

Other Viewpoints

Future of water is present concern

The heavy rainfall from late July through mid-August reduced drought conditions in many counties throughout the state. But longer-term concerns about water remain – particularly preserving the Ogallala Aquifer in western Kansas.

That's why it was good that Gov. Sam Brownback called last week for creating a vision of where water conservation should be by 2050, and then working backward to set benchmarks needed to reach that vision. Foresight and collaboration are essential if Kansas is going to preserve its water supply and protect its economy for future generations.

Brownback made the request during a meeting in Dodge City of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors. The council and the Kansas Water Office plan to spend the next six to nine months developing that vision, working with stakeholders.

Water and agriculture officials discussed at the meeting both how valuable the Ogallala Aquifer is to the Kansas economy and how much it is in danger – which is why a balanced approach to water conservation is needed.

Chad Bontrager, assistant secretary of agriculture, said that irrigated cropland in the Ogallala region was responsible for \$1.75 billion in corn production and \$384 billion in retail beef production in 2012, the *Garden City Telegram* reported. That corn production results in 25,000 jobs and about \$1.2 billion added to the Kansas economy every year, he said, while beef production supports an additional 32,000 jobs and adds about \$2 billion to the economy.

"This leads to a total effect of about 56,000 people employed and \$3.2 billion in value-added," Bontrager said. "And keep in mind, that's just talking about irrigation for corn, for cattle.... There are a lot of other pieces to the economic puzzle there."

But Tracy Streeter, director of the Kansas Water Office, warned that the amount of water being used is not sustainable. He said some areas of southwest Kansas have had a 70-foot decline in water levels in the aquifer during the past 15 years.

A new study by Kansas State University researchers reinforces that concern. It said that if current irrigation trends continue, 69 percent of the groundwater stored in the aquifer will be depleted in 50 years.

The encouraging news is that, under Brownback's leadership, there has been progress on water conservation. Last year, the Legislature repealed the state's 67-year-old "use-it-or-lose-it" policy. Improved irrigation technology and crop genetics are helping reduce water use. Brownback also has held high-profile summits to get farmers and other stakeholders engaged in finding solutions.

Conservation measures can have a significant impact. The K-State study said that immediately reducing water use could extend the aquifer's life and increase net agricultural production through 2110.

David Steward, one of the K-State researchers, said they wrote the study "for the family farmer who wants to pass his land on to his grandchildren knowing that they will have the same opportunities that farmers do today." The issue also has importance for the entire state and its economy.

"Society has an opportunity now to make changes with tremendous implications for future sustainability and livability," the study said. But it concluded with a warning that Kansas must heed:

"The time to act will soon be past."
— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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World War II cost Fike Park its cannons

Information on the history of Fike Park was taken from research done by Opal Linville at Colby's Prairie Museum of Art and History. This is No. 8 in the series.



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

As area citizens were enjoying the new Colby swimming pool during the summer of 1941, most of them weren't worried about the fact that much of the rest of the world was at war. Little did they know what was going to happen Dec. 7.

Early on that Sunday morning the Japanese staged a surprise attack on the United States military base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attack Japanese air force killed 2,400 of our soldiers and sailors, destroyed 188 of our aircraft, and either sank or damaged 21 of our ships in port.

The following day, on Dec. 8, President Roosevelt announced over the radio that the United States was declaring war on Japan. This brought us completely into both the Pacific and European theaters of war.

I have visited the Pearl Harbor Memorial site twice now, and every time I think about that attack, what comes to my mind first is a scene from the movie they show visitors before their guide starts their tour. In that scene, a Japanese officer says, "I fear that we have awakened a sleeping giant."

He probably didn't have any idea how true that statement would prove to be. He didn't know how the American people come together

when we are attacked. And he couldn't have known how fierce our revenge would be.

My dad was drafted into the army and my mother went to work riveting airplanes together. The same thing happened in many households at that time. Many things, including rubber tires, gasoline, sugar, aluminum and other metals, were scarce. The government gave families books of ration coupons to use to buy items such as sugar and tires, and when your coupons were gone, you couldn't have any more for that month. A sticker in your car window let the gas station worker know how much gasoline you could buy.

Metal was being gathered from junk yards, farm yards and every place it could be found to manufacture guns, tanks, jeeps, trucks and other equipment needed for our men to fight the war.

On Sept. 23, 1942, the following article was printed in the *Colby Free Press Tribune*: "The two World War I cannons in the city park have been sold by the American Legion to the Lee Salvage Co. and will be shipped as scrap to

make steel which will be turned into weapons for World War II.

"The metal from these guns, as well as from all scrap on farms in the county and yards in town, is needed to make implements of war.

"If we win the war, we can get new cannons to decorate the park. If we lose.... we will have new guns in the town, but they won't be used to decorate the park."

We didn't get new cannons, but in July 1964, the Air Force gave the city a retired T-33 airplane to be placed in the park. However, because it was so popular with the children, it didn't last long. Because of deterioration, it was removed in only a few years.

Now it looks like we are on the brink of another war. I have to ask, "Why must we always think of war when we want to solve a problem such as the one today? The Muslim government in Syria says that they believe in God, and we here in the United States of America, most of us anyway, also believe in God, so why can't we just get together and decide what God would want us to do?"

Of course I'm just a dreamer and always think like a woman.

I hope you will look for Fike Park History No. 9 next time.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

Secret court has long bi-partisan history

With the establishment media coverage of the National Security Administration's spying on over 100 million Americans, recording their telephone conversations, e-mails and other electronic messages for the last seven years, the attention has turned to whatever happened to Congressional or judicial oversight.

Defenders of the spying assure us that we should not worry. The government's surveillance of its own citizens is old news, dating back to at least 35 years, as is the government's secret watchdog, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act court. I have told my students about this court for at least 25 years.

The secret court began during the Jimmy Carter administration with the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act in 1978. Initiated by Ted Kennedy, this bill had strong bipartisan support. It was created as a response to President Richard Nixon's use of federal resources to spy on political activists during his tenure, which likely violated the Fourth Amendment. Ironically, the solution – legalized spying on our own citizens – brought a greater violation of the amendment.

Few voices opposed giving the government extra spy power during the "Cold War," when it seemed that the whole planet was falling under the totalitarian influence of communism, but once legalized, the surveillance moved to other groups – notably the socialists who opposed the Vietnamese War.

CBS News commentator Dan Rather, in his program *Eye on America*, was one of the first to speak out on the intricacies of this secret court, in 1994 – 19 years ago. He correctly spoke to the issue that all federal courts are supposed to be open, that the Constitution has no place for secret courts.

"Chances are you have never heard of this court because it does operate in secret," he

Other Opinions

• Harold Pease Liberty Under Fire

began. "It holds no public hearings, classifies its rulings top secret and has wide freedom to order domestic spying in the name of national security."

Alan Deshowitz, a defense attorney at the time, was cited as having said, "The idea of there being a secret court in America is so un-American and the end result is that the rights of American citizens are being violated by this court. What is at stake here is the liberty of the American people. Secrecy and liberty are incompatible."

The 1994 program continued, "Behind the stone walls of the Justice Department's sixth floor, the court sits in an ultra-high security vault, guarded by impenetrable double doors. There, seven federal judges hear surveillance requests from the FBI, the CIA and the Department of Defense. And it appears the court has never heard a request it didn't like.

"Over the years the government has asked for 7,500 surveillance warrants. The number refused by the court is zero. The government has never been denied."

In 1994, this amounted to two surveillance approvals on U.S. citizens a day. There was no followup on how the information obtained was used in the defense of freedom.

It gets worse: "The questions under FISA aren't quite as tough as they are in even an ordinary criminal case. In any other court, for

an ordinary surveillance warrant, a judge must find that a suspect is involved in a crime. Under FISA, the standard is lowered to 'may be involved.' An ordinary wiretap runs 90 days. FISA taps can last a year. A suspect under ordinary criminal surveillance 'must be told' about it eventually but not under FISA. And finally, if prosecuted, a defendant is never allowed to see the top-secret warrant applications used against him." Ironically, all this is happening "in a windowless vault just beyond Constitution Avenue," the program concluded.

To date the secret court has reviewed 33,900 requests, denying, in its 35-year history, only 11. So much for oversight. This means that 968 Americans are approved for secret spying, through wiretapping and other surveillance techniques, each year with only one rejection.

This number is not to be confused with the 100 million Americans subjected to secret blanket extraction of their electronic data for the last seven years for some future purpose by the National Security Agency. Your Congress, through the act, authorized actual study of your private information without your permission or knowledge. I guess that is OK, as long as it is on someone else. The problem is, it may be on you, for the last antigovernment thing you said or wrote. How Orwellian is this?

Tell your congressman to end the secret court. Secrecy and liberty are incompatible.

Dr. Harold Pease, an expert on the Constitution, has dedicated his career to studying the writings of the Founding Fathers and applying it to current events. He has taught history and political science from this perspective for over 25 years at Taft College. To read more of his weekly articles, go to www.LibertyUnderFire.org.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

