

Group plans to keep water flowing

MOUND CITY, Mo. (AP) — A nonprofit group has a plan to keep the water — and the stream of wildlife watchers — flowing at the drought-stricken Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

The key? Propane.

The wildlife refuge doesn't have any money budgeted to keep using its propane-powered water pump, a rarely used antique installed decades ago to fill only two small pools.

Refuge manager Ron Bell estimated the propane tab could hit \$6,000 or more to fill large marshes.

That's where the group, Friends of Squaw Creek, comes in. Its members are mounting a fund drive to keep the pump running.

Migrating waterfowl will survive, even if the refuge runs dry. They simply move south or to the area's large reservoirs.

But at risk is a tradition of wildlife watchers driving onto refuge roads to see thousands of geese and ducks nearby and bald eagles preying upon them.

"People come from all over the United States to see this," said George Scheil of Raytown, a member of Friends of Squaw Creek.

On Thursday, water gushed from the pump into a ditch. Ducks used a small wetland nearby, and bald eagles sat atop muskrat houses, watching them. About 50 eagles were at the refuge last week.

A distant flock of snow geese flew into a northwest wind.

"They probably won't be landing here," Bell said. "They like big open water, and we don't have any."

Usually the 7,500-acre federal refuge has up to 300,000 snow geese by late November, along with thousands of ducks and hundreds of bald eagles.

Bell said he doesn't know whether pumping water will fill marshes in time to bring back the snow geese and more eagles.

"But at least it will put us in good shape for spring migration if we don't get rain," he said.

Farmers hoping to sell schools apples

BURNT HILLS, N.Y. (AP) — New York's apple growers have found local schools to be a hard sell, so the state is stepping in to help boost business.

Many schools have contracts with large conglomerates that handle all food service, so they have not purchased homegrown apples and other produce from local farmers.

"That is where I've found a road-block trying to get in locally," said Jerry Knight, a third-generation farmer who has been growing apples in New York's Saratoga County for about 40 years.

The state aims to get homegrown produce into schools by removing some of the restrictions on their food-service contracts, said Jessica Chittenden, spokeswoman for the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

The agency worked with the state Department of General Services to increase schools' flexibility to use discretionary funds to buy produce from local farmers, even if they don't have the lowest bid.

"It kind of allows them to go around the bidding process, but it's very limited," she said.

Before that agreement, schools could only buy products with state contracts from the lowest bidder.

The agency also is trying to connect schools with local farmers through a database on its Web site listing farmers equipped to use state contracts and to supply institutions, she said.

As a result, apple growers are finding some success selling their crops to schools, especially over the past two years, said Peter Gregg, spokesman for the New York Apple Association.

"But there have been a lot of problems as well. A lot of growers have just had the door slammed in their face," Gregg said.

Schools tend to buy their produce from the U.S. Department of Agriculture food program because it's cheaper, he said.

"What they're getting there is literally bottom-of-the-barrel apples from Washington state that are 3,000 miles old," he said.

The shipped fruit is often soft and bruised and turns students off, he said.

"What we'd prefer to see is kids get fresh, local apples," he said. "They're not going to eat them unless they taste good."

The group has also worked with the state over the past year to win bids for New York apple growers through the

USDA program.

"We've been working with them to put out to bid apple varieties that are traditional to New York," he said. "That's really been a big breakthrough for us."

Carol Beebe, executive director of the New York State School Food Service Association, representing 3,500 school food-service workers, said the group is encouraging schools to buy local produce.

"One of our goals ... is to consume locally grown produce and to offer it to our students, so they have more enticing options," she said.

The group recently held an annual trade show for its members that included the New York Apple Association. Gregg, the apple association's spokesman, said the schools market is "a way to cultivate future apple consumers."

NY Farms!, a statewide coalition of organizations promoting New York agriculture and local foods, worked with the state to develop a farm-to-schools week, which started at the end of September.

During the week, locally produced food was brought into schools while farmers and other speakers talked to students about agriculture and nutrition.

Students around the state tended to prefer New York's Empire apples in taste tests conducted during the week, said Glenda Neff.

Local surgeon names Colby doctors in lawsuit

LAWSUIT, from Page 1

has been named in a lawsuit by Margaret Ann Staats of Menlo through her attorney, Charles Worden of Norton.

Staats alleges that she suffered battery and emotional distress and is asking for relief in excess of \$75,000 for herself and for similar relief for her husband, Troy.

The notice of hearing will involve O'Neal's motion on behalf of his client, Hildyard, in which he has asked for "inspection and reproduction" of certain records to which Staats' attorney believes are "overly broad in nature and discovery."

Staats' attorney, according to an objection for subpoena, has further said that he believes business records subpoenaed for all information and documents of any kind and those relating to the Thomas County Sheriff's office are among those considered to be too broad in nature.

Tuesday's telephone conference will involve Judge Jack Burr, O'Neal and Worden.

In the case against Drs. Hildyard, Ketting and Citizens Medical Center board member Judith Sears, Michel on behalf of Dr. Davis, is also demanding discovery, pre-trial conferences and a trial by jury of 12 under Kansas law.



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Juvenile programs to be cut

GREAT BEND (AP) — Barton County officials say the state's budget problems could force them to cut programs designed to keep juvenile offenders out of more trouble.

The Juvenile Services office of the 20th Judicial District will present a revised budget Monday to the Barton County Commission that reflects a 6.5 percent budget cut from the state, director Carla Drescher said.

That comes after a 4 percent cut at the start of the year.

The reductions could lead to cuts in the Great Bend Teen Court and Project Stay programs.

Teen Court lets first-time offenders

between the ages of 10 and 18 avoid court by facing a jury of their peers.

The Teen Court typically sentences youths to community service.

Project Stay provides intense supervision for students who have been truant from school because truancy is the best predictor of future criminal activity, Drescher said.

Drescher said the commissioners will "have to make some big decisions" Monday to cut \$45,000 from her programs.

Teen Court and Project Stay are the only juvenile services programs not mandated by the Juvenile Justice Authority and are most vulnerable, she

said.

The Project Stay staff was reduced from four case managers to three this year during the first round of budget cuts.

Drescher also reduced the budget for cleaning the juvenile services office, eliminated the training budget and eliminated most of the equipment budget.

County Attorney Rick Scheuffler said the juvenile services advisory board is recommending eliminating one of the three remaining Project Stay case workers and assigning Teen Court Coordinator Don Learned to take over those duties.

KU researchers tackle land mines

LAWRENCE (AP) — The United Nations estimates there are 70 million land mines buried around the world, many of them in war-torn countries like Afghanistan, Bosnia and Cambodia where they kill or injure about 18,000 people a year.

"We have enough land mines to kill all the people in the country," says Bory Pen, a Kansas University graduate student from Cambodia. "They're like hidden enemies ready to kill."

Jim Stiles, a KU associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science, is working on ground-penetrating radar techniques to locate land mines.

We're glad to work on it, and the students appreciate the severity of the problem."

Stiles' research, financed by the U.S. Army, is part of a nationwide effort to develop new techniques for finding mines.

Army officials eventually would like techniques that scan large areas at once or could be operated from aircraft.

"Finding a solution for the mine detection problem is like finding a solution for some terrible disease," Stiles

said. "There are lots of researchers working on parts of the problem."

Pen says mines injure or kill four or five people every day in Cambodia.

"People just walk into their backyards, step on a mine and are killed," he said. "We have a lot of handicapped people who were hurt by land mines. A lot of them are beggars. There's nothing else for them to do."

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