

weather report

54°

at noon



Today

Sunset, 7:23 p.m.

Tomorrow

Sunrise, 6:09 a.m.

Sunset, 7:24 p.m.

Midday Conditions

- Soil Temp. 45 degrees
- Humidity 54 percent
- Sky Mostly cloudy
- Winds northwest at 25-40 mph
- Barometer 30.20 inches and rising
- Record High 91° (1963)
- Record Low 20° (1951)

Yesterday's Data

High 52°
Low 31°
Precipitation 1 in. for the day, 1.71 in. month, 3.17 in.

Northwest Kansas

Tonight: Mostly cloudy, brisk, possibility of snow 20 percent. Low 20-25, wind northwest 15-25 mph. Tomorrow: Cloudy, high 40-45, wind northwest, 20-25 mph.

Extended Forecast

Friday night: chance for snow, low 20s. Saturday: Rain possible, high in the 50s. Sunday: High 60, low about 30. Monday, dry, high 65-70, low about 30.

24-hour weather information is broadcast at 162.400 MHz.

local markets

Noon

- Wheat — \$2.37 bu.
 - Posted county price — \$2.32
 - Loan deficiency payment — 13¢
 - Corn — \$1.83 bu.
 - Posted county price — \$1.87
 - Loan deficiency payment — 12¢
 - Milo — \$2.73 cwt.
 - Soybeans — \$3.97 bu.
 - Posted county price — \$4.15
 - Loan deficiency payment — 74¢
 - Millet — \$4.15 cwt.
 - Sunflowers oil current — \$8.40 cwt.
 - loan deficiency payment — \$1.94
 - oil 1999 crop — \$8.90 cwt.
 - conf. current — \$17/\$10 cwt.
 - Pintos - \$12 (new crop)
- Local markets courtesy of Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun and Collingwood Grain
Local bean market courtesy of Prairie Pea and Bean

afternoon wire

Late news from the Associated Press
1 p.m.

NATO admits bombing error

BRUSSELS, Belgium — NATO today acknowledged mistakenly bombing a refugee convoy, but blamed the Serbs for putting the refugees in harm's way. "NATO confirms, from its preliminary investigation, it appears that one of its aircraft mistakenly dropped a bomb on a civilian vehicle in a convoy yesterday," said NATO spokesman Arild Isegg, reading a statement in Brussels. Thousands of Kosovar Albanians chased by Serb artillery fire poured into neighboring states today. Along the tense Albania-Yugoslav border, international observers reported a new round of Serb shelling. Yugoslav officials said 75 people died and more than two dozen were hurt in the Wednesday attack on the convoy. Previously, the alliance had suggested Serbs attacked the refugees, either from the ground or the air.

Winds push semis off road along freeway

By Tom Betz

Goodland Daily News

High winds were expected to continue through this afternoon, forecasters said, continuing the threat that more truck drivers would join the half dozen or so who have ridden their rigs into the ditch since Wednesday.

Aaron Johnson of the National Weather Service office in Goodland said northwesterly winds were gusting to 40 mph during the day, and there was a very brief snow flurry from Kanorado to Goodland about 11:30 a.m.

The winds, which peaked at 1:05 p.m. in Goodland Wednesday at 51 mph, caused several semi-trailer truck accidents along I-70, dispatchers at the Kansas Highway Patrol office in Norton said.

Accidents involving semis were reported at mile post 14.5 west of Goodland, mile 35, east of Goodland; mile 43.8 in Thomas County; mile 129 near WaKeeney; and mile 137 near Ogallah; and near Salina. There were no injuries, but because of the high winds several of the wrecks were not removed until this morning.

The combination of wind and rain

made traveling Sherman County roads treacherous and there were reports of vehicles sliding off into ditches, and in at least one case, blocking the road with the pickup sideways and high centered.

Johnson, from the weather service, said the winds should decrease tonight to a range of 15-25 mph, but will continue out of the northwest. He said the winds are expected to pick up again Friday to 25-35 mph with gusts up to 40 mph from the northwest.

"A strong area of low pressure continues to move east," he said, "but a high is parked over the Rockies and the pressure is tight between the high and the low, creating the winds."

"The low will slowly move north northeast through tomorrow, and the high will slowly move across the area by early Saturday and the winds should decrease," Johnson said. "It will be windy through Friday at least. Saturday morning will not be calm, but winds should be more normal by afternoon."

"Temperatures will start warming up Saturday, but will continue below normal through Friday. Saturday's high will be near 50 and it will be closer to normal over the weekend."

Land prices here soar as state sags

By Roxana Hegeman

Associated Press Writer

WICHITA (AP) — Buffeted by low commodity prices, farmland values in Kansas this year rose for the eighth straight year — but by the smallest increase since 1991, when the price of land declined, Kansas Agricultural Statistics reports.

Northwest Kansas, where irrigated farms are more common, led the rest of the state with a healthy rise in farmland prices. But in the eastern third of Kansas, farmland values dropped as supply-and-demand came into play.

Statewide, the average value for farmland in 1999 climbed to \$580 per acre, up half a percentage point from last year, the agency said. But even within the state, that number varied widely depending on whether the crop-land was irrigated or used for pasture. An irrigated acre, on average, was worth \$1,020, compared to \$623 for an acre of non-irrigated cropland. The overall average value of Kansas cropland was \$659 per acre. Rangeland was valued at \$370 per acre statewide.

Within those categories, however, are wide variations based on location.

An irrigated acre in northeast Kansas was valued at \$1,430 per acre, still the most expensive land in the state. An irrigated acre in northwest Kansas, by comparison, was \$1,090 per acre, even with that region's big boost in land values. And just below it, in west-central Kansas, an irrigated acre brought \$825.

The same wide variances can be seen in per-acre values of non-irrigated cropland and pasture. The cheapest farmland is in southwest Kansas, where pasture was valued at \$220 per acre.

Statistician Eddie Wells attributed the smaller land value increase statewide to low commodity prices. But he said other factors such as supply and demand, demographics and availability of cash and credit come into play.

"Based on the comments we are receiving, it appears to be a direct correlation between low commodity prices and the value of land," he said.

Northwest Kansas farms are rising faster in value than farmland elsewhere in the state, up 4.1 percent this year compared to last year. Farmland in south-central Kansas, which includes fast-growing Wichita, showed the next biggest rise at 3.4 percent.

Among other areas showing an increase: north-central Kansas, up 1.8 percent; central Kansas, up 1.8 percent; and west-central Kansas, up 1.2 percent. Farmland values in southwest Kansas showed no change.

Meanwhile, farmland values declined in all three eastern Kansas regions this year. Northeast Kansas was down 0.6 percent, east-central Kansas was down 1.3 percent and southeast Kansas was down 0.8 percent.

The agency compiles the land value report based on a canvass of farmers in June and January.

Wells said irrigated farmland has substantially higher yields, and the increases in land values can be tied to reducing the risks of crop losses.

"The northwest has a good percentage of irrigated land, probably a higher percentage in that area is irrigated," he said. "... South-central Kansas tracks under the same reasoning."

But Wells was less sure about what is driving the downturn in land prices in eastern Kansas.

"I can't really put my finger on that because of simple supply and demand," he said. "There are more instances of land being available now, and there aren't buyers for it, so the price goes down. I have a lot of uncertainty about that. We didn't glean much information from comments."

Like a giant erector set



Construction is underway on the Goodland's new 500,000 water tower near Centennial Park in the southwest portion of the city. All the steel has arrived, according to Robert Vasko, project supervisor from Pitt-DeMoine of Pittsburgh, Pa. The first 55-foot section of the tower was up by today, and Vasko said a special 80-ton crane should arrive Friday or Monday, depending on the weather, to handle the erection of the next 55 feet. Mike Berney of Wyoming is already welding on a section of the water ball which will be the top of the tower. The project is expected to take about three months for all the welding, and then a month or two for the painting and finishing.

Photo by Tom Betz / Goodland Daily News

Some taxpayers are actually giving up less

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the millions of Americans rushing to meet tonight's income tax deadline, consider this: Many middle-class people are actually paying slightly less in federal taxes than they did in 1995.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, taxpayers with the median family income — about \$39,000 in 1999 — will pay 18.9 percent of their income in all federal taxes this year. That compares to 19.7 percent four years ago, and is about \$400 less.

That might provide some small comfort as people rush to one of the hundreds of larger post offices that will stay open late to handle the crush of up to 40 million state and federal tax returns to be dispatched today.

(In Goodland, window service will end when the mail truck leaves at 4 p.m. today. The Colby post office will be open until midnight for late filers.)

But there was depressing news as well. The Tax Foundation, a nonprofit tax research group, said today "Tax

Freedom Day" would be May 11, a day later than last year. The foundation calculates it would take an average worker until that date to earn enough to pay his or her share of all federal, state and local individual and corporate taxes.

A reminder: If you can't finish in time, file for an extension using Form 4868 and pay as much of your estimated tax as possible to avoid penalties. You can also pay by MasterCard, American Express or Discover card by calling 1-888-2PAYTAX — for a 2.5 percent fee.



The westbound ramps of the west Goodland interchange with I-70 (Exit 17) will be closed for about a month beginning Monday.

Photo by Tom Betz / Goodland Daily News

I-70 ramps to close Monday for repaving

Closure of the westbound ramps at the western I-70 Goodland interchange, set for Friday, actually will begin Monday morning.

Donna Binning, construction engineer for the Kansas Department of Transportation, said the contractor, Koss Construction of Topeka, will have 31 working days to complete the ramp work. Once the K-27 ramps are completed, the crew will move to the east Goodland interchange.

Originally, the plans called for the ramps at the Edson interchange to be completed before the east Goodland exit, but Binning said Koss decided it would be easier to start on the west end and move east as quickly as possible.

The contract allows for 31 days, and based on six work days a week, the crew should move to the eastern Goodland exit by Monday, May 17.

Koss has been positioned concrete paving machines near the west exit, and continues to remove the old westbound concrete roadway, moving east to its batch plant, then starting at Edson

and working back west.

Goodland City Manager Ron Pickman said it was unfortunate that the work on the ramps could not be coordinated with the rebuilding of K-27 under I-70. The K-27 project is set for bids in June, said Chris McDuffett, district engineer for Kansas Department of Transportation.

"It would have been much easier on traffic if both could have been coordinated," Pickman said. "Now we will have to close one lane at a time when work begins to replace the roadway under I-70. We are concerned about having enough room for the trucks to make the necessary turns."

June is also when the city's Cherry Street project is expected to be let for bids, and work could begin on part of that by September, Pickman said.

Replacement of the bridge on old U.S. 24 bridge at Caruso remains in the schedule for July 1, and Sherman County Road Superintendent Curt Way expects the resurfacing of the east part of old U.S. 24 to begin by Aug. 1.