



COLBY FREE PRESS

Kansas rejects Nebraska's water request

TOPEKA (AP) — Attorney General Phill Kline says he won't give Nebraska a break on the Republican River agreement that determines how much water Kansas gets from the waterway, despite a plea from that state's congressman and former Cornhuskers coach, Tom Osborne.



Phill Kline

Kline said Thursday he talked to Osborne and staffers in Attorney General Jon Bruning's office and told them the state won't agree to altering the agreement signed by Kansas, Colorado and Nebraska that ended a decades-long dispute of water allocation.

"I said a deal is a deal and we fully expect Nebraska to comply," Kline said. "All indications we get from Nebraska officials is they intend to comply with the agreement."

Last month, Osborne wrote Kline and Colorado Attorney General John Suthers asking them to reconsider implementing the terms of the 2003 settlement because of "unforeseen circumstances that have occurred since it was negotiated." Suthers' office said Thursday it was drafting its response.

Osborne said the agreement didn't take into account the effect of a multiyear drought that has reduced the amount of water available in Kansas and Nebraska.

Kline said he doesn't fault Osborne for asking.

"He was doing his job," Kline said. "This agreement has forced Nebraskans to reduce their water use and because of that, people up there are upset."

"But it's Kansas water and we intend for us to get it."

Kline said in his conversation with Osborne, he joked, "If we don't get the water, we'll send our football team up there to get it."

Osborne was the University of Nebraska football coach from 1973 to 1997, and his teams routinely

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Phill Kline,
Kansas Attorney General

beat the University of Kansas. On Nov. 5, Kansas defeated Nebraska 40-15, after 36 losses in a row.

A Kansas-Nebraska compact signed in 1943 allocated the annual water supply in the Republican River Basin, with Nebraska getting 49 percent, Kansas getting 40 percent and Colorado 11 percent. The river starts in eastern Colorado, flows into Kansas and up to Nebraska and returns to Kansas in Republic County.

In 1998, Kansas went to the U.S. Supreme Court, claiming Nebraska had violated the compact by allowing the unimpeded development of thousands of wells drawing from the river and its tributaries.

That, Kansas claimed, resulted in Nebraska getting more acre-feet of water than it was entitled, depriving Kansas of its rightful share.

The court appointed a special master to oversee the case, and the settlement negotiated by the three states was finished in June 2003. It ensures compliance with the 1943 compact and gave Nebraska time to make changes in its water management program.

Nebraska used more water than the settlement allowed in 2003 and 2004 and likely did so again this growing season, officials said. But now compliance is measured over a five-year average of water usage, with this period starting in 2003.

To replenish the river basin, Nebraska may have to transfer 100,000 acre-feet of water into the river basin by 2007 or pay \$15 million in fees and damages in 2008, a group of Nebraska irrigators and related businesses said.

Have a heart



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Dave Jennings, owner of Dave's His Shop in Colby, put hearts on the "Heart Tree" in his store window this morning. The fourth year for the tree at his shop, it was started as a tradition after the

death of his son, Jeff, in 2001. Anyone can come pick a heart off the tree, buy the requested gift for a child, and return it and the heart to the store by Thursday, Dec. 15.

Malnourished animals seized from shelter

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Kansas authorities found at least 200 dying, malnourished cats and dogs, some believed to have been rescued after Hurricane Katrina, when executing a search warrant Wednesday at an animal shelter in rural Kansas.

Sheila Jones, a Paola resident who operated the Miami County Humane Society out of her dilapidated home, held several hundred cats and dogs in extremely unsafe and unhealthy conditions, said Debra Duncan, director of the Animal Facilities Inspection Program with the Kansas Animal Health Department.

"She was running a humane society with a self-bestowed title and without any official sanction at all," said David Leffingwell, an attorney for the Kansas Animal Health Department. "Her facility may have been adequate for 20 dogs, but it wasn't for 200 animals."

Wednesday morning, a team of veterinarians, inspectors and law enforcement officials entered the fenced-off property to find scores of skinny, wounded collies, Labradors and Chihuahuas in feces-filled pens in the front yard. Authorities said Jones took some of those dogs from a now-defunct rescue operation in Gamaliel, Ark., that offered shelter

to hundreds of dogs rescued in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The owners of that operation, Tammy and William Hanson — acquaintances of Jones — were arrested and charged with animal cruelty in October. Leffingwell said inspectors had concerns about Jones' operation, which she opened in 2001, but could not get past her gate. Armed with a search warrant, the team walked onto the property Wednesday morning, where they met an angry, defiant Jones.

"She was not happy to see us," Duncan said. "There was one room where there were a couple of dead cats. She said more cats would

come back when she gave them water. So we watched about 15 or 20 cats surround the water dish and several of them drank for at least 10 minutes."

Authorities said the house was crawling with about 75 skinny, sick cats, many of which were purebred, and a room with a child's wading pool stuffed with feces. Outside were at least 120 undernourished dogs, many bruised and bloodied from fighting, Duncan said. Others were penned in crates. Duncan said most of the animals were being taken to rescue groups and shelters in Wichita, Lawrence and the Kansas City area.

Planning group sets task forces

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County planning core committee met Tuesday to set its task forces, the next step in the strategic planning process.

Chairman Scott Focke had everyone give their definition of "prosperous," and most agreed it had to do with being economically and financially stable, along with the opportunity to pursue professional or personal interests, and to have things to do and an environment to do it all in.

Focke said more and more people are deciding where and how to live, and economic development is more than bring jobs to a community.

He asked what can be done to strengthen the community and make people want to live in the county, or attract young people or make those who grew up her to

return. He suggested community development should be the focus.

Eleven task forces came out of the meeting, and they all fall under the umbrella of visit, shop, work and live. The visit task forces are rural experience, with Duane Cheney and Doug Musick; and destination center, with Leilani Thomas as chairman and help from the Colby Visitors Bureau.

Work task forces are youth/entrepreneurial, targeting future industry and shopping. Quintin Flanagan and Omar Weber are the co-chairs for the youth task force, with Fell also as a member. Shop chair is Dave Jennings, with the Colby Promotion Committee and Mary Ann Downing as members.

Gerry Fulwider is the chair of the future industry task force. Thomas County Economic Development Authority members and Vera Sloan are also part of that group.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Mary Ann Downing and Mike Fell, members of the Thomas County planning core committee, took notes during the group's meeting Tuesday. The group set its task forces, which was the next step in the process to develop a new long-term strategic plan for the county.

Live task forces are youth center, ed/med, wellness, recreation/entertainment, beautification and marketing and public relations for the community.

Todd Stramel is the youth center chair; ed/med co-chairs are Diana Wieland and Joni Clark-Leiker; wellness chair is Sherry McDonald

and Tisha Cox is part of that task force; recreation/entertainment chair is Scott Focke. Beautification chair is Musick; Fulwider, Danielle Freeman, Focke and Cheney are all involved.

The marketing/public relations group will include Fell, Wieland, Fulwider and Thomas. It was de-

cided the chairs and task force members will get together on their own to set the goals for their task forces before the January meeting, and will give reports then. The group will next meet at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23 at the Thomas County Office Complex. For questions, call 460-3401.

What's your number?

Your house number or post office box may be worth something.

The Colby Free Press and Colby Chamber of Commerce have teamed up for a new Christmas promotion this year. Called "What's your number?," if a participating store has a number that matches a person's house number or post office box, they win a prize from that store. The promotion will be held Friday through Sunday coinciding with Colby's lighted Christmas parade weekend.

"It's like a treasure hunt," said Colby Free Press Publisher John Van Nostrand. Van Nostrand said the promotion encourages shoppers to visit Colby stores during the holiday shopping season.

"If a store doesn't have a shopper's number, the shopper may at least find a gift while visiting all the stores."

Of course, Free Press readers will need to keep reading the paper to see which stores will be participating in the promotion. Stores have been asked to play and to list many numbers to have a greater chance of having more shoppers.

There is a sense of urgency for the shoppers. Shoppers can only win once at each store. If a house and post office box have the same number, whoever shows up first at that store with that number wins. But it is also possible for a winning number to be at more than one store.

*Christmas Light Parade, 6 p.m., Sunday
Santa City open following parade at 8 p.m.*