

Turtle rescued



Police officer Doug Whitson grabbed the female snapping turtle by the tail Wednesday and took it to a safer location. The turtle had been in the backyard at 1605 Clark Ave. Whitson said it was better to get the snapping turtle out of town to prevent any pets or kids from getting bit.
Photo by Jessica Corbin/The Goodland Star-News

St. Francis man helps design oil well cap

By Karen Krien
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A St. Francis man, overnight, became a well-known and a sought-after guest for a number of national news stations including NBC, CNN and Fox. It all came about when a writer for the Christian Science Monitor got ahold of information that he was one of the guys who designed the containment cap for the Gulf oil spill from the Macondo well off the shore of Louisiana.

However, Joe Caldart, a reserved, quiet guy said he is horrified at the attention. He received many phone calls asking for information and requests to be a guest on national television. He said he has turned them all down and refused to give information.

"I was just one of 10, maybe 15 plumbers who turned in designs which were all similar," he said.

He was referred to as "Joe the Plumber" but he is not the famed Joe that made the headlines during the presidential election. However, he is a retired plumber and has been one since he was 15 years old.

He and hundreds of other plumbers, he said, all realized that plugging the gusher was a matter of "plain, common plumber sense."

When they started showing the break in the pipe, his wife, Jamie said, he shook his head and said, why don't they just plug it?

He started making sketches of



Joe Caldart

ways to stop the oil spill which happened the middle of May. He talked to an engineer at BP in Houston, Texas. He was told that the company was not interested in stopping the leak but instead, harvesting the oil. However, the engineer said he could submit his drawings to Deep Water Horizon Response, the company which built the well.

In the meantime, the condition of the oil spill was getting worse.

Deep Water sent back a form which detailed the design, equipment needed and the cost. He filled out the form and sent it back. He was told the idea was transferred to the logistic office for review.

Three days later, he called BP and a secretary answered the phone. She put her hand over the mouthpiece, then told the other person in the room that he was calling about the design. Caldart could hear the response which was, "him and every other small-town idiot!"

Caldart had three different drawings and all were based on the way a plumber would cap a sewer break only on a much bigger scale.

The first design was to install a hydraulic piston on the containment cap and there were barbs to hold the cap in place. The second drawing, after the pipe was cut, was to internally thread the pipe and put the cap in place by screwing it on. The third drawing was like a fire hydrant with the top flange with an internal seal bolted on the blowout preventer.

The equipment used to stop the leak, Caldart said, is a steel cap and underneath it is the internal seal — a design he had drawn on May 25.

He thought he had been brushed off, so he said he started e-mailing everybody his design. One reached the desk of Dr. Robert Bea, a University of California at Berkeley petroleum engineer, who, when called by the *Monitor* writer, said Caldart's plan was very similar to the successful capping operation.

"Kevin Costner and James Cameron had tried to help and they didn't get anywhere so I didn't think I had a chance," Caldart said. "People

think plumbers don't know more than scientists."

However, he added, by that time, the scientists were thinking about plugging the hole with garbage and tires. Can you imagine what that would have been like when it broke loose and blew tires and garbage all over the coast!

Caldart said he isn't a hero, that there were other plumbers who sent in designs and they probably took "nuts and bolts" from all the designs. However, he thinks that BP should recognize all the people who did take the time to send in drawings.

We are all a bunch of plumbers working together to help the people who did the actual work to stop the leak. Stopping the leak was the main concern of everyone.

Caldart said he didn't believe there had ever been the pressure in the well that BP had claimed there to be. Nevertheless, it had released 60,000 barrels of oil which was coming into the Gulf each day.

As of Tuesday, the oil had been contained in the well but there is a small amount of leaking of oil from somewhere. Caldart said that BP hadn't decided whether to close the well or release the pressure and continue surface containment efforts. They are talking about filling the pipe with mud but, he said, that was tried before on another well and it hadn't worked.

Citizen asks county to schedule tax sale

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Jim Precht, hospital financial officer, arrived, and told the board he has not put the depreciation amounts on the inventory list.

Thomas asked about Lake Mellot who works full-time with Gleason and what their duties are besides the ambulance.

Gleason said he and Mellot have other duties besides the ambulance including working with the emergency room.

The commissioners held a 15 minute closed door session to discuss personnel matters with the commissioners, County Clerk Janet Rumpel, Jolly and Precht.

It was decided Jolly and Precht would meet with the commissioners again on Monday, Aug. 16, and hopefully have closer figures on the inventory.

The commissioners visited with Jolly, Precht and Gleason about the ambulance billing and doing the billing in house. It appears if a third party biller is hired, it would be very costly. Strnad asked if someone in house could be trained to do the billing and they thought it could be worked out.

Precht said the county will need to decide what name they are going to use for the ambulance service because it is a new entity and the county will have to apply for their own numbers.

Hear an update on weed spraying from Curt Way, public works manager, and Doug Hall, noxious weed director, who reported on the pre-emergent spraying to kill the Amaranth.

Hall has sprayed County Roads 70 to 80 and Road 2 to K-27. He said he thought the pre-emergent is working great.

Commissioner Max Linin and Strnad thought it would be better not to mow again as it would spread the

seeds around. Way said leaving the grasses uncut would be better, and around Labor Day to mow again so they are cut before the snow comes. The commissioners agreed with this.

Hall said half of the Road and Bridge chemical budget has been spent.

Strnad asked Hall how the man he hired is working. Hall said he thought pretty well, and has him spot spraying the noxious weeds.

Way asked for a closed session to discuss personnel matters. The commissioners agreed to a 15 minute closed session with the commissioners, Way and Hall.

When the commissioners returned Thomas made a motion to change Kim Tompkins from permanent part-time to permanent full-time, splitting her salary between road and bridge and noxious weeds. The motion passed.

- The commissioners did not set a time to view the road location out on County Road 27 between Road 2 and 3. The commissioners asked Way to put together a cost estimate on putting in the road including the cost of moving the 2-inch gas line. The commissioners will consider the issue at their next meeting at 9 a.m. on Friday if the numbers are ready.

- Approved appointment of Doug Irvin to replace Steve Riebel on the Goodland Regional Medical Center board to fill out the term.

Groundwater, conservation partners on water

Irrigators in designated priority areas of northwest Kansas may be eligible to conserve water and improve water quality on agricultural working lands through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Water Enhancement Program.

Through the water program, the USDA will leverage additional resources and services from conservation partners. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service administers the program and enters into agreements with conservation partners to help landowners plan and implement conservation practices in established priority areas.

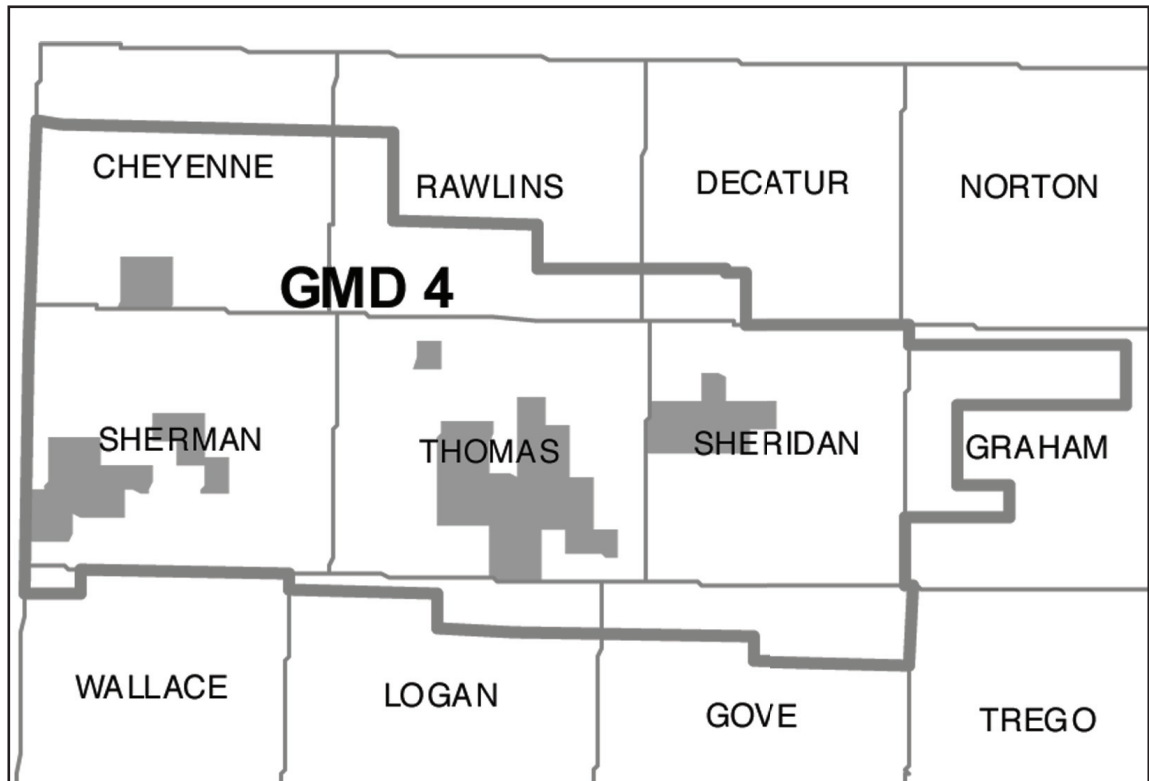
Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 4, is one of three Kansas groundwater management districts to submit water enhancement proposals that were approved. The Groundwater District will partner with the conservation service beginning this year.

Farmers and ranchers in the project areas have until Friday, Aug. 13, to apply for this program at their local conservation office located at 210 W. 10th.

Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 4 was funded for a three-year period receiving almost \$2.7 million. Six designated agricultural areas are eligible to directly conserve groundwater in the district.

To address the aquifer overdraft concern, NRCS and the GMD No. 4 want to convert irrigated cropland to dryland cropland acres. Portions of Cheyenne, Sherman, Sheridan and Thomas Counties are eligible.

The portions of Sherman County are in the southwest and north and



east of Goodland (see map).

"NRCS is working hard to support efforts to protect and preserve our water resources in Kansas with our partners," said Eric B. Banks, NRCS State Conservationist.

"The funding announced will help producers in Kansas begin

or expand plans and projects to improve water conservation and quality," he said.

Additional information about AWEP and a map of project areas is available at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/awep.

AWEP agreements provide as-

sistance to producers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. All participants must meet EQIP eligibility requirements.

Information about other NRCS conservation programs can be found at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.

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Vote Yes for Economic Development and Sherman County

The Sherman County Economic Development Council is a group of volunteers appointed by the Sherman County Commissioners. The purpose of Economic Development is to build capacity for economic growth and sustainability.

A vote in favor of the mill levy for Economic Development will replace, not add to, current City and County funding.

One existing program administered by Economic Development has generated \$135,000 to improve both businesses and homes. A stipulation for participating in the program is spending the money at local businesses. Of the \$135,000, \$45,000 in grant money (tax paid funds) spurred \$90,000 in private spending.

On behalf of Goodland and Kanorado, Economic Development has applied for the Community Development Block Grants for Housing. In this program, up to \$800,000 in federal funds would be used to improve targeted areas.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Program is a

tax rebate program that encourages building improvements. To date, 140 applications have been submitted for properties valuing \$8,300,320.

Going forward, Economic Development is working to bring a new grocery store to Goodland. The office will continue to offer programs that encourage existing business growth and improvements. Economic Development will also improve the marketing strategy used to attract new business. Over the next two years, the goal is to bring in 4 businesses and 40 jobs.

The objective of economic growth is to expand the tax base, which reduces the tax burden for all Sherman County residents.

Your vote in support of funding for Economic Development will help us "go forward" and continue to be a productive and positive community. Money from the mill levy will replace current City and County funding.

Citizens in Support of Economic Development Treasurer, Don Newell