

River control

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Much closer to certainty is an announcement from the Corps leadership that it will start cranking down the faucet at Gavins Point Dam along the South Dakota border Friday from sending 150,000 cubic feet of water per second downstream to 90,000 in increments of 5,000 cubic feet per second each day.

It works out to a 12-day timetable for cutting releases almost in half.

Signs of receding water along the Nebraska-Iowa border should be evident "fairly soon after that," said Mike Swenson of the Corps' Omaha headquarters.

That won't change grim realities for the clients of Auburn crop insurance agent Ruth Gerdes.

For corn and soybean producers, "We've got hundreds of thousands of acres that are going to be zero on the Nebraska side, the Iowa side, in Kansas," Gerdes said.

Thirty-one of her clients lost not only crops, "but they lost their farmsteads, and they lost their homes," she said.

While dramatic declines in river flows appear imminent, what happens at the Gallup Riverfront Campus in Omaha, where the governors will meet, remains to be seen. The event itself will be held behind closed doors, and Heineman's counterparts were almost as tight-lipped as he in the days leading up to it.

Tim Albrecht, spokesman for Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, wasn't answering any detailed questions.

"Really our only comment

is going to be that the governor is looking forward to meeting with his fellow governors," Albrecht said, "and he's looking forward to seeking to increase the prioritization on flood management."

Jeff Zent, spokesman for North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple, was equally brief.

"We're experiencing major flooding along the Missouri River in North Dakota this year," Zent said, "so how the river system is handled is of major importance to our state."

He didn't respond when asked if it was difficult for North Dakota to choose between high reservoir levels for recreation behind the Garrison Dam versus keeping more space available for future flood emergencies.

Spokesman Paul Johnston said the Corps was not

completely opposed to additional steps in the direction of flood control. But its master manual is based on long river history, extensive feedback from the public, and on marching orders from Congress.

"We have a long record of being available to talk to folks like governors," he said. "On the same day the governors will meet here in Omaha, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will be meeting in (South Dakota) to talk about the same topic."

Plattsmouth City Administrator Erv Portis didn't want to weigh in on the Corps sticking with the status quo for next year.

But Portis said a town named for its proximity to both the Platte and Missouri Rivers still was battling high water.

"The road to the water treatment plant still has 5 feet of water on it. So we're still operating by boat to service the plant. That's an incredible toll on personnel."

The 50,000 pounds of chemicals needed recently at the treatment plant, for example, went by boat in 50-pound bags.

"I have full confidence that Gov. Heineman will do what's in the best interest of Nebraska," Portis said.

Gerdes said the Missouri River has sent its own message this year.

"I think the magnitude of what's happened here certainly ought to sober people up," she said, "and realize that the gamesmanship that happened in the past and the politics that happened in the past cannot continue."

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Arson

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teacher at Saratoga for this year, said Nancy Biggs, assistant superintendent for human resources.

Tiwald wasn't Brewster's supervisor, but trains the district's Reading Recovery teachers and evaluates students' performance in the program.

Brewster hadn't been to work since going on summer leave after the spring semester. Biggs said Brewster was supposed to return to her role as a gifted facilitator last week, but had health issues.

She resigned Monday. Brewster had key card access to the building, and a Lincoln police spokesperson said Brewster had been at the district office to drop off records just before the fire, which was discovered by Kirk Langer, the district's director of technology, at about 11 p.m. on Memorial Day.

School officials said Langer told them he didn't see Brewster in the building.

Investigators said they had suspected Brewster since July, when they concluded the fire couldn't have been caused by any mechanical problem.

They interviewed a number of district employees and eliminated all other possible causes of the fire before Brewster's arrest, Jackson said.

Jackson said he did not believe she was aware that she was the prime suspect until the day of her arrest.

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Toll

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There is a lot of room for concern. It is important to look at solutions."

Solutions call for a two-generation approach, said Patrick T. McCarthy, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which publishes the annual Kids Count Data Report measuring child well-being in each state and the nation as a whole.

McCarthy said the country must continue to provide economic supports to parents such as unemployment insurance, earned income tax credits, food stamps, day care subsidies, and at the same time, offer educational and health care programs to help children overcome the life-long obstacles that come with growing up in a poor family.

"When a child grows up in poverty, it increases the likelihood that child will grow up to be an adult in poverty," Breazile said.

Nebraska ranks ninth overall in child well-being in the 2011 national Kids Count Data Report released Wednesday.

New Hampshire ranks first, followed by Minnesota and Massachusetts. States with the lowest ranking are Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Newly released 2010 statistics reveal that kids took a hard blow from the recession:

■ 17,000 Nebraska kids lost their homes to foreclosure since 2007.

■ 27,000 (or 6 percent) of Nebraska kids had at least one unemployed parent in 2010.

And that the gap between the haves and the have-nots continued to grow.

In Nebraska, only families in the top 5 percent income bracket (\$200,000-plus annually) actually experienced a measurable increase in family mean income between 2008-09 — and that was just 3.2 percent.

Families in the \$100,000-\$200,000 income bracket

saw their mean household incomes increase 0.3 percent between 2008-09.

Every other Nebraska income bracket saw their earnings drop between 2008-09.

All the gains made in decreasing poverty rates from their peak in the early 1990s essentially have been lost, said Laura Speer, national Kids Count coordinator.

Poverty is defined as an income of \$21,756 for a family of two adults and two children.

According to 2009 numbers, 20 percent of kids in America live in poverty.

In Nebraska, 66,349 children — 15 percent of the state's kids — lived in poverty in 2009. That's a 45 percent increase from 2000.

Minorities are hardest hit. In Nebraska, some 48 percent of African Americans lived in poverty, compared to nearly 35 percent of Natives, 29 percent of Hispanics and 20 percent of Asians. About 11 percent of whites lived in poverty, Breazile said.

Poverty numbers of 2010

will be released later this year.

"I expect there hasn't been much improvement," Breazile said. "It is very possible they could be worse."

Also growing is the number of children living in low-income families (about \$43,000 for a family of four). Seven percent of U.S. children — 31 million kids — live in low-income families, McCarthy said.

"It is increasingly difficult to go up the ladder (of economic success), and the distance between the lower and top rungs has grown dramatically," he said.

"A wide range of research consistently concludes that the younger a child is when the family is poor, the longer children grow up in a family that is poor, and the more severe that poverty is, the greater impact there is on their educational success, employment success and problems like abuse, substance abuse, neglect and mental health issues," McCarthy said.

Statistics also show a

significant jump of the number of kids living in families where no parent has regular, full-time employment.

In 2008, 84,185 kids — 19 percent of state's children — lived with parents who did not have secure employment. In 2009, that number jumped to 100,605 kids — or 22 percent, Breazile said.

The economic struggles of Nebraska's families worries Carolyn Rooker, executive director of Voices for Children in Nebraska.

"This is troubling not just because more kids are struggling right now, but also because of the lifelong impact of poverty they face as they grow into adults," Rooker said. "Our state's future prosperity depends on how our children are faring now."

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CORRECTIONS

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Lawyer asks to depose Bruning

The lawyer for death-row inmate Carey Dean Moore is asking to depose Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning and other state officials. A headline on a story about the filing on Page A1 in Tuesday's Journal Star was incorrect.



LOTTERIES

- Powerball** (Aug. 13)
9, 12, 35, 50, 58
Powerball: 4
Power Play: 2
Jackpot: \$25 million (No jackpot winner)
- Mega Millions** (Aug. 16)
4, 38, 41, 42, 43
Megaball: 44
Megaplier: 4
Jackpot: \$24 million (Results pending)
- Pick 3** (Aug. 16)
1, 5, 2
- Pick 5** (Aug. 16)
7, 19, 20, 23, 30
- MyDaY** (Aug. 16)
9, 30, 17
- Neb. 2 by 2** (Aug. 16)
Red: 23, 24 White: 16, 25
On the Web: Visit www.nelottery.com for current and past winning numbers.



Dawes

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and counteracting negative perceptions surrounding the school, she said.

She started with a community meeting in February. Since she hadn't hired her staff yet, she enlisted the help of Dawes students, including William Facemire.

He came back this summer to help with more parent/student meetings and give tours of the school.

He helped because it was fun — and because he's excited about having all Dawes students fill the building again.

"I think that Dawes is going to be about more opportunity and fun because we are creating a new school," the eighth-grader said Tuesday morning.

Since that first meeting in February, Zabawa has continued what she calls "relentless engagement" with Dawes families, opting for personal phone calls instead of automated recordings to extend open house invitations.

At the open houses, she let students share the school's vision, reading portions of

King's speech and telling about their own aspirations in a video.

"That's a big part of our story, and I think it captures a big part of what we do," she said.

Zabawa is convinced the message is drawing families to the school. The district estimated the school would get about 260 students the first year, which they've beat by 71 students.

Judi Yost, who has been a teacher at Dawes for 15 years and lives in northeast Lincoln, called the reopening of Dawes a dream come true.

"The doors are open and the kids are here, and they're from the community," she said. "It's just a year of excitement. We're serving the northeast Lincoln community again."

The feeling, apparently, extends beyond the walls of 5130 Colfax Ave.

Take the reaction of the convenience store clerk who sold Yost coffee when she walked in wearing her "I Am Dawes" T-shirt early Tuesday morning.

"Now it's Dawes again!" he said.

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LPS welcomes most of its students

Lincoln Journal Star

The doors of Lincoln Public Schools' 54 schools opened Tuesday and welcomed most of the district's 36,000-plus students for the beginning of a new school year.

At Lincoln East High School, freshmen walked through a gauntlet of teachers waving blue and white pom-poms. Sophomores, juniors and seniors across the district will start Wednesday.

At Calvert Elementary, parents of kindergartners attended a "boo-hoo breakfast" and got a chance to see their students in action from another room via laptops set up by the

parent-teacher organization.

LPS Superintendent Steve Joel visited Northeast High School. He watched Pershing Elementary students do 20 toe-touches to start off their day and Huntington Elementary students learn — via video — the proper way to enter the cafeteria.

At the start of every year, the district's top administrators visit all the schools. This year, with a fire that destroyed the district offices, Joel was particularly looking forward to his visits.

"It's a great diversion. I actually couldn't wait for today to occur," Joel said. "You get a chance to see a lot of things we've been talking about."

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