



# Tribune

Weekend



## Heineman seeks disaster declaration

ANNA JO BRATTON  
The Associated Press

OMAHA — Gov. Dave Heineman on Friday requested a federal natural disaster declaration for eight counties parched by drought in Nebraska.

Heineman visited with farmers in McCook and saw the condition of pasture and wheat fields.

"It is very dry out here, and it's deteriorated every day," Heineman said by telephone from McCook.

Heineman asked U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns to approve a disaster declaration for Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow counties, all in the southwestern corner of the state.

Heineman said those eight counties had suffered at least a 30 percent loss of one or more crops because of drought conditions, according to reports from the Nebraska USDA County Emergency Boards.

Heineman said designation requests for additional counties were likely as more information is collected by the Farm Service Agency.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel also sent a letter to Johanns, supporting Heineman's request.

A disaster designation provides farmers access to low-interest loans and other assistance programs.

In 2002, all 93 counties in the state were declared federal disaster areas primarily because of drought. In 2003, 92 counties received the designation. In 2004, that was down to 54 counties,

and last year just 14 were declared disaster areas, and not always for drought.

The USDA on Thursday approved emergency cattle grazing on conservation reserve land in three Nebraska counties. State and federal elected officials from Nebraska have asked the USDA to give similar grazing approval for other counties.

For Nebraska's wheat farmers, the news keeps getting worse. The state's wheat crop is forecast at 56.1 million bushels, down 11 percent from projections a month ago and 18 percent from last year's crop, according to the USDA.

More than half of Nebraska's wheat crop is in poor or very poor condition, according to the USDA report. In the west, it is discolored, and wheat lines the fields unevenly, leaving dirt visible through the plants.

"You don't see that lush evenness and golden brown," said climatologist Brian Fuchs of the National Drought Mitigation Center.

Please see DROUGHT/page B2



AMY ROH/Tribune

Above: Emilio Leija and other employees of Garcia-Chicoine Enterprise make a curve in guardrails being installed along the future track at Motorsport Park Hastings on Friday. Right: Jose Luis Gomez, back, and David Solano use machinery to hammer guardrail posts into the ground Friday at Motorsport Park Hastings.

## MPH track is starting to Take shape

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Just a few months ago, there was nothing to be seen but wheat and dirt.

Now, driving past Motorsport Park Hastings on U.S. Highway 6, one can see tire walls, guardrails and workers moving dirt.

With track developer George Anderson's first race only 41 days away, Anderson's contractors are furiously erecting guardrails, moving dirt and preparing to lay the track's asphalt.

About two weeks ago, when Anderson met with organizers for the track's first event, Stromer Land Leveling of Juniata was completing the necessary dirt work so Werner Construction Co. could make final preparations before asphalt could be laid.

As of Thursday, Anderson said Stromer Land Leveling was completing the last parts of their involvement in the project, and Werner Construction Co. of Hastings had begun its part of the dirt work.

Along the track's eastern straightaway and turn three, Werner already has laid the line that will be used by the asphalt machine.

Elsewhere on the property, Garcia-Chicoine Enterprises Inc. of Lincoln has been installing guardrail. Even with temperatures in the upper 90s on Thursday, about six men were working with metal and machine to complete the inside guardrails.

The men are working furiously as Anderson is requiring that all guardrail inside the track be completed before Werner Construction lays the asphalt.

"Once they start on the asphalt, no one is going on it," Anderson said.

That means Werner Construction will have to wait to lay asphalt until the guardrails are built, the tire walls are installed and the ground is seeded.

When Anderson initially purchased the property and completed the early dirt work, he planted wheat to help keep the dust from blowing onto the highway. Now, Anderson is planting both buffalo grass and oats on the track's infield.

Anderson is actually using some of the wheat he planted before as one of the safety barriers on the track.

For the motorcycle races, like the Motorcycle Roadracing Association's super bike race in July, Anderson will use wheat bales in front of the tire walls for extra cushioning along the guardrails.

In some areas where a driver is more likely to drive off the track, Anderson also is building sand traps to stop the vehicles more quickly. He said the traps would hold 12-18 inches of Platte River gravel.



An intricate drainage system also has been created at the track.

Anderson said the people racing on his track have the ability to drive in rain but won't drive in standing water.

That is part of the reason why the are slight embankments around the track and a series of drainage pipes to take the water out of the track system.

### THE GARAGES AT MPH

Along with what can be seen happening on the track, Anderson also is laying out plans for a series of stay garages, where drivers could essentially live when visiting the track.

The Garages at MPH, as Anderson is calling them, will be a series of stay garages, with a garage on the first floor and housing upstairs.

"It would allow racers and other interested people to be at track, stay the weekend and use the facility," he said.

These stay garages would be positioned inside the track, allowing residents to have a bird's-eye view of the race.

Anderson said he has discussed his plans with developers, who are now drawing out concepts to match his ideas.

Please see MPH/page B2

## Candidates for Osborne's seat square off

The Associated Press

LINCOLN — The two candidates vying for Tom Osborne's congressional seat squared off for the first time in front of a lively crowd of teenagers.

Adrian Smith and Scott Kleeb talked about Iraq, domestic surveillance, immigration, ethanol, climate change and water issues in front of about 200 teenage participants of the American Legion's Cornhusker Boys State Thursday.

Both are vying for the 3rd District congressional seat now held by Osborne, the legendary Nebraska football coach whose bid for governor failed in the May 9 Republican primary.

Smith is a Republican, and a state senator from Gering.

Kleeb, Democrat, works as a Sandhills ranch hand, and has a doctorate from Yale.

Here is how the two are differed on issues:

◆ Smith said regulations to reduce emissions could harm Nebraska's economy, Kleeb said action needs to be taken to slow global warming.

◆ Although Kleeb, did not directly answer a question on whether national security is infringing on personal freedoms, he suggested it may have. Smith said, "I struggle to find abuses on the system."

◆ Smith was strongly opposed to embryonic stem-cell research, but Kleeb — referring to all stem cell research — said it has great potential.

Please see DEBATE/page B2

## Empty fuel tank can damage vehicle

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Though gas prices might be hitting your pocketbook, waiting to fill up and driving around on an empty tank could pack an even harder punch.

Jerry Hackler, owner of Hackler Auto Repair, 810 S. Lincoln Ave., said running a fuel tank on completely empty can lead to costly repairs.

"The debris that's been laying on the bottom of your gas tank tends to get sucked into your fuel pump," Hackler said. "These modern electric pumps can't handle that and get locked up."

Even if there is some fuel in the tank, Hackler said it might not be enough to keep the vehicle running in perfect condition. He said gas serves as a coolant for an electric fuel pump, which is inside the gas tank.

"The fuel in the tank is what cools and lubricates the pump," Hackler said.

During the summer months, fuel tank temperatures can become extremely hot. Without gasoline to cool the fuel pump, damage can occur. Even when temperatures in the gas tank are cool, he said, having no gasoline can damage the fuel pump.

While prices can vary from vehicle to vehicle, Hackler said the price to replace a fuel pump is high.

Please see EMPTY/page B2



AMY ROH/Tribune

Automobile officials say driving your car on empty can do more harm than just running out of gas.

### Weather

Hi: 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms today.  
Lo: 80  
55



Art by Jennifer Edmisten, 9, Hawthorne School

### DOGS IN COURT

EASTPOINTE, Mich. — A state judicial agency says a dog's place is in the home and has ordered a suburban Detroit judge to stop bringing her terriers Lurch and Lizzard to court. The State Court Administrative Office, an agency of the Michigan Supreme Court, contacted Eastpointe District Judge Norene Redmond about the dogs this week, said agency spokeswoman Marcia McBrien. "Courtrooms are serious places, and respect for the court needs to be maintained," McBrien said.

### Nation

Redmond said last week she saw no problems with bringing dogs to court, something she has done occasionally since 2004. She said the dogs brought calm to the tense courtroom. The state agency said there had been several complaints about the dogs. The Associated Press

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# Officials get hit with high valuations

**The Associated Press**  
**LINCOLN** — Even county officials deal with the pain of soaring property valuations. Of the five members of the Lancaster County Board, only one — Commissioner Bernie Heier — had a valuation increase less than the overall county average of 17.5 percent. The others had increases of 20 to 30 percent. Commissioner Bob Workman's more than 25 percent increase on his home didn't

phase him, he said. "I think it's a fair value," he said. Workman also owns several rental properties, and said some of those values were high and some were low, in his opinion, so they balanced out. But Commissioner Larry Hudkins was not happy. His overall valuation went up a little more than 20 percent, but the value of his land went up significantly. He's considering filing a protest. "My gut instinct is to protest

on the land," he said. Both Hudkins and Heier get breaks on their valuation with the special greenbelt designation used for agriculture land near towns and cities. Commissioner Ray Stevens had an increase of about 20 percent on his home, and nearly 30 percent on a downtown condo. Commissioner Deb Schorr's increase was around 23 percent. Other officials saw larger-than-average increase in their property values: County Attorney Gary

Lacey had a nearly 30 percent increase on his condo, and Sheriff Terry Wagner is protesting his more than 30 percent increase on his south Lincoln home. But some officials were in better shape. Treasurer Richard Nuernberger and Public Defender Dennis Keefe had single-digit valuation increases, and County Engineer Don Thomas' valuation declined. Norm Agena, county assessor, said the rates show the assessment process is blind.

# Empty: Low fuel can damage vehicle

*Continued from page A1*  
"You can easily spend \$500 or more on a fuel pump these days," he said.

Along with the fuel pump, the sediment in the bottom of a tank also can damage the fuel filter and fuel injectors, said Rose White, public affairs director with AAA Nebraska. Also, people choosing to drive on empty to avoid paying higher gas prices often run out of gas altogether, White said. "Anytime we see a big increase in high gas prices, we also see an increase in those who run out of gas," she said.

During the months of June, July and August, AAA's national network of road service providers expect to dispatch fuel to about 116,000 motorists whose cars and trucks have empty tanks. "We see a lot of people who

try to stretch out the last gallon of fuel until prices go down," she said. "And oftentimes, that just doesn't work."

White recommended that drivers keep at least a quarter of a tank of gasoline in their vehicles at all times.

"Situations almost always occur at an inconvenient time and possibly a dangerous location," she said.

While AAA tends to see an increase in stranded drivers when gas prices increase, the Central Nebraska Motorist Assist program has not.

Trooper Dan Astrones, with Troop C of the Nebraska State Patrol, oversees the two Central Nebraska Motorist Assist Units that patrol Interstate 80 for stranded motorists. While there has been a few stranded drivers who ran out of gas, he said he has not seen an increase.

# GED: More than 20 graduate

*Continued from page A5*

"They changed the tests," she said. "They're a lot harder now. The math, I don't remember there being as much algebra or geometry as there was — plus, I'm older and I'm not so fresh out of school like I was (the first time she took the GED tests)."

Now that she obtained her GED, Tappan said she has a lot more faith in herself, and has thought about higher education.

"Someday, I'd like to go back to school for something else, and I wasn't able to do that before," she said.

She has also provided a good example for her daughter Kylie, 11; and son Anthony, 8.

"To see me go back to class after I quit, is good for them," she said. "They actually didn't know I quit until I went back to do

that. They're both really excited and proud. My daughter said 'it will be weird to see my mom graduate.'"

Being older and doing high school work, Tappan said she is more interested in the subject matter.

"What I learned in high school I didn't care about," she said. "Now, it's like 'that's kind of interesting.'"

Alber said he didn't know if all students are necessarily finding the subject matter more interesting, but a lot of them see the practicality of the material.

"They see where they are going to apply it to their daily lives," he said. "Whereas, in high school we were all like 'when am I going to use that.'"

Not all students need the diploma. Alber guessed about 5 percent of students don't need a GED and are enrolled

only to improve reading skills or to refresh their math skills to better help their children with homework.

Over the about two years Alber has been with the program, he has seen a modest increase in enrollment.

"I don't want to read to much into it," he said. "The GED is obviously an alternative route to getting credit for academic achievement."

He said the reason for increased enrollment could be students are unsatisfied with a traditional education, or are just realizing the importance of an education.

"I definitely believe it's the latter," he said. "We had a student recently drop out of GED classes to go back to high school. If that option is not closed, that's what we encourage them to do."

# Language: Local officials approve

*Continued from page A5*

Dave Barrett, AC principal, agreed that ALS courses would be provided at schools if there was enough student interest.

"It'd come if there was a need and if there was a need then we'd provide," he said.

Barret said that he thinks having ALS as an accepted world language in schools is useful.

"It's great — any of the world

languages are beneficial," he said. "The bottom line is that communication is essential."

Tamisha Rose, who recently graduated with a degree in physical education, learned the basics of ASL through Hastings College's course on the subject. Rose, too, thinks the addition of ASL as a world language is exciting.

"There's so many people who

use sign language to communicate," Rose said. "I think it's one of the best things that ever could happen for the deaf community."

As a future educator, Rose thinks that knowing sign language will help her accommodate the needs of her students.

"A student who is deaf can definitely benefit from a teacher who can sign to them," Rose

said. Rose thinks that ideally educators in school systems should have a basic understanding of pertinent languages, including ALS.

The policy, approved Wednesday, is the result of several months of work between the state board and representatives of the deaf and hard of hearing community.

# Drought: Heineman seeks disaster declaration

*Continued from page A1*

Average yield is forecast at 34 bushels an acre, down four bushels from last month and five bushels below last year and the 10-year average.

In some areas, the outlook is even worse, said Michelle VanLaningham, executive director of the Nebraska Wheat Growers

Association. "There will be people that might get two bushels an acre," VanLaningham said.

Lack of rain and high temperatures in April and May stressed the wheat crop, Fuchs said, especially in western Nebraska and the Panhandle. Much of the western part of the state averaged two inches of rain

or less during April and May. In some areas, it was the driest May on record, Fuchs said.

The USDA predicts nationwide wheat harvest at 1.26 billion bushels, 4 percent lower than last month's projection and 16 percent below last year. Yields were forecast at 40.5 bushels per acre.

# MPH: Track starting to take shape

*Continued from page A1*

Each of the garages would have a modern steel look on the outside with more individualized characteristics inside.

Anderson said he wants each residence to have at least two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen and a washer and dryer.

Since he announced his plans, Anderson said he has received calls from racers across the country putting in requests for a stay garage. One driver from California even sent him a picture of what he wants his garage to look like.

Individual requests have included Internet access and large bathrooms for drivers to clean up after the race, Anderson said.

"We're going to build them the way they want them, and they're gonna get what they want," he said.

Anderson said he plans to create concepts in various price ranges to cater to different racers.

Each of the stay garages, though, will have a second-floor balcony overlooking the track.

Anderson said the higher-end garages likely will be situated between turns eight and nine, providing a broader view of the track. Many of the interested drivers are from California, where homes can easily cost \$1 million, he said.

"That is why I want them to feel like they are staying at the Four Seasons for the price of a Super 8," Anderson said.

In the garage itself, Anderson said he needs a car lift for the drivers to work on their vehicles. Depending on the plan, he said each garage might be

able to hold anywhere from two to four vehicles.

As many of these drivers would be coming from across the country, Anderson said this would be a great way for drivers to keep their vehicles at MPH, rather than having to use a trailer to get them home.

Anderson hopes to break ground on the stay garages by the end of the summer.

"I just have the feeling you're going to see some activity out there in the very near future," he said.

Along with the stay garages, Anderson also has plans for a series of work garages, a commercial area and a drag strip along the property's east side.

He is hoping with money generated from the stay garages, he will be able to build the drag strip sooner than



AMY ROH/Tribune

David Solano of Garcia-Chicoine Enterprise of Milford attaches guardrails to each other at Motorsport Park Hastings on Friday.

planned. He estimates the cost for asphalt and concrete for the drag strip will cost \$1.5 million

In the commercial development, Anderson has plans for a

fuel station, tire store, high-quality car wash and possibly a second site for his business, Gessford Machine Shop, 701 W. South St.




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