

Winter storms help end long drought

Northwest Kansas is out of the drought, according to the federal Drought Monitor, partly thanks to the almost 30 inches of snowfall and less of an inch of rain in the last three weeks.

Scott Blair, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said the drought monitor is released once a month.

The most recent report, which came out Thursday, showed northwest Kansas, including Oberlin, out of the drought and on a normal status.

Mr. Blair said the recent storms, which brought 24 inches of snow at

Snow seems to fall all weekend

It seemed to snow a little, snow heavy, stop and then snow a little almost all weekend, but by the time it was done, Oberlin had accumulated four inches of light, fluffy powder.

In all, National Weather Service reports show that Oberlin received four inches of snow over the weekend which just seemed to keep stacking up on the previous 24 inches. Finally Sunday night, the snow

stopped, although the wind kept blowing as the temperature dropped to 0 degrees.

Even though some kids were hopeful, the Oberlin School District didn't cancel classes on Monday. The district had a scheduled late start for teacher training and ran on mud routes, but the students were in school all day.

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the end of 2006 and another four inches over the weekend, helped put a dent in the area's drought status.

The outlook, he said, looks better for northwest Kansas. It certainly has improved, he said.

The kind of weather we're having, with so much moisture, just isn't normal for the winter months,

said Mr. Blair. It just happened that there were two systems back to back with slow-moving storms that pulled a lot of moisture out of the Gulf of Mexico.

That meant a significant amount of snow for the area.

Mr. Blair said unlike northwest Kansas, southwest Nebraska, which is in the Goodland weather station's coverage area, is still in a dry to moderate drought.

For the next 14 days, he said, it looks like the Oberlin area will go back to having normal precipitation for the year, which means there is just a chance.

What isn't normal is that the area is set up for very cold temperatures until the middle of the week at least, when things start to get a little warmer.

Temperatures, said Mr. Blair, should stay fairly chilly, with the high on Friday forecast for 37 degrees.

The colder temperatures, which have been in the teens during the day, have been caused by a large Arctic air mass from Canada and the large area covered by snow. Moderate temperatures should return soon, more like normal winter in this part of the country, he said.

City, county and schools could get help

Representatives from the city, county and school district met with two officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency on Saturday about the damage and work done after the holiday snow storms.

Decatur County was one of the 44 declared a disaster area after a storm that dropped 24 inches at the end of the year.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he met with a man and woman from the agency Saturday morning along with Tim Stallman, county road and bridge supervisor, and Kelly Glodt, school superintendent.

The meeting Saturday morning, said Mr. Shike, was his second with representatives this winter.

The first was a phone meeting, said Mr. Shike, about the ice storm which damaged the city's electrical system before Christmas.

The agency will pay for overtime hours for the storm at the end of the year and equipment hours for the

city, Mr. Shike said, adding that he doesn't know the cost yet, but the agency will pay 100 percent of the overtime. That covers when the crew went out on Saturdays, Sundays and in the evening after a normal shift at work, he said.

At the end of January, said Mr. Shike, the representatives will come back and the paperwork for the hours and equipment use will be filled out.

Mr. Shike said the city and the agency are just in the preliminary stages of figuring the damage to the electrical system. He said he still doesn't know what will happen with that.

Mr. Glodt said he thought the meeting had gone well, but nothing is set in stone. He said he thought he would have to meet with Mr. Shike and Mr. Stallman again before the representatives come back.

He said the roof over the high (See FEDERAL on Page 8A)

Oberlin woman found dead in alley behind her house

An Oberlin woman found dead in the alley behind her home last Wednesday died of exposure in the night, when temperatures dipped to 13 degrees, police said.

Leah Marie McCullough, 38, died sometime between 10:30 and 11 p.m. last Tuesday and 6:43 a.m. last Wednesday morning, when her husband George found her in the alley behind their house at 706 N. East Avenue.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said Mr. McCullough called the police department around 6:45 a.m. last Wednesday. Chief Lockhart said Mr. McCullough said his wife left home sometime between 10:30 and 11 p.m. to head up the alley between the 700 blocks of North York and North East to take food to a neighbor.

Mr. McCullough said he and his wife and some friends had been drinking at home that night. He had laid down on the couch when she left and woke up the next morning. Chief Lockhart said Mr. McCullough searched the house for his wife and didn't find her. He then headed up the alley, where he found her and

immediately called 911. Mrs. McCullough was unresponsive when the ambulance arrived and was pronounced dead. Chief Lockhart said he sent the body to Hays for an autopsy.

At the end of last week, he said, he didn't have anything in writing, but knew that there wasn't any sign of foul play.

Mrs. McCullough died a natural death due to exposure, basically because she was outside in the cold all night, he said. There weren't any signs of her falling and hitting her head or anything like that, the chief said.

Chief Lockhart said the fact that she had been drinking that evening could have played a part in her death, but he couldn't blame the alcohol alone. He said there were signs of hypothermia at the scene, but didn't elaborate.

Chief Lockhart said the alley was snowpacked and icy. Mrs. McCullough still had the food she was taking to her friend, never having made it.

Mr. McCullough said it wasn't (See WIFE on Page 8A)



Students pack up food

AFTER SCHOOL last week, Dakota Soderlund (above) helped load a box of food into a pickup owned by Joe Stanley of Stanley Hardware. The students from the junior high, including Joe Hirsch (left), helped Mr. Stanley load food from the store's holiday drive to take to the Decatur County Food Pantry in the basement of the United Church.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Three file for April city, school elections

Three people have filed for the city-school general election at the beginning of April.

Last week, Oberlin School Board members Barb Olson and Monte Moore filed for re-election. Both decided to pay the \$5 filing fee instead of getting 50 signatures on a petition.

Melinda Enfield, who filed to run for the Oberlin City Council, decided to carry a petition. She needs 25 signatures, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn.

Anyone who wants to run needs to file by noon on Tuesday in the clerk's office at the court-

house. Candidates either pay the \$5 filing fee or get a petition signed.

Seats up for election in April include:

- Four on the Oberlin School Board held now by Jeannie Martin, Kurt Vollertsen, Mr. Moore and Mrs. Olson.

- Three on the Oberlin City Council, including the mayor's position, held by Ken Shobe, Rhonda May and Ray Ward.

- Three on the Norcatour City Council held by Mike Helm, Jim Plotts and Mark Bailey.

- Three on the Jennings City Council held by

Rick Foster, Bill Gawith and Stann Hartzog.

- Three on the Dresden City Council, including the mayor's seat held by Russell Rhodes, and council seats of Erma Spresser and Scott Taylor.

If a primary election is needed, it will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 22, but only if more than double the number of open seats apply to run for one job.

The general election will then be Tuesday, April 3.

Winter Sports section inside today's issue

The Winter Sports Section is inside today's *Oberlin Herald*.

The section includes team pictures from Decatur Community Junior High School and Golden Plains High, and individual pictures of the Red Devils basketball players and wrestlers.

THE OBERLIN HERALD'S
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