

from other pens...

## Trees, water use a zero-sum game

Did J. Sterling Morton get it all wrong? We won't go that far, but a recent report delivered to local natural resources districts does seem to indicate attempts to reinvent the prairie in the image of the father of Arbor Day's native, tree-covered Michigan are misguided.

The use of water is a zero-sum game, and consumption of precipitation by grassland and trees leaves less for crops and, more importantly for legal purposes, less to send down the Republican River to Kansas.

The Republican River Basin Water Balance Study report presented at the Middle Republican NRD recently showed just that.

Riparian forests – wooded areas near rivers, about the only kind that exist in southwest Nebraska – and woodlands use more water per acre than any other land use, including crops, according to the study.

Riparian forest and woodlands use 4.26 acre-feet of water a year or 51.2 inches of average annual consumption.

By comparison, irrigated corn uses 2.34 acre-feet of water, or 28.1 inches of average annual consumption.

An acre-foot is the amount of water it takes to cover an acre of land one foot deep in water, or 325,851 gallons.

It shows trees, especially those with root systems that reach deep, consume a lot of water," said Frank Kwapioski of H2O Options Engineering LLC of Lincoln.

The study seemed to show a link between water consumed by trees and grass and the overall decrease in surface water, he said.

"In the 1930s, the landscape was different than it is now, which may describe the change being seen in overall surface water," he said, "though there are many factors, not just one."

The problem is, the Republican River Compact conflict, which threatens agriculture in southwest Nebraska, was signed – by the state of Nebraska, we must add – with that 1930s landscape in mind, rather than modern conditions that exist following decades of conservation efforts and growth of trees and underbrush.

We enjoy trees and feel they add much to our communities. However, a new river agreement should be negotiated with modern conditions taken into account.

– McCook Daily Gazette, via The Associated Press



## That college education did pay off

"You're a d\*^m fool, Jeff Ellis," his friends told him.

And maybe he was. Maybe it was a big waste of time and money to send a girl to college for four years.

After all, when she graduated, she would just get married. But he and Pearle had always believed that it was important to give their children the best education they could afford.

So he sent his youngest daughter to college, and here she was marrying as soon as she graduated. Not just marrying, but marrying a Yankee and moving to Kansas.

She came home to visit and eventually brought little Cynthia, his third grandchild, for a visit. But Jeff died before his Emma ever used that expensive four-year college education to teach school.

It had been tough getting married and moving to Kansas. It was so cold there in the winter. Not like Arkansas.

On the trip north, she'd asked her new husband what those funny looking little red



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

fences were along the road. She'd laughed with disbelief when he had told her they were snow fences.

Then there were the people up here. Her father-in-law barely spoke English! And relatives, my goodness, there were a lot of relatives – aunts and uncles and cousins by the dozens. These people bred like rabbits!

It took a while to get used to joining such a big family. Buford had 16 aunts and uncles and several of them spoke nothing but French or a mixture, like her father-in-law, of French and English.

But they were welcoming and tried to be helpful, and she soon learned their language and their strange customs. She even got used

to the cold, snowy winters. And when the call came, she took her four-year college education and got a teaching certificate and went into the classroom, even though Cynthia was just a little girl. She taught for several years that time.

After her second daughter was born, she returned to the classroom, and this time it was more than 25 years before she got out of school.

There was the great need for teachers as the baby boomers clogged the classrooms. Then it was her girls' turn to go to college. As Cynthia went through five years of pharmacy school and Marie four of nurses' training, all she earned went to paying the tuition, fees, room and board of her girls.

It was payback time, a thank-you to her parents for giving their daughter the best education they could afford.

After all, only a d\*^m fool would send a girl to college during a war – and after the worst depression the country had ever seen.

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Recently, the U.S. Department of Labor released a dismal update on the state of our nation's economy. Not only did the national unemployment rate rise to 9.1 percent, but the number of Americans looking for work increased to 14 million.

The current economic policies are not working. In fact, they are working against us – creating an environment of uncertainty and hampering job growth in America. As I tour businesses in Kansas, business owners will say to me, "What next? What harmful thing is Washington, DC, going to do next that puts me out of business?"

When the message coming from Washington is more taxes, more regulation and more intrusion into the free market, it's no wonder businesses are not hiring new workers. Instead of creating barriers to job growth, Congress and the Administration must create an environment where businesses can grow and start hiring again – and that starts by pursuing a number of pro-growth policies.

First, Congress must reign in government regulations. Rather than hiring new employees, businesses are spending money on complying with unreasonable regulations and mandates – from the EPA's efforts to regulate carbon, to the costly mandates imposed by the new health care law. According to the Small Business Administration, our nation's smallest businesses, those with less than 20 employees, spend 36 percent more per employee than larger firms to comply with federal regula-

## where to write

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**jerry moran**

• in Congress

tions – that's roughly \$10,585 per employee to comply with all federal regulations.

Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy; they employ half of private sector workers, and have generated 65 percent of new jobs over the last two decades. It makes absolutely no sense to drive up their operating costs and leave them with fewer opportunities to hire new workers.

Second, Congress must replace our convoluted and burdensome tax code with one that is fair, simple and certain. One- or two-year extensions of tax cuts only add to the environment of uncertainty – so companies remain reluctant to hire new workers or expand. When employers know what to expect, they can plan for future expenses and can invest in their companies, grow, and hire new workers.

Third, Congress must open foreign markets for American manufactured goods and agricultural products. Across our country, thousands of Americans depend upon exports for jobs, including more than one-quarter of all manufacturing workers in Kansas. In the absence of trade agreements we risk losing more of our market share to our competitors. Our pending agreement with Korea alone is

[skamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me](http://skamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me)

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worth \$11 billion and would create an estimated 70,000 new jobs. It is past time for the President to send implementing language to Congress for these trade agreements, so we can start exporting more of our manufactured goods – and not our jobs.

Fourth, Congress must develop a comprehensive energy policy. Rising gas prices and recent events in the Middle East demonstrate the importance of having access to a reliable energy supply. Higher energy prices are hampering our economic recovery. No single form of energy can provide the answer – so we must develop traditional sources of energy, as well as renewable energy sources. When employers have access to reliable energy supplies, they can spend their resources on hiring new workers rather than on escalating energy costs.

Finally, Congress must reduce government spending. Our failure to balance the budget will result in increased inflation, higher interest rates, fewer jobs and a lower standard of living for every American. It is time to work together and pass a responsible budget to reduce our deficit this year, next year and far into the future. That plan should include significant spending reductions, a balanced budget amendment to restrict Washington's ability to borrow money, and should address our long-term unfunded liabilities.

As John Adams once famously quipped: "facts are stubborn things." And the facts tell us Washington must change direction if we are to grow our economy and put Americans back to work. The failed economy we are experiencing and the financial collapse around the corner is the most expected economic crisis in our lifetime. We know what is going to happen if we don't act – and it would be immoral to kick the can down the road one more time because the politics of this issue are too difficult.

Americans deserve leadership in our Nation's Capital to confront these challenges and not to push them off to the next generation of Americans. When we confront these issues in a responsible way, businesses will succeed, employees will be hired, and Americans will again be able to pursue the American dream.

To contact Sen. Moran visit his website at <http://moran.senate.gov>.