourth of July celebration, the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass Festival, the Thomas County Fair and the Governor's Economic Summit on Water Management - and those aren't all. In case you didn't know, this level of opportunity in community events is not necessarily common everywhere.

Summer is about to become a busier time at Colby Community College as well with the start of a sustainable energy project overseen and implemented by the Honeywell Corporation, an established company with a solid reputation.

This project addresses a number of pressing issues on campus - retrofitting and replacing equipment and controls - and I hope it will serve as a catalyst for both short- and long-term success for the college.

Some might ask how the college can begin any project in the face of budget shortfalls. That is a valid question, given that we are experiencing financial difficulties. On the surface, what we are doing might seem like a situation in which a neighbor asked to borrow \$50 until payday and then showed up a few days later with a new car - most would find that troubling, assuming that the person had money all along. However, our situation is much different. Let's see if I can put to rest some concerns regarding such a project.

The answer to "why" is the easiest to explain. In a few years, we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the college. Many of the earliest buildings plus the infrastructure - pipes, pumps, wiring - on campus have been around for well over three decades.

Rather than replacing systems over the years, we have opted to defer expensive projects and repair equipment only after it has broken down. We have a very qualified maintenance staff but because systems are antiquated, and money is tight, even repairs have become difficult; finding a part can be nearly impossible.

These systems are inefficient as well. Thus,



Steve Vacik

• From the president

the college is spending too much on daily use, driving up other costs, especially water and electricity. In addition, some projects have become critical, like leaking roofs on buildings. If you were on campus during the last tremendous rain, you could have seen what a mess it made in Thomas Hall and the Cultural Arts Center. To sum it up, these are not wants, but needs; they are not cosmetic but essential.

The "how" is more challenging to explain because we do not have the resources to take on such a large, expensive project without assistance. It is similar to buying a house - we would prefer to pay for it up front, but the reality is that we cannot. Instead, we are going to enter into long-term financing and pay down the debt over a number of years.

So how do we pay for the debt service? With the Honeywell Project, we will use the money saved through upgrades to pay for the project.

There is no hefty down payment or large out-of-pocket costs up front; rather, money we save through efficient lighting, heating and cooling, among other things, will be reinvested into paying for the project. Honeywell even guarantees that we will save through this project.

Again, for a comparison, consider your furnace at home. If you are having consistent problems with an old system, you can continue to fix it or replace it with a new, efficient one. Replacing is more expensive in the short term but you are saving on repairs and on your electric bill in the long term. Ultimately, it will more than pay for itself. Quite simply, that is the how of the Honeywell Project - financing through long-term savings.

The "what difference" answer is the most exciting information - and not just because it helps the college but because it benefits others as well. Beyond heating and cooling, lighting and similarly obvious improvements through-

out the buildings, including the pool area, this project is ambitious in that it includes the installation of a small wind turbine and photo-voltaic (solar) system.

In addition to cutting energy consumption, the turbine and photo-voltaic system can be used for hands-on training to prepare students for future jobs and in addition, grow the Alternative Energy Program at the college - which means more students and additional revenue to the college and community.

While Honeywell is working on campus, they are also going to utilize some of our students as interns, providing valuable on-the-job skills and work experience.

But beyond just the college, this project will save significant energy, which we hope will assist the city of Colby in the "Take Charge!" challenge, a regional competition in which the local community is engaged. Further, during the life of the project, we will use local contractors when feasible.

Even those contractors from out of town, though, will eat, sleep and play here in Colby, putting additional money in the local economy. I am not suggesting that this is somehow altruistic on our part but it is quite rewarding when we can improve the college, save money and help our community in the process.

I hope that my brief overview of the Honeywell Project makes reasonable sense - I readily admit that I am a historian, not an engineer. As contractors begin on campus, and continue over the next 12 to 18 months, though, I did want to let the community know why, how and what difference this project will make in the life of the institution.

Also be on the lookout for additional, more specific information in the near future on the work taking place here at the college. As your community college, my desire is that we be as open, honest and transparent as possible. And to be honest, this project is an exciting next step in the future of the college - different, better, with a purpose.

Dr. Stephen Vacik is president of Colby Community College. Vacik is a native of Fargo, N.D., and was vice president of instruction at East Mississippi Community College before moving to Colby.

Hospice offers many things

It's likely that many readers saw the article in the June 1 AARP Bulletin, "Palliative Care is Not What You Think." And it's a good bet that those who did were left with an inaccurate perception about hospice care.

While I applaud the article's informative look at the difference palliative care can make for those who are terminally ill, the assertion therein that hospice care (which is always palliative care) "is for people who no longer need or want to treat their condition but want help managing their pain" fails to convey the reality so many grateful people have experienced with the help of hospice at the end of life.

Truth be told, pain and symptom management - though critical - are merely one aspect of the care hospice provides to terminally ill people and their families. Those who choose hospice care also receive the emotional and spiritual support they need to fully live every day that remains at home, in comfort and with dignity, surrounded by their loved ones.

Other Opinions

• Darla Schueth HospiceCare

Through the expert and compassionate care of an interdisciplinary team (including a physician, registered nurse, certified nursing assistant, social worker, chaplain, and grief counselor) and a customized care plan based on respect for each individual's choices and goals, hospice helps patients and families find peace and meaning, strengthen personal relationships and complete and celebrate life, all of which eases the burden for patients and family at what is understandably a difficult time.

Given this, it's not surprising that hospice

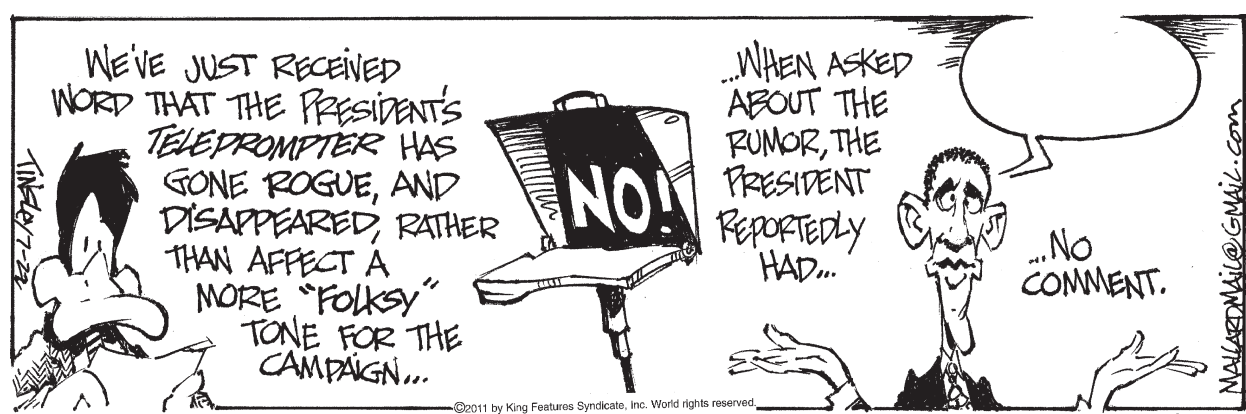
care is shown to improve quality of life for patients and their families. (*Journal of Clinical Oncology*, March 2010). However, a little known truth is that hospice can also actually prolong life for patients with certain diseases by a mean survival rate of 29 days longer than nonhospice patients. (*Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, March 2007). Moreover, after the death, hospice continues to make a significant difference, with grief support designed to provide comfort and guidance to those left behind.

"Help with managing their pain" may be the initial impetus for terminally-ill patients and their families to seek hospice care. And with good reason; we are experts at this. But as those we serve soon learn, we can - and do - offer so much more.

Darla Schueth is president and chief executive officer of HospiceCare of Boulder and Broomfield Counties in Colorado. Submitted by Hospice Services of Northwest Kansas.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan., 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.