



Free Press Viewpoint

Low water level has major impact

While it hasn't affected drought-stricken western Kansas as much, federal efforts to maintain the flow of the Missouri River for barge traffic have sapped water levels in key reservoirs, costing Kansas businesses millions in tourism and recreation income.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which run the flood control reservoirs in eastern Kansas – and some in the west as well – says it's powerless to stop the diversion. Congress requires the Corps to maintain enough flow on the Missouri to allow navigation as far as Sioux City, Iowa, the agency says, and it has no choice in the matter.

"We don't have the option to decide not to do it one year or other years because of drought," said a Corps official quoted by the Associated Press.

That may be true, but it's all the more reason for Missouri River states to band together to fight this waste of our water. The Corps said it's required by law to keep the river up through the "navigation season," from April 1 to Dec. 1 – regardless of how that affects upstream reservoirs.

While the Missouri once was considered navigable well into Montana, today it's blocked by dams in South Dakota and northern Nebraska. (Though there are still a couple of draw bridges way up in Montana.)

The sandy, wandering Missouri was a tough river for old-time boat captains. The average lifespan of a riverboat was said to be only a couple of years. Then the Corps narrowed and deepened the river, allowing navigation at the cost of millions – and much environmental damage.

The deeper, faster water still raises issues for wildlife and sport fishing today, and makes the river much more dangerous for recreation.

Barge traffic this year has been minimal. The AP reports that only about 200 barges reached Kansas City this year, compared to an estimated 40,000 that moved past St. Louis on the Mississippi. That's a 10th of what used the Missouri at the peak of barge traffic.

At the big eastern Kansas reservoirs – Tuttle Creek, Perry and Milford – the Corps has lowered lake levels three to six feet, leaving docks and boat ramps impaired or unusable. One new houseboat dock is said to have been damaged when it settled on rocks. Fishermen and others have trouble finding a place to put in.

All of this is costing Kansans money, and that's not fair to those who have invested in facilities at Kansas reservoirs or the towns that depend on this business. The effect on upstream states must be similar, all the way to Montana.

We know, in a dry year, lake levels are bound to fall. And those who built at Kansas lakes knew going in the Corps has a duty to keep the river up. But it's a question of overall economic good, and from here, it looks like we'd be better off to scuttle barge traffic and let the railroads handle the grain and coal a little farther east.

– Steve Haynes

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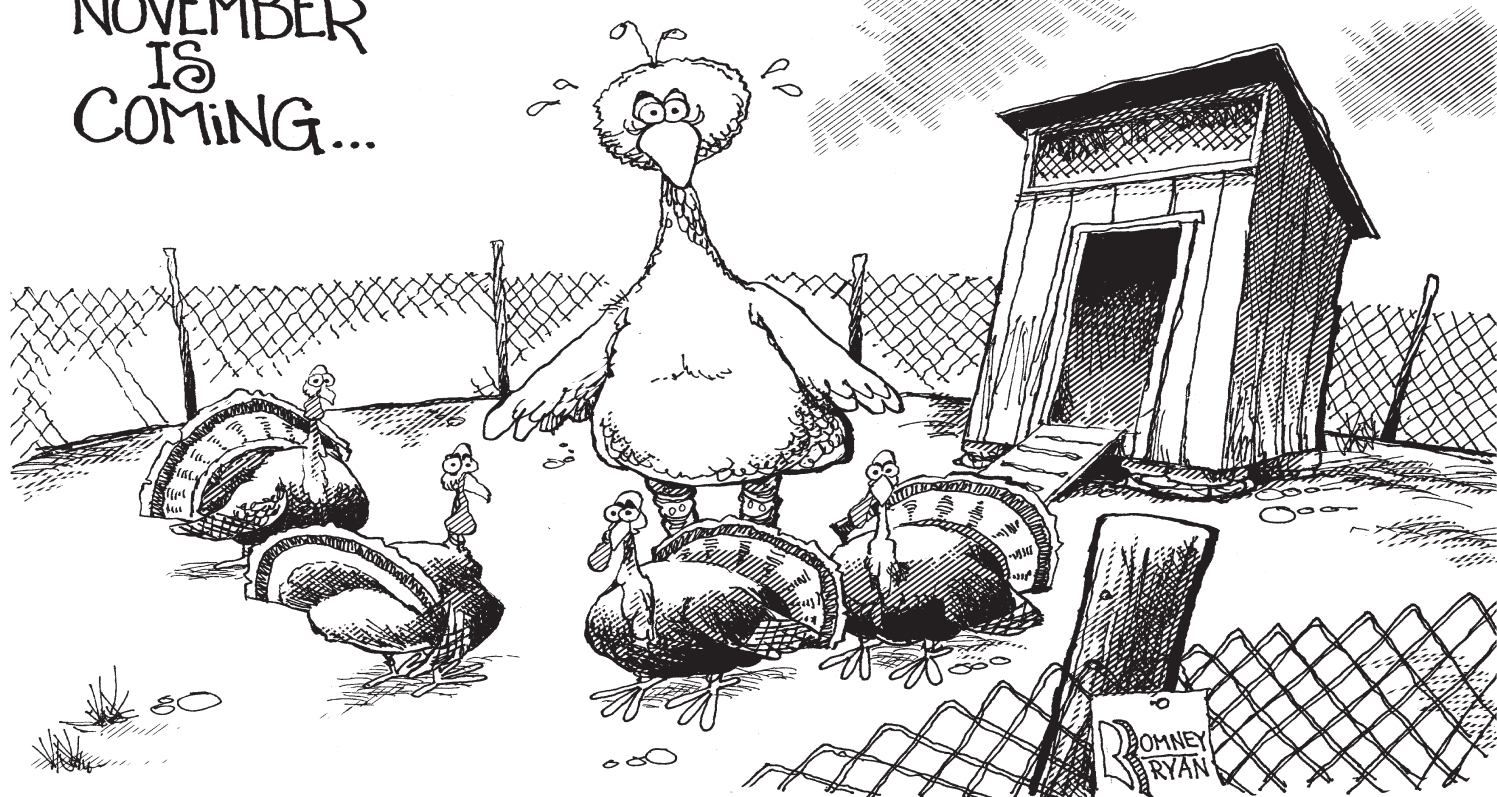
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NOVEMBER IS COMING...



AND ALL THE TURKEYS ARE ON EDGE.

Stoicism takes this cat only so far

She sits stoically by as I lay out my instruments of torture.

There's the machine, the strip and the needle, all placed on a fresh paper towel.

And there's Molly, sitting on the counter, waiting.

Each morning and evening, we pick her up, lay out the equipment and try to get blood out of a cat's ear. That's somewhat easier than making a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but only somewhat.

The strip goes into the blood-testing machine and we grab an ear. Molly flinches, pulling her ears close to her head. She's been through this before, and she's developed a profound dislike for this part.

Sometimes we can get a good drop of blood in one try. Sometimes, it takes two or even three pokes to get anything out of her poor scarred ears. Then there are the days when the needle goes all the way through and you get blood coming out the top and the bottom. Some days, she shakes her head and blood scatters on the wind.

After the ear starts to bleed, we put the metered strip up to the blood spot and hope that there's enough for a successful test. If not, you have to do it all over again.

Most of the time, we're successful and the meter registers her blood sugar, which can run anywhere from 57 to over 600. She's supposed



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

to be below 100, but that number is seldom seen.

Next comes the shot. For sugar levels of 500 or more, she gets four to five units of Lantus insulin. If it's in the 300 to 400 range, we go down to two to three units. Under 200 is a one-unit shot and that's a tough one to pull up into the syringe. It's sort of like putting 1/32nd of a teaspoon of something in the pot.

If the reading is less than 100, she doesn't get a shot and we know that she will be high the next time around. But we know low blood sugar will kill her faster than high.

If the reading is less than 50, she gets a drop of honey and a can of wet food. The vet says that stuff is sort of like a candy bar for her.

While the insulin is supposed to be a once-a-day formulation, we've found that Molly needs two shots a day to keep her even half-way stable.

That means that in about 12 hours, we get to go through the whole rigamarole again. No

wonder Molly is getting a little tired of it all.

The shot is the easy part. She doesn't mind it at all and probably doesn't even feel it, because cats and dogs have very few nerve endings in their skin.

I'm told that you can do a blood test using a cat or dog's paw pads. Just don't prick the largest one, I'm told.

That sounds so simple when I read the "how to test your pet's blood glucose levels" on a website.

However, no matter how much Molly puts her ears down, it's nothing compared to the fight I would have if I tried to get blood out of her paw. She doesn't even like me to pick up her paw and fights any attempt to do so.

I'm guessing that both of us would be a bloody mess if I tried that. As it is, Steve has a tendency to get both the cat's ear and his finger when he does the check.

I suppose a two-for-one might be efficient, but I doubt that either his doctor or Molly's is going to buy that.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Newspapers protect citizens before law

Other Opinions

• Mike MacLaren Michigan Press Ass.

Paying for baseball umpires is more important than protecting your property from foreclosure.

That is in essence what elected officials across the country are saying as they push for "cost saving" legislation to allow government to post notices of legal actions on government-run websites.

"Baseball umpires? You can't be serious," you say.

I am serious; I'm also worried. You should be too. Here's why:

Government officials say such legislation saves money that could be spent on police and fire fighters. But there are government programs that cost more than publishing these notices, such as umpires for city baseball leagues. It's a fact: the City of Niles, Mich., spends more each year for baseball umpires than for publishing legal notices in the local newspaper.

But there's a larger issue at stake. These public notices are legal documents. News-on-paper notices give citizens an independent, authentic and verifiable record of what their government has done. If questions arise regarding ordinances, actions or any other municipal decision, courts will not accept a copy – they want the original document as proof. This news-on-paper publication requirement was put in place to protect public and municipal officials so that there's no question that a document had been doctored.

Requiring legal notices to be published in a venue independent of government is a form of insurance for taxpayers. How can you get "beyond the shadow of doubt" proof of the contents of a legal document from a website that can be altered with a click of a mouse, or hacked? Heck, even the Pentagon's computers have been hacked.

When was the last time you visited your lo-

cal government website? Is it something you do weekly?

By contrast, according to American Opinion Research:

Newspapers are the number one source for local/community news.

Seventy percent of Michigan adults read a print newspaper on an average Sunday.

Eighty-seven percent of Michigan adults – 6.7 million – read a Michigan newspaper during an average seven-day period.

Ninety-five percent of 18- to 29-year-olds read a newspaper each week in Michigan.

Newspapers deliver an ongoing information stream, so that if one person misses a property-rezoning announcement, others can alert them that a nearby wooded lot could become an adult video store.

Let me be clear. Under the guise of saving money, such "pull public notices out of a newspapers and post them on a government web site" legislation will make it easier for municipalities to have special meetings, make assessments and other important decisions with nearly no knowledge or input from the community. Yes, newspapers charge to publish these notices. More often than not, they are done at cost. But without these notices, more than a few community newspapers face the specter of shutting down. So on top of posting these public notices where the public won't notice, there may be no local paper to report

on the results of the actions.

And let me be clear about something else: government officials across the country have thankless jobs. Most of the ones I've worked with are industrious and well-intentioned people. I sincerely doubt that they realized how this legislation could cause a crack in the cornerstone of communities across the country. But the truth is that these bills will hurt you and every other citizen across this nation.

So, government officials, thank you for all the thankless work you do. It is a lot.

And thank you for reconsidering your support of this legislation. Because the taxpayers you work for deserve better.

Mike MacLaren is executive director of the Michigan Press Association in Lansing.

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U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeier, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612,

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