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State expects cash windfall in water war

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Kansas should be raking in quite a bit of money soon, water experts say, as the U.S. Supreme Court has found both Colorado and Nebraska in violation of a river compact approved from the 1940s that dictates how water is shared among the three states.

Colorado has come closer to compliance with the Republican River Compact, while Nebraska is farther away, said Wayne Bossert, manager of the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District. Our neighbors to the north continued drilling wells and approving new irrigation rights for farmers into the year 2000, and Kansas still not getting the amount of water the compact requires, he said.

Nebraska denied access to groundwater was part of the original compact, but their opinion was opposed by the supreme court who ruled that groundwater did indeed affect river flow. The Kansas government has asserted that Nebraska owes Kansas over 72 million dollars for Nebraska's non-compliance. Nebraska disagrees the amount is this high. It is still unclear how much money Kansas will receive from Nebraska.

"It could be \$58 million, \$20 million or \$108 million," he said, "but we are clearly talking about multiple millions of dollars."

Bossert was at a county commissioners' meeting Monday to

talk about water issues.

If Kansas were to get Nebraska to pay over \$72 million, he said, 19 million could be spent on conservation efforts in the Upper Republican River Basin in northwest Kansas. Most of the northern half of Thomas County is in that basin, including the Sappa and Prairie Dog Creek drainages.

Bossert said Kansas officials have decided to spend the money they will eventually receive from the court cases on conservation efforts. Two-thirds of the money from Colorado will be used for conservation projects in northwest Kansas.

Two-thirds of the money from Nebraska will go toward efforts in the Lower Republican Basin Project and the remaining third from both states will go to the state to be used for conservation. Bossert said one-third of the money going to the state will be earmarked to go to the Upper Republican River Basin in northwest Kansas.

Bossert said the groundwater district has spearheaded the project by inviting everyone with an interest to join a working group that will decide how to implement conservation policies in the basin.

"We wanted to make sure we got all the stakeholders brought in," Bossert said.

The group has been named the Upper Republican River Basin Conservation Projects Alliance, he said. It includes cattle feeders,

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Veep candidates face off at 8 p.m.

NEW YORK (AP) — Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin enters her debate tonight with Democratic rival Joe Biden as many voters harbor serious doubts about her readiness for the nation's highest office.

An AP-Gfk poll released Wednesday found that just 25 percent of likely voters believe Palin has the right experience to be president. That's down from 41 percent just after the GOP convention, when the Alaska governor made her well-received debut on the national stage.

Tonight's debate in St. Louis gives Palin a chance to overcome the doubts in a 90-minute showcase at 8 p.m., her first lengthy give-and-take session since joining the GOP ticket with candidate John McCain.

McCain today dismissed suggestions that he was upset with campaign staff for holding back Palin from extensive questioning

by reporters and voters and not letting her be herself on the campaign trail. In the four weeks since she was nominated by party delegates, Palin has appeared without McCain at six rallies and other major campaign events. She has appeared with McCain at 15.

"We let Sarah be Sarah. She's smart, she's tough, she's been in debates before," McCain told "Fox & Friends" on Fox News Channel. "The American people ... the more they see of her, the more they love her, and I'm confident of that at the end."

Palin has granted just a handful of interviews and has often appeared to be uninformed about national issues. McCain and other Republicans have criticized the questions that produced this impression as "gotcha journalism."

In a CBS News interview aired Wednesday she criticized the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion.

Briefly

Foundation friends to meet

The Friends of the Thomas County Community Foundation will hold their annual board meeting at 7 p.m. Monday at City Limits Bar and Grill, behind the Comfort Inn south of Interstate 70. Members who don't plan to attend should pick up a proxy ballot at the office, 350 S. Range Ave., Suite 14, or ask for an e-mail proxy, said Executive Director Melinda M. Olson. For information, call (785) 460-9152 or e-mail tccf@st-tel.net.

wFly-in breakfast is Saturday

The Friends of the Colby Airport will hold a fly-in and breakfast from 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. The Eagle Med King Air, a Kansas Highway Patrol helicopter, experimental aircraft, powered parachutes, antique aircraft and

radio-control aircraft are expected. Tandem skydiving and plane rides will be offered. Breakfast will be provided by the Colby Boy Scouts and proceeds will benefit youth groups and the airport. For information, call Mark at 460-4438.

Center offers lunch for seniors

The Thomas County Nutrition Center is open to those 60 and older and their guests to have lunch at noon Monday through Friday at the Senior Progress Center in Fike Park. The cost is \$2.50 for those 60 or older and \$4.75 others. Meals can be delivered to those unable to attend or picked up at the center. Reservations should be made by noon the day before by calling 460-2901.

Mercury collection ends Friday

The Thomas County Landfill's free mercury collection program ends Friday. Eligible items include

elemental mercury, mercury-containing devices such as thermometers, barometers, manometers, mercury displacement relays, heating/cooling thermostats and mercury switches. For questions, call Larry Jumper at (785) 462-8139.

Scouts out selling popcorn

Colby Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts are selling popcorn door-to-door until Oct. 26. This year's inventory includes microwave popcorn, popping kernels and a variety of tins filled with caramel, chocolate or cheese popcorn. Anyone who isn't contacted by a troop or pack member should call Gary Schuette, pack leader, at 460-0003.

Coffee with Coaches' returns

Back by popular demand, said Coach Chris Gardner, "Coffee with the Coaches," begins at 9 a.m. every Saturday during the Colby High football season

at the Sports Shoppe, 400 N. Franklin Ave. For questions, call 460-5000.

Hunter safety class offered

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Colby Recreation Department plan a hunter education class at the Colby Community Building from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday and next Thursday and 8:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 11. The range session will be Saturday afternoon. Students must be 11 by Oct. 11 and must attend all sessions to receive a Hunter Education card, needed to buy a hunting license. "This is the only scheduled class in Colby this year," said Benny Young, with Wildlife and Parks. Registration is at the Pirates Den, 1115 S. Franklin Ave., Colby. For questions, call the store at (785) 460-6631, Young at (785) 462-7602, or Matt Bain at (785) 462 3367.



Noon fire drives out occupant

Firemen rushed to a home south of Levant, about 5 1/2 miles west of Colby on County Road R, just before 1 p.m. today after someone noticed smoke.

The owner, Greg Bellamy, rushed back to the house as firemen arrived. Later, he said it looked like the smoke was coming from a floor furnace. Firemen said it might have been electrical. Whatever the cause, smoke billowed from the front door when fire fighters opened it.

Four trucks responded to the call, along with two sheriff's officers and an ambulance. Fire crew reported some difficulty manning all the rigs at first, and dispatchers called a second company. One crew set up a portable "bladder" to hold water.



STEIFON MATTHEWS/Colby Free Press

Clinic offers school screening for kids

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Parents in the Colby School District can get free early childhood screening for their preschoolers at a clinic Tuesday at the Colby United Methodist Church.

The clinic will test how well a child is developing in several areas, said Kathy Kersensbrock Ostmeyer, director of special education and infant toddler coordinator for the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center.

Tests include vision, motor skills (fine muscles and growth muscles), hearing, vision, cognitive skills, and speech and language skills. she said, all conducted by trained ex-

perts. Staff from the service center will be assisting with the tests.

For an appointment, call school nurse Amy Huffles at Colby Elementary School, 460-5100. The screening is open to infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

Ostmeyer said that a child's brain experiences the most development from birth to age 6, which is one reason why it's a good idea to have your child come get a free screening.

"The child will be given activities to help speed up their development, or they will be given an additional assessment," Ostmeyer said.

The in-depth assessment a child gets depends on what area they needed help in, she said. For example, if a preschooler is having

trouble seeing, they would be referred to the eye doctor, and if they were having trouble speaking, they would see the speech pathologist.

The experts conducting the screenings promote play as a way to speed up a child's development in certain areas, Ostmeyer said.

"Young children learn better when they are having fun," she added.

Ostmeyer said if your child is having trouble developing in a certain area, it is sometimes best to work from the bottom up. For example if a child is having trouble remembering the names of colors, you may want to start off by having them sort colors, before you move on to teaching them the names. Ostmeyer said this is known as task analysis.

