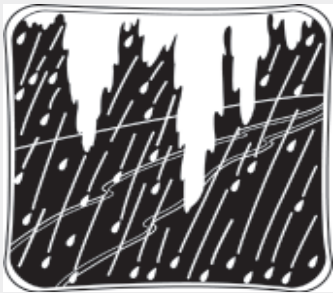


Weather Corner



The forecast
Tonight — A 50 percent chance of snow. Cloudy with a low around 11. North wind between 10 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph. New snow accumulation of less than one inch possible. **Tuesday** — Areas of fog before 10 a.m. Otherwise, cloudy with high near 19. North wind between 10 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph. **Tuesday night** — Widespread fog. Otherwise, cloudy with a low around 4. Northeast wind around 10 mph. **Wednesday** — Areas of fog before 10 a.m. Otherwise, cloudy with a high near 18. East wind around 10 mph. **Wednesday night** — Mostly cloudy with a low around 3. **Thursday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 32.
Temperatures
Sunday's high, 25
Low this morning, 18
Records for this date, 83 in 1911, -31 in 1899
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
February's precipitation, 0.00
A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-8367.

Briefly

Courthouse, landfill closed

The Thomas County Courthouse and landfill will be closed Monday, Feb. 19, for President's Day. Both will re-open for business Tuesday.

School changes announced

Colby Public Schools has announced the one hour late start has been canceled. Buses will run their normal routes. Also, there will be no school for students and staff Friday, Feb. 23. This is an incentive day for the students and staff because the district met the requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress.

'Daffodil Days' begins

American Cancer Society Daffodil Days run through this month. The deadline to order is Saturday, Feb. 24. The daffodils will arrive in Colby around March 5-7 and will be available for pick-up at Sompelace Special, 185 W. Fourth St. To order, or for more information, call or e-mail Cathy

Harrison, Daffodil Days coordinator, at 460-2501, 462-2331 or harrison@st-tel.net.

Families wanted

High Plains Mental Health Center is searching for families to help with its new program Homeward Bound. The program will serve children with emotional and behavioral problems and their families in crisis situations. Participating families will provide a home and daily needs for children from overnight to several weeks. Single people are also asked to help with such children. Interested people will take a seven-week training course. Participating people will be reimbursed. "Colby is a hot sport for this service," said program manager Audrey Harper Schoenberger. She can be reached at (785) 628-2871 or aschoen@hpmhc.com. Also, Becky Kirchhoff, a program social worker, can help interested people. Kirchhoff can be reached at (785) 346-2184 or rebecca@hpmhc.com

Tax help available

Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th, will be the location on Thursdays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. and until April 15 assisting with tax returns for the elderly or low to middle income families and individuals. Alvin Volk is coordinating the project in Colby and will help in tax preparation at no charge. For information, call 460-2645.

Conservation meeting set

The Thomas County Conservation District will hold its annual meeting Monday, Feb. 12, at 6:30 p.m. at the Thomas County 4-H Building.

Massage clinic set in February

A massage clinic, sponsored by students in the physical therapist assistant program at Colby College, is planned from 5 to 9 p.m., Feb. 20, in the health sciences building on campus. Cost for massages is \$12 per half hour. To make an appointment, call 460-4797, but walk-ins are welcome.

Native red cedars are endangering prairie ecosystem

WICHITA (AP) — Some native Kansans are causing all kinds of problems for their home state. Researchers and other experts say the Eastern red cedar trees growing across much of the state are threatening the water supply, costing ranchers millions of dollars and displacing wildlife. And the problem is only going to get worse, they say, unless ranchers and state officials start paying attention. "If you ever take a drink of water, or have any interest in wildlife or the rural economy, you'd better be concerned about cedars," said Terry Bidwell, an Oklahoma State University researcher. "If Kansans aren't concerned now, they're dang sure going to be in a few years." The red cedars are the lone native evergreen in Kansas and for centuries were found only on rocky bluffs where they escaped fires started by

lightning or American Indians trying to grow better grass for game. When Europeans began settling the area, they fought the fires, which are a natural part of the grasslands. And the government encouraged planting cedars for windbreaks and wildlife habitat. Thousands, if not millions, of cedar saplings were distributed. Songbirds continue to help the spread by eating the cedar berries, then depositing them through waste. "We're (now) in the midst of a red cedar population explosion in Kansas," state forester Ray Aslin said. Cedars are built to take up more than their share of water, which is bad news in a state suffering water shortages in many areas. The thick, evergreen canopy of a cedar can stop 65 percent of a rainfall from reaching the topsoil and aquifer. And cedar root systems of-

ten stretch twice as far as a tree's broad drip line. A Texas study done on junipers, a family member of red cedars, said one 15-foot tree can consume 35 gallons of water a day. "Junipers are already causing problems for San Antonio," said Bidwell, who has studied the trees for 20 years. "Oklahoma City is going to have to get interested in cedar control. They get their water from Canton Reservoir, and that watershed is getting covered up with red cedars." Cedars also have a negative impact on rangelands, where they soak up ponds and springs. "I can show you springs that went from dry to really flowing after we cut about 95 percent of the cedars," said Don Queal, a Pratt tree harvester. "We finished one Saturday, and the water was flowing the next Saturday. It happens that quick."

Cedars often grow 10 to 30 feet across, allowing little or no grass growth beneath. Many roots are shallow and rob grass of rainwater, leaving white, straw-like growth. "White grass is bad grass," said Ed Koger, a rancher who also has battled cedars for years. "It look likes something, but when it comes to cattle feed there's not much there." The trees also hurt populations of some wild animals, such as lesser prairie chickens. "Some birds native to the prairie are what we call 'birds of broad horizons,'" said Randy Rodgers, small-game biologist for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. "They do not tolerate vertical structures, whether it's trees or man-made. We assume they do it to avoid predators that may use them for perches." And Bidwell said Oklahoma's

cedar invasion is tied to decreasing quail populations. In Kansas, the trees are spreading from spots in the Red Hills and the Flint Hills' edges to many corners of the state. Queal, in Pratt, said the red cedars are increasing on the Smoky Hill prairies, which stretch roughly from Junction City to Colorado. But it is relatively simple to stem the problem. "Once you cut that tree below the lowest living branch, or burn them when they're small, they're dead, period," Alexander said. "After that you just have to stay on them by burning your grasslands every few years. It ain't hard. It's the way nature intended it to be."

State courting feds to lure jobs and money

TOPEKA (AP) — Rolling out the red carpet to lure an attractive business is nothing new, especially in Kansas. Cities, counties and even the state regularly dangle incentives in front of executives looking to start a new firm or relocate their operations. Tax breaks, free land or job training programs are typical perks offered to make the state look better than its neighbors. The latest target isn't a business but the federal government, which is looking at 18 sites across the country to build a lab to replace the aging Plum Island, N.Y., Animal Disease Center. The Department of Homeland Security is soliciting bids for a 500,000-square-foot facility that could bring up to 500 jobs and infusion of \$3.5 billion. Kansas says the center would be a perfect fit, given that Kansas State University has become a leader in plant and animal research and the concentration of agriculture and animal health industries. "Kansas, for five years, has taken a series of steps to prepare itself to be a friendly site for investment in bioscience facilities and research," said Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt. "If we get this facility, it will be proof that this investment has paid off.

"This is not an end game. Our objective has been to put in place a foundation that will support ongoing, substantial investment in the life sciences." Legislators approved funding in 2004 to build three university research centers, including the Biosecurity Research Institute at Kansas State. That lab can do much of the research envisioned for the new federal facility, but on a smaller scale. State officials say the lab would be a good transition from the Plum Island site to a new Kansas location. The region along Interstate 70 from Manhattan to Columbia, Mo., is touting itself as the "Animal Health Corridor," noting the location of international firms that account for a third of every animal health dollars spent in the world. Schmidt, R-Independence, and Sen. Nick Jordan, R-Shawnee, said the state's investment led several life and animal science firms to locate in Kansas in recent years. Jordan, a key legislator on economic development policy, said those recent transactions should start showing up in jobs reports as those firms build their payrolls. It's a slow process but he sees momentum building. "I think you'll see those startup companies all over the state pick up.

And that's a longer and sustained growth," Jordan said. "If you can find entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses in your state, they are likely to stay and grow there and add jobs." This is the second time Kansas officials have put a full-court press on Washington to increase the federal presence in the state. In 2004, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius formed a military council to protect the state's four military installations and lure additional soldiers and missions. A lobbyist was hired in Washington, while local, state and congressional officials joined voices showing support for the military. Like this year, the state passed a slew of resolutions and laws making Kansas appear military friendly, including a bill of rights that increased benefits to soldiers and their families. The result paid off. In 2005 the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommended keeping all four Kansas installations remain open with enhanced missions. The 1st Infantry Division returned Fort Riley after 10 years in Germany, bringing with it thousands of soldiers, families and civilian jobs. When the process is complete, the economic impact of Fort Riley alone will be more than \$1.25 billion, not counting hundreds of millions of dollars in construction along the way. Legislators are relying on that model again. They have approved bills establishing a working group that will spearhead the effort. Cities will work to make the land and necessary infrastructure available, university officials have pledged help in coordinating research, while state and congressional politicians will be vocal in touting the state as the logical site. However, unlike the military, which can ebb and flow depending on national security issues, legisla-

tors see federal research and subsequent cluster private-sector industries as a permanent addition to the economy. For example, the cluster of aviation jobs in Wichita sprouted in the early 1920s and have made it the Air Capital of the World. It remains home to operations for Raytheon, Cessna and Boeing, despite the economic downturn of five years ago that weakened the market for aircraft. Others see the federal lab as a cog in the bigger picture of securing the nation's food supply. "This isn't a dream of a bureaucrat in Washington, D.C. This is part of the war on terror," said Duane Simpson, a lobbyist for agriculture interests. "This is part of the 21st century world that we live in. The United States needs to be able to do research on protecting our food supply. We need to be ahead of those guys who wish to do us harm." If there is any question about the transforming power of one business decision, Schmidt notes the decision by Sam Walton to locate his world headquarters in Bentonville, Ark. "Thirty years ago, northwest Arkansas was a sleepy little region. This has a similar potential and the fact it is government investment instead of private doesn't change the fact that we have an opportunity, just like northwest Arkansas had an opportunity," he said.

Document on display

LECOMPTON (AP) — A document that historians say helped usher in the Civil War was back in the room where it was drafted 150 years ago, on display at Constitution Hall over the weekend as part of "Bleeding Kansas '07" events. The Lecompton Constitution, under which Kansas would have been admitted into the union as a slave state, has been preserved at the Kansas State Historical Society since Rutgers University donated it in 1957 to commemorate the document's 100th anniversary. Hundreds of people viewed the constitution Saturday and Sunday and listened to a speech by a Civil War historian at Constitution Hall. It's the first time the Lecompton Constitution has been at the building since it was written in 1857 and sent to Washington, D.C., for ratification. "It's an important benchmark and an overlooked benchmark in the road to the Civil War," said historian Brian Matthew Jordan, of Gettysburg College, who spoke as part of the program of lectures and dramatic interpretations. "It's absolutely awe-inspiring to stand here and know that this document is here

for the first time since it was signed." The eight-page document was written by men who wanted Kansas admitted to the United States as a slave state. It was ultimately rejected, and Kansas become a free state in 1861. The fight over the Lecompton Constitution caused a split in the Democratic Party of the time, resulting in the election of President Abraham Lincoln. "It's a fascinating history, and I think many people just don't know how truly pivotal Kansas was in many respects of American history and certainly in Civil War history," said Susan Merchant, of Topeka, who saw the document during the weekend. "It did begin here." The document disappeared for a period until it turned up in the possession of a former Lecompton Union and National Democrat editor, Alfred W. Jones. He donated it to the New Brunswick Historical Club of New Jersey through Rutgers University. The constitution isn't expected to be returned to the place of its writing until its bicentennial celebration in 2057.

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