

Moisture is well above normal here

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Decatur County is well above normal when it comes to rain in the past 4 1/2 months.

Dave Floyd, a meteorologist with the Goodland office of the National Weather Service, said the county has had 150 percent of normal rainfall since October and 80 percent of normal for snow in the same time.

A big storm in October brought a lot of the rain, he said, adding that Oberlin's moisture

is comparable to that in Norton and Atwood. Norton is at 200 percent of normal since October, with seven inches of rain from that one storm. Norton had 130 percent of normal snowfall.

This part of the state, he said, wasn't in a drought in the fall or going into one and so far has been able to maintain its soil moisture.

While January was dry and warm, he said, for the past 4 1/2 months, precipitation levels in northwest Kansas have been OK.

Last year at this time, the drought monitors showed this area going into a possible drought.

Mr. Floyd said the service had a drought webinar last Friday with emergency managers and fire people from Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Experts assessed past winters and what it looks like this year.

Last year, the southwest and southern part of Kansas was hot and dry, he said. Going west toward I-70, he said, the weather pat-

tern changed drastically.

The weather in the southern part of Kansas hasn't really changed, he added. Southwest Kansas is reporting extreme drought conditions which are long-term because that area was so dry last year.

The outlook for the southern part of the state parallels the current conditions, said Mr. Floyd. The drought there is likely to persist or worsen.

The newest drought monitor outlook goes through the end of April, he said. It

doesn't show a drought or possible drought for northwest Kansas.

There is a weak to moderate La Niña effect in the Pacific Ocean, which could mean a little dryer weather across the area including southwest Kansas.

The patterns in northwest Kansas over the past couple of weeks, said Mr. Floyd, have been a little atypical for La Niña, with snow, rain and cooler temperatures. The area remains ahead of normal for precipitation and moisture.



Diners support center

PASSING A POTATO, Mary Ann Amack (above, left) and Julie Gallentine helped diners get their spuds loaded with butter, sour cream and cheese during a fund raiser for landscaping on the east side of the building that houses the Golden Age Center, Sunflower Cinema and the bowling alley. Max Carman (right) left his post at the donations table to get his potato on Saturday.

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes



Elected offices up for grabs in the county

There's plenty of time to decide to file for a spot on the ballot for a county elected office, and most of them are up for grabs this year.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine, who represents the east side of the county, including Jennings, Dresden and Norcatour, does not plan to run for re-election, leaving that seat open for the taking.

Anyone who wants to run for a county job needs to file by noon on Friday, June 1. The primary election will be Tuesday, Aug. 7, and general election on Tuesday, Nov. 6. Candidates can file either by paying a fee or getting signatures on a petition.

All county offices are up for election this year with the exception of commissioner in District 1, held by Stan McEvoy. Mr. McEvoy was re-elected in 2010 by the voters in Oberlin City Precinct No. 2.

Several county officials have filed for re-election this year, including:

- Ken Badsky for sheriff.
- Kari Ketterl for register of deeds.
- Ralph Unger for commissioner in District No. 2, representing Finley, Logan, Liberty, Sappa, Bas-setville Townships and Oberlin City Precinct No. 1.

Sheriff's Deputy Jay Tate has for magistrate judge, a post held for

many years by John Bremer. Judge Bremer says he will retire this year and has not filed. With proposed changes in state law, however, there's no guarantee the county will continue to have a judge.

No one has filed yet for several offices:

- Commissioner District No. 3, representing Beaver, Sherman, Harlan, Grant, Olive, Roosevelt, Lincoln, Oberlin, Center, Altony, Jennings, Pleasant Valley, Cook, Prairie Dog, Dresden, Lyon and Allison townships. Commissioner Gallentine said he doesn't plan to file.
- Treasurer, held by Jean Hale.
- County attorney, held by Steve Hirsch. Mr. Hirsch said he plans on filing.
- County clerk. Clerk Colleen Geihlsler, says she plans on filing.

Mrs. Geihlsler said all of township treasurer and trustee positions are on the ballot as well. Only a handful of people who have filed for those spots.

Ms. Geihlsler each voting district, township or precinct, needs a man and a woman in each major party to form the county party committees.

Anyone who wants to file for a seat can get information in the clerk's office on the second floor of the courthouse.

Broken water line leaves Jennings dry

By **CYNTHIA HAYNES**
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It was a little dry in Jennings for two days last week as a broken main forced the city to turn off the water several times.

Mayor Marge Hartzog said that people noticed water bubbling up at the edge of the highway at the intersection of Topeka Avenue and K-383 about 2:30 p.m. last Monday. That is right behind her house, the mayor said.

Contractor Jim Zodrow came out and dug up the area, she said, but stopped when it was discovered that the problem, a hole in the water main, was under the highway. The state Transportation Department was called and gave permission for work to continue on Tuesday morning. The area was dug up and the leak fixed, Mrs. Hartzog said. After about an hour, when there seemed to be no more problems, the hole was filled in.

However, pressure on the pipe when the water came back on caused another blowout a little north of the first leak, and the area had to be reopened for further repairs on Wednesday morning.

Mrs. Hartzog said she thought about 14 foot of pipe was replaced.

Water was out both in Jennings and farm homes which use the city system while the leaks were being repaired, she said.

When the water came back on on Wednesday, the city's water and wastewater operator, Fred Washburn, took a sample and sent it to Topeka for analysis.

From then until Friday, when Mr. Washburn got the results from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment in Hays, which got them from Topeka, people were asked to boil their water and add bleach to dishwater to deter any problems due to contamination.

"Our community really pulls together," she said, noting that when the problem was found, men from all over the area came out to help fix the line.

Mrs. Hartzog noted that she has received no complaints about the outage but a lot of praise and compliments for those who got out in the cold to fix the problem.

"Everyone is grateful to those who helped," she said.

Oberlin grad plans to compete in state pageant

By **CAROLYN PLOTTS**
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Like any girl preparing for a pageant, Jessica Soderlund of Oakley, formerly of Oberlin, is concerned about what she is going to wear and how to do her hair and make-up.

The pageant Miss Soderlund, 23, is preparing for is a little different. She will be competing for the title of Miss Wheelchair Kansas.

"They're having a hard time getting other contestants to enter the pageant," she said. "I hope I'm not the only candidate. I don't want to be the winner runner-up."

Started in 1972 by a Columbus, Ohio, physician, Dr. Phillip K.

Wood, the pageant has provided a forum for the promotion of the achievements of people who are "wheelchair mobile."

This year's pageant will be held at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Topeka on Friday to Sunday, March 9 to 11. The requirements to enter include be a U.S. citizen between the ages of 21 and 60, use a wheelchair for all daily mobility, be a Kansas resident

for at least 6 months, have not held a similar title in another state, be willing to raise money and obtain sponsors for the state and national entry fees, be willing to travel throughout the state and be ready and willing to advocate, educate and empower all persons. Marital status is not a consideration.

As the result of a birth defect (See CONTESTANT on Page 5A)

Legislators to talk at town hall meeting

The county's two state legislators plan to be in Oberlin on Saturday to talk with voters about issue in Topeka.

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and Rep. Ward Cassidy will be at the Decatur County courthouse from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. to talk with the public and take questions.

The Decatur County Farm Bureau Association will provide pizza, Farm Bureau Insurance agent Tina Meitl will provide cookies and the courthouse will supply tea and water.

The legislators plan stops in Phillipsburg, Norton, Atwood and St. Francis the same day.

