

Area gets over three inches of rain

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkans.com

Yards are muddy, terrace channels are full and so is the lake at Sappa Park.

With a little over three inches of rain falling in Decatur County at the end of last week, it's left everything a little damp, even soggy in places.

Last Wednesday, the state sent an executive order by e-mail which listed Decatur County in the drought watch classification, the least serious of three categories.

Diane Coe, an environmental scientist with the Kansas Water Office, said Decatur County went on the list in the spring. There was some talk about removing the county from the list, she said, because the conditions got a little better, but it was never removed.

Being on the drought watch list, she said, just tells people they need

County on drought watch lists

An order issued by the governor's office last Wednesday listed many Kansas counties as being in one of three drought categories, an emergency, a warning or just a watch — the category that includes Oberlin.

The list was compiled before heavy rains last week, however. In Oberlin, the official observer has recorded 23.28 inches of precipitation so far this year, compared to a normal figure of 21 this time of year.

Included counties in the drought emergency are mostly counties to the south, Barber, Barton, Clark, Comanche, Edwards, Finney, Ford, Grant, Gray, Harper, Harvey, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Kingman, Kiowa, Lane, McPherson, Meade, Morton,

Pawnee, Pratt, Reno, Rice, Sedgwick, Seward, Stafford, Stanton, Stevens and Sumner.

Those in the drought less-serious warning category included Greeley, Gove, Logan, Ness, Scott, Trego, Wallace, Wichita, Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Butler, Chase, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Cowley, Crawford, Elk, Greenwood, Hamilton, Labette, Linn, Lyon, Marion, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson and Woodson.

Counties in the drought watch include Decatur, Norton, Cheyenne, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas, Ellis, Graham, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Franklin, Geary, Lincoln, Miami, Mitchell, Morris, Osage, Osborne, Ottawa, Phillips, Rawlins, Riley, Rooks, Rush, Russell, Saline and Wabunsee.

to pay attention and keep track of water use, especially with public water suppliers.

When a county is moved into the emergency section, she added, the state has resources to help officials

deal with the situation. While state officials are gathering information about the weather

weekly, she said, the drought categories are reviewed monthly.

Ms. Coe said lots of information goes into the decision to list a county, including the water index, percent of normal precipitation, soil moisture, crop moisture, vegetative health and reservoir levels.

She said they also look at the U.S. Drought Monitor and talk with the state climatologist.

"Continued dry conditions have led to a drought emergency declaration for 13 additional counties," said Gov. Sam Brownback. "Three-quarters of Kansas counties are well below normal in available soil moisture because of below-normal precipitation patterns and drying conditions. Stream flows and lake levels also are being affected."

The order put six counties, including Decatur, into the watch status. The counties listed will stay in the status until another order is

issued.

This part of the state, said Dave Floyd, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Goodland, isn't doing quite as bad drought wise as the counties to the south. Actually, he said, he didn't consider the western area, including Decatur County, to be heavily into the drought.

There are two kinds of droughts, he added, agricultural drought and hydrologic drought. The agricultural drought is something that comes up quicker as dry weather affect crops.

The hydrologic drought, he said, takes months or more to determine. It depletes streams and reservoirs and has an impact for a longer time.

It's hard to say, said Mr. Floyd, if the area is or isn't in that kind of drought, because it comes on over a (See COUNTY on Page 7A)

Council OKs paperwork for street grant

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkans.com

The Oberlin City Council approved resolutions Thursday to apply for a Community Development Block Grant to help pay for fixing nine blocks of streets.

Corina Cox, with the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission out of Hill City, met with the council about the project during a public hearing on the grant application.

The nine blocks include three on Columbia east of the hospital to just west of U.S. 83; one on Commercial between Elk and Buffalo; two on Elk between Elm and Oak and three on Griffith between U.S. 36 (Frontier Parkway) and Washington.

The total project cost would be \$536,639, said Ms. Cox, with \$394,979 to be paid from the grant money and \$131,660 by the city.

The city won't actually find out until January whether the money

has been awarded.

Last year, the state received 27 applications and approved only 17 projects, said Ms. Cox. With the state's budget squeeze, they can expect cuts next year.

To get a grant, she said, the city has to show that 51 percent of the 2000 census population falls in the low- or moderate-income categories. This grant is set up to help lower-income communities.

Fifty-one percent of the city's population is 964 people, she said. The grant application is contingent on that.

When the 2010 census numbers come out, she added, probably by next fall, then those numbers could be used.

Before the council approves the resolutions, she said, it needs to hold a public hearing.

Councilman Rusty Addleman asked who selected the streets to (See COUNCIL on Page 7A)

City claims it's not liable for dog

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkans.com

An Oberlin woman learned Thursday that city officials don't believe the city has any responsibility for her puppy, which was taken to an animal clinic here and put to sleep because it was ill.

Mayor Bill Riedel said, as he understood it, a citizen found the puppy and took it to High Plains Veterinary Clinic, which contracts with the city to handle strays. He said the veterinarian there recommended putting the animal down.

Leslie Plotts first told the City Council about the situation with her puppy at the Thursday, Sept. 15, meeting. The dog, she said, had been suffering from heat stroke. It got off its leash in her yard and was picked up by a passerby who took it to a veterinary clinic, where it was put to sleep.

At the September meeting, Ms. Plotts asked the council for compensation for the dog, saying she wasn't sure how much the pet had cost.

Thursday night, Mayor Riedel told her he didn't think the city was responsible. The city's animal

control officer didn't pick up the dog, he noted, nor did he take it to the clinic. That was done by a passing citizen.

Ms. Plotts said she has been told two stories, one that the animal control officer picked up the dog, and another that it was a private party. She said she would like to know who the private party was so she could tell them the dog didn't have rabies.

Ms. Plotts said she wants to be compensated for the puppy, which she claimed was having a heat stroke. She said a city ordinance says that a dog suspected of having rabies is supposed to be held for 72 hours. If that would have happened, she said, she would have her dog back. Neither the vet nor the dog catcher, said Ms. Plotts, followed city ordinances.

She said she wants to know why the city employs someone who doesn't follow city ordinances or contracts with someone who doesn't.

The dog, said Mayor Riedel, was taken in by a private individual to (See WOMAN on Page 7A)

Representative's staff to hold office hours here

A representative from Rep. Tim Huelskamp's staff will hold office hours here at the end of October.

The representative will be at the Decatur County courthouse from 11 a.m. to noon in the courtroom on the third floor, on Tuesday, Oct. 25. Anyone with a question or concern

with federal issues or agencies is invited to drop in.

Staff members will also hold office hours in Norton and Graham counties the same day.

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Festival draws crowd

PLAYING NICKEL RICK-A-SHAY Sisters Susan Rynearson (above left) and Kathleen Worlickey enjoyed the fun at the Immaculate Conception Fall Festival in Leoville on Sunday. Jaylen Herl, 1, Hoxie, (right) got her face painted by Angela Ritter, Dresden, with the Leoville Catholic Youth Organization.

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes



Assistant state attorney general opens office

An assistant state attorney general opened her office last Monday in the Sherman County courthouse.

Nicole Romine, who serves in Attorney General Derek Schmidt's criminal litigation division, is in charge of the new office.

Mrs. Romine said she will handle criminal prosecutions for the attorney general's office, working with county attorneys on major cases, and working on criminal appeals from the office in Goodland.

Mr. Schmidt said he decided to

base one of his criminal prosecutors in Goodland to work with law enforcement officials and prosecutors in the western part of the state.

"This new arrangement will help ensure our office remains in close contact with the criminal justice needs of western Kansas," Schmidt said. "It is consistent with my commitment to be sure the attorney general's office services the entire state."

Mrs. Romine said she looks forward to the challenges and opportu-

nities of the new assignment.

"I am truly excited for the professional and personal changes this transition will bring about," Mrs. Romine said. "I look forward to building positive relationships with local prosecutors and providing them with efficient access to the services of the criminal litigation division. My husband and I look forward to becoming a part of the Goodland community."

Mrs. Romine is the first full-time, general-assignment criminal pros-

ecutor on the attorney general's staff based outside of Topeka in recent history. The office has three drug prosecutors posted with task forces in southwest Kansas and southeast Kansas.

"We're working to be good partners with our colleagues in local law enforcement agencies and local prosecutors' offices throughout the state," Mr. Schmidt said. "It's a priority for me that we work closely together."