WICKED WEATHER

First Half of '07 Has Been One to Forget for Kansans

From Staff & Wire Reports

Flooding, tornadoes and blizzards have capped what will go down in history as one of the harshest first halves of a year for Geary County.

Since the doppler began keeping track of rainfall totals and snow accumulation, the county has seen more than 24 inches of rain since Jan. 1. This brings the average to well over 120 percent higher than the average.

Storms have left the county's streets damaged and in need of repair. A late spring freeze has cost farmers an untold amount of money as crop losses and the harvest is only 80 percent complete. Totals so far from Geary County Grain are at about a one-quarter to a one-third decline compared to the last few years.

Geary County is not the only area to suffer the wrath of nature this year.

Of the state's 105 counties, only three — Marion, Atchison and Jefferson — have escaped being designated a disaster area by local, state or federal officials this year.

"We are beginning to wonder what has brought Kansas to the focal point," said Sharon Watson, director of public affairs for Kansas Emergency Management. "We have certainly gotten every type of storm you can have, with the exception of hurricane, and we hope we don't have one of those."

State officials are still tallying the damage from last week's floods, which affected 20 counties in southeast Kansas. So far, emergency management personnel have identified about 3,100 homes destroyed or heavily damaged in five counties, with a dollar figure to be determined later.

Winter storms that crippled western Kansas earlier this year and a rash of spring tornadoes, including one that largely destroyed Greensburg, have caused more than $1 billion in damage already, with the state spending at least half that for recovery efforts.

Much of the damage has occurred in rural areas, which have struggled in recent years because of drought and other economic obstacles.

Insurance companies are fielding claims for hundreds of millions of dollars, money that temporarily boosts local economies. Please see WEATHER, Page 4A.

Water from a large storm in late May flows along the side of the railroad tracks in Ogden.

Brandy Cruz — The Daily Union
Vehicles (above photo) sat installed in the water on Marshall Street in Chapman after a powerful storm in May. The water prevented drivers from entering or leaving the city on the north side of town.

KYLE WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY UNION

Approximately 4,000 cubic feet of water per second (right photo) exit an outlet at the Milford Lake Dam in May. The Army Corps of Engineers opened the outlet to bring the lake down to a conservation level.

BRANDY CRUZ
THE DAILY UNION

WEATHER
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3A

with the rebuilding of homes and the replacement of lost furniture and other property.

"Any time wealth is destroyed, we're poorer," said Art Hall, director of the University of Kansas' Center for Applied Economics.

Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius said on Friday she may call lawmakers back to the Capitol for a special session to pass a relief package for those affected by the floods. They crafted a similar bill for Greensburg residents.

The question is whether Kansas has any money left to cover the region's needs.

The ice storms and blinding snow of December and January caused an estimated $360 million in damage to roads, power lines and telephone poles — the costliest natural disaster in state history. President Bush later designated 44 counties as part of a major disaster area.

Five months later, on May 4, a swarm of tornadoes struck the state's midsection, including a 1.7-mile-wide monster that killed 10 people in Kiowa County and destroyed or damaged almost 1,000 homes in Greensburg.

Three other people died in twisters the same day or the next day.
CHIEF JUSTICE TO VISIT UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts plans to spend two days at the University of Kansas in 2008, meeting with law and business students and delivering a speech, the university announced Friday.

Roberts is scheduled to give the Vickers Memorial Lecture on April 30 at the Lied Center.

The university's business and law schools are working together to develop a schedule for his visit.

The university said law professor Steven McAllister was pivotal in bringing Roberts to the university, using his experience as a clerk for Supreme Court justices Byron White and Clarence Thomas to communicate with Roberts' office.

Tickets to the lecture are free but won't be available until next year.

The Vickers lecture is named after J.A. Vickers, an alumnus and founder of Vickers Petroleum, and his son, Robert.
KU announces spring 2007 honor roll

LAWRENCE — More than 4,690 undergraduate students at the University of Kansas earned honor roll distinction for the spring 2007 semester.

These students, from the Lawrence campus and the schools of allied health and nursing at the KU Medical Center in Kansas City, Kan., represent 99 of 105 Kansas counties, 44 other states and the District of Columbia and 37 other countries.

The honor roll comprises undergraduates who met requirements in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and in the schools of allied health, architecture and urban planning, business, education, engineering, fine arts, journalism, nursing and social welfare.

Honor roll criteria vary among the university's academic units. Some schools honor the top 10 percent of students enrolled, some establish a minimum.

KU continued from page 3

grade-point average and others raise the minimum GPA for each year students are in school. Students must complete a minimum number of credit hours to be considered for the honor roll. Among those named are:

Pawnee Rock: Kyle Hesed, son of Larry and Laurie Hesed.
Lewis: Tara Beth Roenbaugh, daughter of Greg and Denise Wood.
Garfield: Patricia LaVonne Hunter, daughter of Daniel and Mary Hunter.
Larned: Sarah Elizabeth Best, daughter of Michael and Elizabeth Best; Megan Kathryn Foster, daughter of Karol and Rocke Foster; Katie Jane Fox, daughter of Kevin and Jane Fox; Tyler John Fox, son of Kevin and Jane Fox; Amber Marie Humphrey; Nicole Marie Pounds, daughter of Von and Connie Pounds; Emily D. Schuster, daughter of Paul and Sue Schuster.
Rozel: Garrett Steven Blattner, son of Donna and Steven Blattner.
Saint John: Casey Elizabeth Cornwell, daughter of Rick and Gayle Cornwell.
The dumbing-down of education

I’ll be the first to admit that my grades in college wouldn’t have qualified me for any academic scholarships. However, I worked hard, especially my last two years, and finished with a respectable 3.0 grade point average. The hardest part of college was taking a bunch of required classes where I learned things that I’ll never use again unless I’m on Jeopardy. Nevertheless, I knew I had to maintain a certain GPA if I wanted to gain entrance into the William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas. That GPA requirement was a 2.5, which is a C. I don’t think that GPA requirement is too much for officials at the school of journalism to ask for students who want to get into one of the top-ranked journalism schools in the country.

Having said that, I was surprised last week when I learned that state officials decided to revise the teacher licensing process — making it more lax concerning mandatory grade point averages and licensing tests to teach other subjects. The move is to help deal with the current teacher shortage in Kansas.

Beginning in August, out-of-state teachers won’t need to have a mandatory 2.5 GPA from college and science teachers can become certified in other class subjects by passing a content exam.

School district officials in Atchison County feel that easing the standards won’t lower the quality of teachers in school districts, rather make it easier for experienced out-of-state teachers to bring their skills to a Kansas classroom.

Apprently another reason for eliminating the GPA requirement is so that teachers who didn’t do so well in college years ago, but have years of experience, are not beaten out by teachers who’ve met or exceeded the GPA requirement but have little or no experience.

Although I understand why the changes were made, I can’t say that this is a step in the right direction.

If you’ve have a child in school you know that teachers today stress the importance of getting good grades as well as high performance on the state’s standardized tests, which are subsequently tied to how much funding a particular school receives.

Some of my best teachers in school were less experienced teachers who could better relate to the students they were teaching. That’s not to say I didn’t have my share of tenured teachers who were good educators as well.

However, how can a teacher who couldn’t meet a 2.5 GPA in school honestly look a student in the eye and preach about the importance of getting good grades?

Although I’m sure there are many good experienced teachers out there who don’t meet the state’s old GPA requirement, I don’t think we should be cutting corners to get a larger pool of applicants to choose from.

One saving grace is a teacher’s grade point average wouldn’t be the only measuring stick in determining whether an educator could teach in Kansas. An experienced educator who graduated from college with less than a 2.5 GPA would be required to obtain approval from a licensure review committee in order to get a job at a Kansas school. To obtain a license, an educator would have to pass state-approved teaching and content area exams.

I can only hope with new lax standards that district officials don’t make it habit of hiring an experienced teacher who didn’t meet the old state GPA requirement and may not be the best applicant just so they can say they have X number of experienced teachers on staff. I guess we’ll just have to wait and see.

Michael Terry, Globe managing editor, can be reached at 367-0583, Ext. 211, or michaelterry@npgo.com.
Flooding adds to rough first half of '07 for Kansas residents

WICHITA, (AP) — The first half of 2007 has been one to forget for many Kansans as blizzards, deadly tornadoes and now flooding have caused millions of dollars in damage, disrupted lives and put a dent in the state's economy.

Of the state's 105 counties, only three — Marion, Atchison and Jefferson — have escaped being designated a disaster area by local, state or federal officials this year.

"We are beginning to wonder what has brought Kansas to the focal point" of severe storms, said Sharon Watson, director of public affairs for Kansas Emergency Management. "We have certainly gotten every type of storm you can have, with the exception of hurricane, and we hope we don't have one of those."

State officials are still tallying the damage from last week's floods, which affected 20 counties in southeast Kansas. So far, emergency management personnel have identified about 3,100 homes destroyed or heavily damaged in five counties, with a dollar figure to be determined later.

Winter storms that crippled western Kansas earlier this year and a rash of spring tornadoes, including one that largely destroyed Greensburg, have caused more than $1 billion in damage already, with the state spending at least half that for recovery efforts.

Much of the damage has occurred in rural areas, which have struggled in recent years because of drought and other economic obstacles.

Insurance companies are fielding claims for hundreds of millions of dollars, money that temporarily boosts local economies with the rebuilding of homes and the replacement of lost furniture and other property.

But that doesn't make up for the original damage.

"Any time wealth is destroyed, we're all poorer," said Art Hall, director of the University of Kansas Center for...

(See ROUGH on Page 2)
Rough

(Continued from Page 1)

Applied Economics.

Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius said on Friday she may call lawmakers back to the Capitol for a special session to pass a relief package for those affected by the floods. They crafted a similar bill for Greensburg residents.

The question is whether Kansas has any money left to cover the region's needs.

The ice storms and blinding snow of December and January caused an estimated $360 million in damage to roads, power lines and telephone poles — the costliest natural disaster in state history. President Bush later designated 44 counties as part of a major disaster area.

Five months later, on May 4, a swarm of tornadoes struck the state's midsection, including a 1.7-mile-wide monster than killed 10 people in Kiowa County and destroyed or damaged almost 1,000 homes in Greensburg. Three other people died in twisters the same day or the next day.

Insurance companies said the tornado in Greensburg caused more than $150 million in insured losses. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Small Business Administration have set aside $42.5 million to help those affected by the storms.

"Those two storms (the winter storms and tornadoes) alone have left an unprecedented mark on the state in terms of damage and destruction," Watson said.

The state then got a heavy dose of rain, bringing floods to central Kansas in May and southeast Kansas in late June and early July. The high water in Coffeyville was made even worse by the release of thousands of gallons of crude oil from a refinery on the Verdigris River.

"All I can tell you is that I have my staff very busy researching the length of a cubit," said Randy Duncan, emergency management director for Sedgwick County, referring to the unit of measurement used in the Bible to build Noah's Ark.

Duncan said the disasters should remind Kansans that the state is vulnerable to bad weather year-round and they should be prepared — especially if they're in local or state government.

"You will see more local governments pay more attention to financing emergency management activities," he said.

Economists said disasters do provide the opportunity for struggling towns to get improved facilities, such as new city buildings and more technologically advanced homes. But any underlying economic weaknesses will likely remain a problem.

"If these were aging communities, shrinking towns, then the disaster is probably not going to change that," said Robert Olshansky, a professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Illinois. "In principle, there's a great opportunity to make a dramatic improvement, but usually after disasters, most of those things don't happen."

Meteorologists said there's no one cause of this year's weather mayhem, noting that the blizzards were caused by a strong jet stream while the tornadoes and flooding were driven by a weak jet stream. For the rest of the summer, forecasters predict weather to remain between the extremes.

Of course, it could be worse. The Legislature hadn't had to deal with locust swarms since 1874.
KU Honor Roll Announced

More than 4,600 undergraduate students at the University of Kansas earned honor roll distinction for the spring 2007 semester.

Area students on the honor roll were Scott Carlson Bird, son of Tammi and Brian Hanson of LeRoy, a graduate of Burlington High School; and Sabrina Coreen Gregersen, daughter of David and Teresa Gregersen of LeRoy, a graduate of LeRoy High School.
A rough start for 2007

State sees its share of natural disasters: floods, blizzards, tornadoes

WICHITA (AP) — The first half of 2007 has been one to forget for many Kansans as blizzards, deadly tornadoes and now flooding have caused millions of dollars in damage, disrupted lives and put a dent in the state’s economy.

Of the state’s 105 counties, only three — Marion, Atchison and Jefferson — have escaped being designated a disaster area by local, state or federal officials this year.

“We are beginning to wonder what has brought Kansas to the focal point” of severe storms, said Sharon Watson, director of public affairs for Kansas Emergency Management. “We have certainly gotten every type of storm you can have, with the exception of hurricane, and we hope we don’t have one of those.”

State officials are still tallying the damage from last week’s floods, which affected 20 counties in Southeast Kansas. So far, emergency management personnel have identified more than 3,100 homes or businesses destroyed or heavily damaged in five counties, with a dollar figure to be determined later.

Winter storms that crippled western Kansas earlier this year and a rash of spring tornadoes, including one that largely destroyed Greensburg, have caused more than $1 billion in damage already, with the state spending at least half that for recovery efforts.

Much of the damage has occurred in rural areas, which have struggled in recent years because of drought and other economic obstacles.

Insurance companies are fielding claims for hundreds of millions of dollars, money that temporarily boosts local economies with the rebuilding of homes and the replacement of lost furniture and other property.

But that doesn’t make up for the original damage.

“One time wealth is destroyed, we’re all poorer,” said Art Hall, director of the University of Kansas Center for Applied Economics.

Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius said on Friday she may call lawmakers back to the Capitol for a special session to pass a relief package for those affected by the floods. They crafted a similar bill for Greensburg residents.

The question is whether Kansas has any money left to cover the region’s needs.

The ice storms and blinding snow of December and January caused an estimated $360 million in damage to roads, power lines and telephone poles — the costliest natural disaster in state history. President Bush later designated 44 counties as part of a major disaster area.

Five months later, on May 4, a swarm of tornadoes struck the state’s midsection, including a 1.7-mile-wide monster that killed 10 people in Kiowa County and destroyed or damaged almost 1,000 homes in Greensburg. Three other people died in twisters the same day or the next day.

See DISASTERS Page 10.
DISASTERS
Continued from Page 1.

Insurance companies said the tornado in Greensburg caused more than $150 million in insured losses. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Small Business Administration have set aside $42.5 million to help those affected by the storms.

"Those two storms (the winter storms and tornadoes) alone have left an unprecedented mark on the state in terms of damage and destruction," Watson said.

The state then got a heavy dose of rain, bringing floods to central Kansas in May and Southeast Kansas in late June and early July. The high water in Coffeyville was made even worse by the release of thousands of gallons of crude oil from a refinery on the Verdigris River.

"All I can tell you is that I have my staff very busy researching the length of a cubit," said Randy Duncan, emergency management director for Sedgwick County, referring to the unit of measurement used in the Bible to build Noah's Ark.

Duncan said the disasters should remind Kansans that the state is vulnerable to bad weather year-round and they should be prepared — especially if they're in local or state government.

"You will see more local governments pay more attention to financing emergency management activities," he said.

Economists said disasters do provide the opportunity for struggling towns to get improved facilities, such as new city buildings and more technologically advanced homes. But any underlying economic weaknesses will likely remain a problem.

"If these were aging communities, shrinking towns, then the disaster is probably not going to change that," said Robert Oshansky, a professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Illinois. "In principle, there's a great opportunity to make a dramatic improvement, but usually after disasters, most of those things don't happen."

Meteorologists said there's no one cause of this year's weather mayhem, noting that the blizzards were caused by a strong jet stream while the tornadoes and flooding were driven by a weak jet stream. For the rest of the summer, forecasters predict weather to remain between the extremes.

Of course, it could be worse. The Legislature hasn't had to deal with locust swarms since 1874.
Just in time for the tuition hikes to be approved for fall, the Kansas Board of Regents released a study indicating that a state university education usually costs less in Kansas than it does in five neighboring states.

That's good to know, though of limited comfort to price-sensitive wannabe students.

With the notable exception of research institutions in Colorado and Oklahoma, which charge less than comparable University of Kansas, Kansas State University and Wichita State University, resident undergraduates in states next door could end up paying from 3 percent to 68 percent more for comparable college degrees, the study said.

Such comparisons remain valid and reassuring, as they were when Kansas' universities got aggressive about tuition increases early in the decade.

But they won't ease the sting many families will feel this fall from the latest proposed increases, which range from 4.9 percent at Fort Hays State University to 6.5 percent at WSU to 9.7 percent at Emporia State University.

Regents chairman Nelson Galle clearly is right that "rates at our state's universities continue to provide Kansans with an exceptional educational value."

However, the regents and the institutions they govern cannot afford to be cavalier about tuition, one of the biggest investments a family can make.

Seeing that tuition has gone up again, many potential students may decide the barrier to enrollment is impenetrable and not bother to explore the many aid options ...

Of course, perhaps the most important factor in the tuition issue is the Legislature, which arguably has forced higher tuition on higher education by scaling back state funding of university budgets — from 49 percent in 1985 to 29 percent in 2005.

That has put more pressure on institutions to cover costs through tuition, research money and grants ...

Even if there are good reasons for tuition increases — and there are — every hike carries the risk of pricing taxpayers out of their own universities.
Abbott graduates KU with highest distinction

Kristin L. Abbott graduated May 2007 from KU School of Nursing, University of Kansas with a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing with highest distinction.

The recognition ceremony was held May 19, in the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Building, Kansas City, Kan. Abbott was an Honors Program graduate, and was a 2007 inductee into the Phi Kappa Phi Interdisciplinary Honors Society. She was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau Nursing Honor Society.

Other special recognition was an April 2007 KUMC Student Research Forum Poster Presentation.

Abbott is the daughter of Rick and Georgia Abbott of WaKeeney, Kan., and granddaughter of Dorothy A. Abbott of Arkansas City, and the late Philip S. Abbott.
Justice Roberts to visit KU

LAWRENCE — Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts plans to spend two days at the University of Kansas in 2008, meeting with law and business students and delivering a speech, the university announced Friday.

Roberts is scheduled to give the Vickers Memorial Lecture on April 30 at the Lied Center.

The university's business and law schools are working together to develop a schedule for his visit.

The university said law professor Steven McAllister was pivotal in bringing Roberts to the university, using his experience as a clerk for Supreme Court Justices Byron White and Clarence Thomas to communicate with Roberts' office.

Tickets to the lecture are free but won't be available until next year.

The Vickers lecture is named after J.A. Vickers, an alumnus and founder of Vickers Petroleum, and his son, Robert. Speakers have included George H.W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, Kenneth Starr and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.