

Farmers share dry woes

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type of losses we'll have this year," said Larry McCants, president of First National Bank in Goodland. "I think we'll see double or triple liquidations this fall and spring."

Speaking briefly after hearing the testimony, each panel member said they understand the farmers' worries because they've been in the farmers' shoes. They said Congress will try hard to help when it reconvenes in September. Until then, they said, all they can do is listen to the farmers' problems and pray for a lot of rain.

"We're in a very good position to get some type of drought assistance," Adams told the crowd, "considering the people we have working for us in Washington."

Several drought assistance bills have been submitted to Congress, including ones from Rep. Moran and Sen. Roberts, but no decisions have been made. President Bush has said drought assistance should come out of money set aside to pay for the new farm bill to avoid a bigger budget deficit.

Many Kansas counties, including Sherman, have been declared disaster areas because of drought damage, making farmers eligible for low-inter-

est emergency loans from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But farmers say the last thing they need is another loan.

Ben Duell, a Sherman County farmer, echoed many of the speakers when he told the panel the money shouldn't come out of the new farm bill, but from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which steps in after a natural disaster.

Davidson, who is touring Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska, agreed the drought has caused enough damage to be considered a natural disaster, but said his agency would have to change its policies to help drought victims. He said the agency only helps people who have been forced from their homes because of a natural disaster.

"Unfortunately," he said, "farmers aren't being displaced from their homes, but from their livelihood."

Two northwest Kansas agriculture extension agents talked about how dry it really is here.

Dana Belshe, Sherman County agent, said between May 15 and Aug. 20, a growing period for fall crops, the county received just 3.78 inches of rain, which is more than three inches below the normal of 6.88 inches for that period. He said it's been the sec-

ond driest May, June and July in history, the first being in 1924, and the fifth hottest year on record.

Since the past few years have been drier than normal, Belshe said, thirsty crops aren't able to draw on water stored in the ground. Those reserves have dried up.

"It will take several years for producers to recover from this drought," he said.

Roger Stockton, area crop extension specialist in Colby, said the ground is so dry it's going to start blowing away and there won't be any plants there to catch it.

"We're at an extreme risk of having a mini-Dust Bowl situation out here this winter," he said.

Stockton said farmers desperately need help.

"It's time for some kind of intervention to save western Kansas," he said. "I don't think anyone wants to see this area turn into a ghost town."

Davidson said the Risk Management Agency so far this year has paid out \$97 million in crop insurance, primarily for wheat losses. He said it will likely end up paying double or triple that figure after the fall harvest, which is expected to be one of the most disappointing in 20 or more years. Last



John Thaumert, president of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, told a panel of state and federal officials on Monday at the Kansas Drought Forum that farmers are in desperate need of drought assistance. Photo by Rachel Miscall/The Goodland Daily News

year, he said, a total of \$159 million was paid in crop insurance.

Davidson said the drought is hitting Colorado, Kansas, South Dakota and Montana the worst, but Texas, Oregon, Nevada, Indiana and the northern High Plains are also suffering. Palmgren

opened the forum by saying 38 percent of the U.S. is in severe drought, and some areas have been suffering for five years.

"These farmers can jokingly say 'We used to be called wheat growers,'" he said, "but now we're called wheat

planters."

Unger said farmers and ranchers aren't joking when they tell how much devastation drought has caused.

"They usually don't cry wolf," he said, "and I don't think we're crying wolf today."

High winds, hail cause damage to Kanorado buildings

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office in Goodland.

But, he added, we didn't miss out on the strong winds and large hail the storm spawned.

Mentzer said in Sherman County there were reports of gusts up to 89 m.p.h. and golf-ball sized hail north and west of Goodland. At 4 p.m., he

said, drivers on I-70 west of Goodland reported hail and wind had broken car windows.

Kanorado seems to have gotten the worst of it, Mentzer said. Residents say part of the roof on the old school house was ripped off and an accident at the Collingwood Grain elevator apparently knocked out power in town for over three hours.

There were no reports of damage in Goodland, Mentzer said, but a barn and other buildings in Kanorado were nearly torn apart by the winds. He said meteorologists were going to Kanorado today to check the damage.

Peggy Witzel, who runs the Little Butterfly Cafe in Kanorado, said she owns the old school building. Wind blew off the part of the roof covering

the stage, she said.

"It took the wood off and everything," Witzel said. "There's just a big hole there now."

She said she plans to put on a new roof, though it will be expensive because the building isn't insured.

A grain dryer apparently blew into a transformer at Collingwood Grain, Witzel said, and wind blew down power lines and large branches all over town. The manager of Collingwood in Goodland wasn't available this morning to confirm what happened, and a secretary said the power is still out at the Kanorado elevator.

Witzel said the entire town was without power for three to four hours Monday night, but city workers had the lights back on by 9:30 p.m.

"There was major damage," she said, adding that townspeople did a good job of cleaning up branches last night and this morning.

Witzel said someone told her they thought they saw a tornado, but there were no reports made to the weather

service office.

Mentzer said there were reports of major wind damage across the Tri-State area, but there were no confirmed tornadoes. He said meteorologists are investigating a report of a small tornado in Cheyenne County south of Wheeler.

Strong winds reportedly turned over some rail cars in Wallace, east of Sharon Springs, about 5 p.m., Mentzer said, and wind and grapefruit-sized hail broke out windows and damaged roofs in Hitchcock County in Nebraska.

"This whole complex was very significant," he said. Two storm cells formed near the Nebraska line, one near Benkelman, north of Bird City, and another farther to the east.

The storm started developing after noon around Benkelman, Neb., Mentzer said, and started moving south, rolling into Cheyenne County about 2:30 p.m. It hit Sherman and Thomas counties about 4:15 p.m., he said.

"That's when it started getting really, really dark," he said.

The thick, fast-moving clouds almost completely blocked out the sun, bringing darkness to Goodland.

Once the southbound storm passed over I-70, Mentzer said, it didn't drop much more rain, but kept producing strong winds.

He said Sharon Springs received only about .88 of an inch.

While this area stayed relatively dry, there was flooding in Atwood, Bird City and Colby, Mentzer said.

Northwest Kansas could be in for another doozy tonight, he said. Severe thunderstorms are expected to form in eastern Colorado this afternoon and move east over Sherman County and into Kansas.

"It's the same setup," he said, noting that there's a good chance for more rain this week.

"We've been in a wet pattern since Friday night," he said, "and it seems like we'll stay in it at least through Wednesday."

Thieves strike store second time

By Doug Stephens

The Goodland Daily News

KC's Videos was broken into Thursday night for the second time in a month and this time the thieves got away with a computer and caused about \$1,000 in damage to a back door.

Kindi Bauman, who owns the video store at 1018 Main with her husband Chris, said she got to her business about 7 a.m. Friday morning to use a sun lamp and found the back door broken down and a computer used to keep track of accounts and inventory missing.

The first time the store was broken into — through the same back door on June 26 — thieves got away with cash, Bauman said, but she doesn't keep money around anymore.

"Getting burned once was more than enough for me," she said.

KC's isn't the only business which has been broken into lately. The build-

ing north of the video store, Picnic in the Park at 1016 Main, was broken into late Sunday, Aug. 17, or early the next day.

The burglars got away with about \$20 in petty cash.

Luckily, Bauman said, most of the files on the store's stolen computer were saved on a back-up, and have been transferred to a replacement computer. There were a few items which had to be re-entered, she said, and she was doing some work by hand until the new system was up to speed this morning.

The computer stolen is set up specifically for her store, she said, and won't be of much use to anyone else.

"I don't know why they took it," Bauman said. "I don't see the motive. They won't be able to do anything with it."

The owner said she isn't sure if any movies or video games are missing

from the store, and she will have to do an inventory.

Chris Bauman said he's not sure how the back door was broken into. It is made of steel, he said, and isn't easy to get around. The police are investigating the robbery, he said, and they told him they are looking at a few suspects.

The Baumans encourage anyone with information about the crime to call the Goodland Area Crime Stoppers at 899-5665.

Callers can stay anonymous, and rewards can be given up to \$1,000 if the call leads to a conviction.

Bauman said she hopes the police catch the criminals, but until then, she has taken a new security measure.

"I bring my dog down to the store with me every day," Bauman said. "Ever since the first time we got robbed, I make sure to have him with me."

Colorado not paying for water

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of Kansas is entitled," Padilla said.

Campbell's assessment of how long it will take Kansas to see any money comes as the state is struggling financially. Gov. Bill Graves recently cut \$41 million from the budget because state revenues aren't living up to expectations.

But a 1996 Kansas law limits how the state could spend money received from Colorado to litigation costs and water conservation projects in the Ar-

kansas River basin in southwest and south-central Kansas.

Neufeld said for people in his area, an increased flow of water is more important than money, because people assume attorneys fees will eat up most of the dollars.

Any resolution of the lawsuit with Nebraska over the Republican River appears years away.

Kansas filed it in 1998, and another special master has yet to rule on Kansas' claim that Nebraska allowed the river to be depleted as it flows into

north-central Kansas. In fact, Campbell said a trial before the special master isn't expected to begin until next summer.

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