

weather report

41°
at noon



Today

- Sunset, 4:38 p.m.
- Tomorrow**
- Sunrise, 7:07 a.m.
- Sunset, 4:39 p.m.

Midday Conditions

- Soil Temperature 31 degrees
- Humidity 57 percent
- Sky Mostly sunny
- Winds north 20-25
- Barometer 29.89 inches and rising
- Record High 71° (1927)
- Record Low -14° (1942)

Last 24 Hours*

High 36°
Low 9°
Precipitation —

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Partly clear; low 10-15; winds West 5-15. Tomorrow: Mostly sunny; high 40; winds northwest 5-15.

Extended Forecast

Friday through Sunday. Dry through Sunday. High Friday 45-55; low 15. Saturday and Sunday highs 50-55; lows 20-25.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.
* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

- Wheat — \$2.10 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$1.94
 - Loan deficiency payment — 51¢
 - Corn — \$1.61 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$1.70
 - Loan deficiency pmt. — 29¢
 - Milo — \$2.38 hundredweight
 - Soybeans — \$4.00 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$3.93
 - Loan deficiency payment — 96¢
 - Millet — \$3.80 hundredweight
 - Sunflowers
 - Oil current crop — \$5.90 cwt.
 - Loan deficiency pmt. — \$3.84
 - Confection current — \$11/\$7 cwt.
 - Pinto beans — \$13(new crop)
- (Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and Prairie Pea and Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

afternoon wire

Late news from the Associated Press

1 p.m.

Dow recovers after short fall

NEW YORK — U.S. blue-chip stocks started to claw back today from Tuesday's slide, although technology stocks remained under pressure as investors cashed in on last year's record-shattering gains amid worries about the profitability of Internet companies.

European markets were down in late trading, but had recovered from their lows of the day. Asian markets, which ended their trading before American markets opened, suffered big losses.

The Dow Jones industrial average, which plummeted almost 360 points Tuesday, was up 102.07 at 11,100.00 at late morning. But the technology-heavy Nasdaq index, which plunged a record 264 points Tuesday, was off another 70.51.

Among unsettling factors for technology was news that Amazon.com's losses were not down, despite a jump in Christmas sales.

Cuban boy to go home

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Cuban boy whose rescue at sea launched a diplomatic tug-of-war between the United States and Fidel Castro "belongs with his father" and must be returned to the Cuba, U.S. immigration officials said today.

A decision announced by Doris Meissner, commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, requires 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez to leave Miami and return to Cuba by Jan. 14.

"Family reunification has long been a cornerstone of both American immigration law and U.S. practice," Meissner said. "This little boy, who has been through so much, belongs with his father."

She said the INS was ready to work with Elian's family in Miami and others to secure his return to Cuba.

The boy's father, Juan Gonzalez, was not immediately available for comment.

People protesting the INS decision gathered today in front of the agency's offices in Miami and the home of relatives who have cared for the boy since he was rescued on Thanksgiving Day.

The boy was found clinging to an inner tube at sea after his mother and nine others died when their boat sank during their effort to leave Cuba for Florida.

Elian quickly found himself in the middle of high-level diplomatic discussions as Cuban-Americans who had

fled the communist island demanded that he be allowed to remain in the United States. Cuban President Castro joined Elian's father in demanding the boy's return and sponsored massive demonstrations on the boy's behalf.

Even before the INS ruling was publicly announced, Elian's relatives in Miami said they would appeal.

After interviews with the elder Gonzalez, the boy's great-uncle and lawyers in Miami, the INS found that the father had the sole legal authority to speak on behalf of his son regarding his immigration status in the U.S..

Even though the boy's parents were divorced, the INS found that Elian had a "close and continuous relationship" with his father.

U.S. senator to visit Goodland Thursday

Kansas Sen. Sam Brownback will be in Goodland Thursday, visiting at Goodland High School, the Northwest Kansas Technical School and having lunch with area businessmen as part of his "listening tour."

Brownback is scheduled to arrive at Goodland's Renner Field at 9:30 a.m. and his first stop will be at the Goodland High School auditorium, where he will speak to the junior and senior classes.

Following the visit to the high school, Brownback will go to the

Northwest Kansas Technical School, where he will tour the campus. This will be Brownback's first visit to the 600-plus student campus and he will spend a few minutes at each program site.

For lunch, the senator will meet with about 20-30 area businessmen as part of his "listening tour" in the meeting room at the Student Union of the Technical School.

He will return to Topeka in the afternoon.

Cleaning up after Ol' Man Winter



City crews were busy Tuesday removing piles of snow from Monday's storm, which brought the first .24 inches of moisture for the year. The forecast is for dry, warmer weather through the weekend.
Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Daily News.

Area co-ops partner with grain giant

By Steve Haynes

The Goodland Daily News

Four farmer-owned cooperatives have joined with a multinational grain trading company in a partnership they hope will change the way grain is marketed across northwest Kansas.

In a deal that just a few years ago would have seemed akin to making a pact with the Devil himself, the co-ops are buying a half interest in grain giant Cargill's high-capacity grain facility southeast of Colby and a related elevator in town.

While they are buying half the Cargill facilities, the co-ops are not making any commitments to sell grain to it. But as owners, they'll have a stake in making the deal work, and they think Cargill will see them as partners, not competitors.

The co-ops include Frontier Equity Exchange, based in Goodland; Hi-Plains Cooperative out of Colby, Oakley-based CO-AG and Farmco Inc. of Tribune. They hope their investment will capture the efficiencies of a high-capacity elevator loading 110-car unit trains, saving them the cost of building one while helping them sell members' grain to markets they only dreamed of before. And the benefits may spread beyond members of the four big cooperatives.

"It should make a big difference to the whole area," said Randy Schoenthaler, general manager of Frontier Equity, noting that other elevators can sell grain to the partnership. "What it came down to was who had deep enough pockets to make the thing work."

The deal should open up markets for northwest Kansas grain in the world export trade, Schoenthaler said, and the addition of the co-ops to the ownership mix should change the focus of the Cargill elevators.

"The biggest thing that's going to happen is it's going to change the dynamics of that facility," Schoenthaler said. "It has been pretty much a wheat and milo facility. That was what the owner wanted, but not necessarily what we needed to ship."

Markets are opening up to export grain by ship from the Texas Gulf Coast and the Pacific Northwest, he said, and by rail to Mexico and Texas, among others. But to be a player, grain dealers need to be able to ship by the trainload.

"If you're going to be going to Mexico," said Schoenthaler, you really need to be shipping 100-car units trains, not the eight- or nine-car units we ship here on the Kyle."

The loading facility also could be used to market what are thought of as

specialty crops today, he said, including white wheat, in demand in Asia for making noodles, and white corn, big in the tortilla market to the south. By loading trains, the co-ops can even bid on shipload contracts.

The key is capturing the efficiency of the unit trains, which not only earn a lower freight rate (Schoenthaler said he wasn't sure how much lower), but also can reap volume rebates.

The co-ops knew they needed a high-capacity loadout, but why make a deal with a firm farmers often have thought of more as an enemy than a friend? It just made more sense that fighting, said John Strecker, general manager of Hi-Plains in Colby. His co-op had more experience with the facility, having shipped much of its grain through the then-Continental Grain elevator over the last few years.

Both he and Schoenthaler said the farmer-owned co-ops wanted to avoid a situation like the one that developed in WaKeeney, where Cargill and cooperatives aligned with Kansas City-based Farmland Industries built loadouts within sight of each other. Cargill apparently agreed, as this is the fourth similar partnership the firm has set up.

"Efficiency is the name of the game in today's agricultural markets," said Mickey Ebenkamp, sector manager for

Cargill in Kansas. "For too long, we've been afraid to cross the boundaries that we have set for ourselves as farmer-owned cooperatives, regional grain companies and international companies."

Strecker says the Colby elevator, though built nearly 20 years ago by Lincoln Grain, is a first-class facility. Schoenthaler said the partnership's joint board and as-yet-to-be-hired manager will have to decide how things work. He said he sees Cargill's downtown elevator (formerly Cooper Grain) as being used for storage while the big facility out south loads unit trains.

The owners will still have the option of shipping grain by truck, as most corn has moved in the past, or on Phillipsburg-based Kyle, which Schoenthaler said does a great job for them but can't move enough grain at critical times between wheat and corn harvests.

"I really don't see that we'll do any less business on the Kyle than we do right now," he added.

But he does see it as opening up new markets and lowering costs for farmers while capturing some of the money the co-ops now spend on shipping.

"I think we had a good relationship with Cargill," said Colby's Strecker. "I just see it as we now are doing some business with ourselves instead."

Graves outlines budget

Legislators trying to find way to increase money for schools

By John Hanna

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — Republican legislators plan to ignore Gov. Bill Graves' suggestion to break their word about increased spending for public education, and find some way to keep their promise.

"I fully expect the Legislature to restore the funding for education to the level we promised last session," said Senate President Dick Bond, R-Overland Park.

On Tuesday, the GOP governor sent a revised state budget to legislators in which he proposed breaking a promise he and legislators made to the state's 304 school districts.

"Based on the governor's big-picture budget plan, that was the best he could do in terms of an increase," Graves spokesman Don Brown said.

The 1999 Legislature increased per pupil spending by \$50 for a total of \$3,770 during the 1999-2000 school year. Graves wants to cut that back to \$37, or \$3,757 per pupil.

"The Legislature should honor its commitment," said House Appropriations Chairman David Adkins, R-Leawood. "Right now, it's not the time to be going backward."

Democrats agreed. "Seven short months later, the governor's asking us to renege on that promise. I think that's going to be a tough sell," said House Minority Leader Jim Garner, D-Coffeyville.

Governors normally wait until the State of the State address to outline a revised version of the current operating budget, along with a budget for the following fiscal year.

However, Graves wanted to give legislators a chance to begin work early on revising the budget for fiscal 2000, which ends June 30. The House Appropriations and Senate Ways and Means committees plan to meet Thursday and Friday to discuss his proposals. The Legislature convenes Monday.

The state finished its 1999 fiscal year on June 30 with \$73.4 million less in revenues than expected in its general fund. That led Graves to propose changes in the fiscal 2000 budget approved by legislators last year.

The general fund is the largest source of money for Kansas government programs and where the state deposits most of its tax money.

Graves proposed cuts of \$67.4 million, or about 1.5 percent, in the general fund spending approved by the 1999 Legislature.

However, even with those changes, general fund spending still would be about 4.6 percent more in fiscal 2000 than in fiscal 1999. The budget approved by the 1999 Legislature called for a 6.2 percent increase in general fund spending.

And the total budget picture is even more positive.

The governor's proposal would actually increase spending from all revenue sources for fiscal 2000 by \$43.7 million, or 0.5 percent. The new total budget would be \$8.49 billion, with a little more than half coming from the general fund.

Judge to decide fate of Republican River by end of month

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Attorney General Carla Stovall has accused Nebraska of shorting Kansas of billions of gallons of water under the Republican River Compact.

But in a federal courtroom on Tuesday, David Cookson, assistant Attorney General for Nebraska, argued his state has not violated the compact because it does not apply to groundwater. Nebraska drills wells in the Republican basin, which Stovall said illegally depletes the flow of the river.

Special Master Vincent McKusick heard oral arguments in the case on Tuesday and said he will make his ruling by the end of the month.

Stovall filed a lawsuit in May 1998 saying that every year Kansas is shorted about 10 billion gallons of water by Nebraska.

The compact, signed by Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado in 1943, spells out distribution of water from the river.

Nebraska argues that the river compact does not

apply to groundwater or water pumped from wells that have been drilled in the Republican River basins.

The Republican River begins in northeast Colorado, runs across the northwest tip of Kansas, then snakes across southwestern Nebraska before re-entering Kansas just south of Superior, Neb.

After McKusick makes his decision, the Supreme Court will review it. McKusick is a retired chief justice of Maine who was appointed by the U.S. Supreme Court to decide on the case.