

Weather



National Weather Service
Tonight: A 50 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms...
Saturday: A 30 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms...
Sunday: Sunny, with a high near 81...
Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 86...
Tuesday: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms...

Wednesday fire extended into Thomas County as well

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County, Brewster, Kanorado and Wallace County departments. Three or more discs owned by area farmers were brought out to help control the fire.

There was also one plane that dropped a load of water on the fire. James said nobody knows who the plane belonged to, and the

first he knew of it was when it flew over his head. Unfortunately, he said, the blast from the plane's propeller actually helped the fire flare up in one area.

No one was hurt in the fire, James said, aside from one firefighter's cut hand. Several vehicles received minor damage, he said, such as blown tires or dented bumpers from the tight ravines.

The only real problem of the night was communication. James said the radio repeater kept going down, which made it difficult to coordinate firefighting units.

"Everyone from all the departments worked great together," James said. James said the firefighters cleared the scene at 3:30 a.m. Thursday morning.

Invasive species removed from state lake

Amy Bickel
The Hutchinson News

KINGMAN (AP) - Maneuvering his boat on murky waters, Jeff Koch envisions a day when anglers again will frequent Kingman State Fishing Lake in search of a limit of healthy sport fish.

But during a trip to the northern end of the lake, where northern pike typically gather near a spring to escape the summer heat, the state fisheries biologist and his crew were coming up with everything they didn't want.

"That's telling," Koch said as his crew netted large gizzard shad instead of the pike they sought.

Long overrun by white perch, as well as large gizzard shad and common carp, anglers aren't having as much luck as they'd like when fishing at the Kingman lake.

"If people aren't using the lake, that tells us something," Koch said. "Largemouth bass, bluegill and crappie populations are in pretty bad shape."

Therefore, this week Koch and his Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism crew searched the lake to try to salvage what they could of the pike population - a self-sustaining fish that has been in the lake

since the mid-1990s - before they drained the lake in attempt to kill what was left.

Then, he said, he and other officials would simply start over. White perch thrive in the Chesapeake Bay area and KD-WPT officials would rather they stay away from Kansas waters.

However, in 1994 wildlife and parks staff mistakenly introduced perch into Cheney and Wilson reservoirs during a striped bass stocking that originated from Virginia, said regional fisheries supervisor Sean Lynott.

That same shipment also was supposed to go to Glen Elder but didn't, Koch said.

Because of natural and illegal movements, perch now are in other state waters, including Lake Afton and Sedgwick County Park Lakes in Sedgwick County, Carey Park Pond in Hutchinson, Hoover Pond in Kingman and the Ninnescah, Arkansas and Saline rivers.

Lynott said Kingman's infestation of perch probably occurred from an angler who had perch in his bait bucket.

White perch are a prolific species. Numbers augmented so much that by 2010, Koch and other wildlife and parks officials knew the problem had to be fixed - and before angler usage dropped any further.

"There just were not enough predators to keep the numbers down," Koch said.

That has hurt the aquatic life in the lake, he said. White perch and other nuisance fish are destroying spawning efforts and eating young fish after they hatch.

"Ever since 2003, when we discovered white perch in the lake, their numbers have drastically increased," Koch said. "That has led to the decrease of our sport fish populations."

Meanwhile, carp also have become common enough that they are rooting on the bottom of the lake, leaving the water cloudy - conditions not necessarily preferred by clear water fish like northern pike.

Koch said he has spent time educating people about the project and the need. Calls already have flooded into Koch's office about the draining of Kingman State Fishing Lake.

This is the sixth time state officials have drained the lake in the past 65 years, Koch said. The kill-off is part of a complete rehabilitation that includes draining the lake and allowing personnel to manage hard-to-reach vegetation.

Moreover, while the lake may again need rehabilitated someday, Koch said that what they are doing will provide "10, 15, 20 years of good fishing" or more.

Kingman's lake is already more than 2 feet down because of the current drought. With the marshes around the lake - and other water bodies upstream - dry, it was the perfect time to drain the lake and take care of the perch population, Koch said.

"It's a good time to assure we will get a 100 percent kill," he said.

On a cloudy, rainy morning, Koch and his crew searched the waters for the some 300 northern pike that reside in the lake. They used a technique called electrofishing, which shoots voltage into the water, causing fish to

come to the surface where they can be netted.

KDWPT had tried in the 1970s to establish northern pike - typically found in northern waters - in Kansas with little luck, Lynott said. However, at Kingman, wildlife officials found a clear lake with a deeper, cooler spring - below the 75-degree temperatures that pike prefer.

It was soon clear, however, that with the week's cooler temperatures, most of the fish had left the spring area and dispersed throughout the lake - making it tough to capture the fish that remained.

The two days of electrofishing did produce a few significant largemouth bass, as well as about 50 of the 300 northern pike that call the lake home.

Mark Kumberg, the Pratt Fish Hatchery's manager, said the fish would be housed at the hatchery. Before going into hatchery waters, however, the fish go through a three-hour treatment for zebra mussels, "just in case," he said.

By noon Tuesday, the crew began draining the lake - a process Koch estimated would take at least a week. Water left in the lake will be chemically treated to eliminate the remaining fish.

Koch and staff also will go in and rebuild habitat, which includes placing cedar trees in the lake.

The project is inexpensive, he said. The chemical will cost just a few hundred dollars. The fish to repopulate the lake all will come from the Pratt hatchery.

Koch said he hopes the lake fills by the spring fishing season - barring, of course, a continuation of the drought.

"At that time, we'll restock largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish and northern pike," he said, adding that there should be ample opportunities this spring to catch a keeper. "We'll stock some adult fish from our hatcheries."

Briefly

Fair checks available at office complex

Premium checks from the 2012 Thomas County Free Fair are in and ready to pick up 1 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. at the Extension Office in the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range, Suite 16. For information, call Jody McCain at 460-4583.

Church of Christ to hold Prayer for Schools

The Colby Church of Christ will have their Fourth Annual Prayer at the Schools at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday in front of the Colby Grade School, 210 N. Grant Ave. A short prayer and scripture reading will take place to pray for teachers, administration, staff and students. The public is invited.

Grade school offering parents a 'sneak peek'

The Colby Grade School "sneak peek" for families of kids in kindergarten to fifth grades will be from 5 to 6 p.m. Tuesday. Parents and kids will have a chance to visit their children's classrooms and meet the teachers. Feel free to bring school supplies to put in your child's desk. For questions, call 460-5100.

Gem Lions plan annual hog roast Wednesday

The Gem Lions Club will hold its annual hog roast from 5 to 8 p.m. next Wednesday at the Gem Community Building. Come enjoy bluegrass, folk and country music, a horseshoe contest and all you can eat for a donation. Drawings will be held for 16 half hogs. Remember to bring used eyeglasses and hearing aids to help those in need. Proceeds will be used for community projects. For information, call Ken Poland at 462-7809.

Dennen Field closed for repairs to track

Dennen Field is closed for about a week for resurfacing, repairs and maintenance on the track. For information, call the high school office at 460-5300.

Chamber, college plan student block party

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau and Colby Community College are gearing up for the annual Community Campus Block Party from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday on the lawn on the north side of the student union. Businesses, churches and organizations are encouraged to set up display booths or tables. The college will serve a barbecue lunch. For information, call Holly Whitaker at the Chamber office, 460-3401.

Hospital plans welcome reception for new doctor

Citizens Medical Center will hold a welcome reception for Dr. John Dygert and his family from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Meadow Lake Golf Course in Colby. Everyone is invited. For information, call Citizens Foundation Director Tama Unger at 460-1214.

Colby native given award

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taught at Pratt.

He said that he enjoyed coaching and teaching at Pratt, although the eventual move to Hays was a welcome chance to get his family closer to relatives.

"Hays is a great community and our kids seem to enjoy it," Albers said. "I don't see us leaving for awhile."

Albers and his wife Tina have five children, MacKenzie, Kord, Ady, Brenlynn and four-year-old Brogan.

Tina Albers is a part-time preschool teacher at O'Loughlin Elementary School, and his mother, Joan Albers taught in Colby schools for 28 years. Tom appreciates the value of having teachers in his family.

"You learn to appreciate education," he said. "You place a high value on education."

Oil country welcomes dairy plant

HUGOTON (AP) - A new dairy and cheese processing plant coming to southwest Kansas is being hailed as another step in the region's efforts to diversify its economy and attract more dairy operations.

Gov. Sam Brownback and Stevens County officials on Thursday broke ground for a \$20 million Kansas Dairy Ingredients plant near Hugoton. The plant is expected to bring 60 new jobs to the county but officials said it also is important to attracting more cheese and processing plants - and more dairy cows - to southwest Kansas.

The first phase of the project is scheduled to be operating by Jan.

15, KDI officials said.

Dave Bezone, chairman of the Stevens County Commission, said the fuel industry is the foundation of the county's economy, but "that gas and oil isn't going to be here forever."

Kansas Senate President Steve Morris, a Republican from Hugoton, said the region has about 130,000 dairy cows and he expects projects like the KDI plant to help increase that number significantly over the next several years.

Morris said other cities in the state envy Stevens County for its new dairy processing plant, coupled with the Abengoa Bioenergy plant, a \$350 million plant that will turn crop residue into biofuel. Abengoa received

a \$132.4 million loan guarantee from the U.S. Department of Energy in 2011 to help develop the project.

Brownback said while oil and gas bring people and industry to southwest Kansas, the region's strength is agriculture.

"We are good at agriculture. We've really gotten the beef processing industry. Now we want to do a similar movement with dairy and the dairy processing industry," he said.

Officials plan to process about 1 million pounds of milk per day to be broken into various components for use as ingredients. The plant is expected to expand next year to produce cheese and other dry-milk ingredients.

LOCAL TV Listings
Sponsored by the COLBY FREE PRESS

Monday Evening August 20, 2012
Table with columns for time slots (7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00, 11:30) and rows for various TV channels and programs.

You're Invited to a Welcome Reception
Dr. John Dygert and Family
Please come and help us welcome Dr. Dygert and his family to Colby and the Family Center for Health Care.
Tuesday, August 21st • 5 - 7 p.m.
Meadowlake Golf Course • 1085 E. Golf Club Rd.
To Schedule an appointment with Dr. Dygert - 785.462.6184 or 1.800.453.6751