



Fit for print Press' closure casts bad light on UM System.

By WILLIAM LEAST HEAT-MOON

Sunday, July 15, 2012

The University of Missouri Press has never published anything I've written, and I have no working relationship with it, but I consider its existence crucial to the mission of the university. I was a freshman at MU when the press was born in 1958, and I remember the excitement and pride on campus in having achieved another goal in our rise toward the top. We all understood that no great university is without a bona fide press.

I believe the proposed closing of UM Press — or its transformation from a real press to a bogus one — is a peremptory decision more political than economic, one made with no real regard for the consequences and with no opportunity for public comment. By abrupt fiat, UM System President Tim Wolfe wants to eradicate a half-century of dedicated work in fostering, developing and publishing more than 2,000 books. The assertion from University Hall that it is not killing the press but creating a "new, more sustainable model" is mere cover for the destruction.

The idea was bungled from the outset, with the formal phasing out of the press set to begin July 1, the very day MU would join the Southeastern Conference. (One must keep in mind that the press serves all four campuses in the system and that this exceedingly poor proposal did not come from Jesse Hall.) As a donor to the Tiger Scholarship Fund, I look forward to our future in the SEC, and I understand that the economics of MU athletics have no connection with those of the press. But how many people beyond Columbia will see, even if incorrectly, the \$200 million master plan to upgrade athletic facilities and the killing of the UM Press as anything other than one more instance of sports over books? That perception would be furthered by MU becoming the only SEC school without a genuine press. Mississippi and Arkansas each have an authentic press, but not Missouri? The proposed execution of the UM Press is more than shameful and embarrassing. It's intolerable.

The reaction to the announcement of closure was rapid and national. Within days, the online petition "Save the University of Missouri Press" gathered more than 4,000 signatures. Thomas Strong, an MU alumnus, lawyer, and UM Press author, wrote Wolfe to say, "I cannot adequately express how offended I am by your decision. Please remove the plaque that bears my name in a room of the law school. I will make no further gifts to MU." John Eisenhower, Ike's son and another UM Press author, wrote Wolfe and said the decision to shutter the press must have been made "without a realization of the national standing of the institution you are destroying."

I have at hand dozens of other similar expressions of anger, outrage and sorrow. National Public Radio aired a segment on the axing; in it, one of the hosts spoke of "the incursion of corporate values into academia," and Bruce Joshua Miller, a publishers' representative, said of the so-termed "new model" that system administrators were "trying to fob that off as a university press, which it would not be."

According to the Tribune, "Wolfe acknowledged he has never visited the UM Press or spoken to the employees, nor did he consult with faculty about closing the current operation." From the beginning, the decision came from people with corporate and bureaucratic backgrounds, nowhere among them anyone remotely considered to be knowledgeable about books and publishing. The proposal, then, is an expression of the worst in bottom-line thinking. These are people who seem to see a cultural entity as valuable only if it is profitable.

For a university to close its press is not without precedent, but it is rare. Those that have been eliminated were at schools having nowhere near the prestige of MU. The only parallel might be Iowa State University, the former agricultural college, which sold its small press in 1999 to a commercial publisher.

Of several bogus assertions and implications, the one about the press over the past three years requiring a subsidy of almost \$400,000 is perhaps the most egregious. The UM Press pays about \$50,000 annually in expenses for a building it bought for just less than \$1 million in the 1990s. Of the \$50,000, \$20,000 goes into a contingency fund held by the university to cover potential major expenses such as for mechanical repairs. The balance goes to pay for utilities and maintenance, including janitors, lawn care and snow removal. Those expenses are not routinely paid by other departments and will remain regardless of who takes over the building. There is no savings to the UM System here.

A "write-down" policy begun in 2009 requires the press to devalue its inventory of published books from their initial value to nothing over three years. This change, with the forced reduction of "excess" inventory including the "pulping" (shredding) of books, has created for each of the last three years an uncharacteristically large "write-down" expense of about \$100,000. These are accounting adjustments and not "out-of-pocket" expenses borne by the UM System. You see, then, the real subsidy to the press is not the alleged \$397,835 but rather \$247,835, less than the current salary of, say, Provost Brian Foster.

I asked UM Press Editor-in-Chief Clair Willcox about statements made by system administrators that the press had an increasing deficit. "Any claim the deficit has run between \$50,000 and \$100,000 the last few years would be valid only through an odd interpretation of the Press's operations statement," he wrote. "Our accounting shows the annual deficit declining from about \$36,000 three years ago to a small fraction of that amount this year, and possibly no deficit at all. The University System pulled the plug just as changes it approved three years ago were beginning to have a real effect. In fact, we've just finished the 2011 to 2012 fiscal year well ahead of our sales projections."

Claims that the previous director of the press, though effective at keeping it funded, resisted some alterations that would have helped ensure a sustainable budget have substance. Since then,

however, subsequent changes are producing the intended results. "The belt-cinching of an operation that has never been fat has been successful, although the strain from an increased workload because of a smaller staff has been considerable," Willcox told me

Missing from all the manipulated figures out of University Hall is the universally recognized fact that a university press exists to further learning, not to make money. Of the 130 members in the prestigious American Association of University Presses, more than 95 percent require a subsidy, and the few that do not, such as Harvard and Princeton, have fruitful endowments. University Hall seems to look at the press as a mere print shop. It is not. It is a highly professional publisher fostering the creation of books as well as their design, promotion and considerably more. Instead of pushing the press to inconsequence, Wolfe should be leading a strong endowment for it.

The "phaseout" of the UM Press calls for the publication of its fall books but nothing thereafter. However — and this is a critically significant "however" — there was no plan for the "backlist" — that is, books previously published by the press. This is another indication of an uninformed decision made hurriedly. Is there a sane person alive who would withdraw all the money from a savings account without a plan for the cash? The backlist, requiring years to create, is a sizable resource worth thousands of dollars.

Statements from University Hall imply the press in its current form is inefficient and has failed to employ recent developments in publishing that draw upon advancements in digital electronics. Willcox told me that the UM Press some time ago made "improvements in marketing, including a database system that significantly improves our digital interaction with wholesalers and online booksellers. We have been providing digital files for online publication through outlets like Ebrary and NetLibrary since the 1990s. We publish ebooks for handheld readers like Kindle and Nook. We have a long history of embracing technology to save costs and labor. ... Any notion that UMP is technologically behind the times is incorrect."

No one has defined what the so-called "new models" for the press might be, but the two I know of, ones talked about quietly, would not preserve the UM Press as a genuine university press.

In one idea, the University of Nebraska Press would assume virtually all operations — editing, designing, printing, promoting, distributing — in exchange for 85 percent of the proceeds. I call the phantom UM Press under this model the University of Missouri Press at Lincoln. It is rank outsourcing. A 15 percent economic share is little help to the university and none at all to Columbia.

Another idea for a new model would move the UM Press onto the MU campus and into management by an existing entity, likely the Missouri Review. That approach would call for hiring a new director and editor with much of the work being done by students. Were this to happen, the UM Press would be the only major university press so constituted. Having taught writing and journalism around the country for 40 years, I'm unable to imagine 20-somethings having the full capacities necessary to operate a major academic press. Although the Missouri Review is respected for its excellence as a literary journal, the operation of a major academic press requires not collegians but an experienced, permanent staff.

Engineering school takes lessons abroad

Trip to South Africa is rare opportunity.

Courtesy of Marty Walker



University of Missouri engineering student Nick Fray, left, works with students from Bellville South High School in South Africa as part of a summer study abroad program.

By Janese Silvey Columbia Daily Tribune Friday, July 13, 2012

Engineering students at the University of Missouri now have more opportunities to study abroad, including a newly launched summer trip that allows them to become the teachers.

The College of Engineering is partnering with Western Cape University in South Africa to host what will become a yearly two-week summer program there. MU and Western Cape have had a broader partnership for more than 25 years.

Eight students returned from the inaugural trip earlier this month.

"It was overwhelming," senior Hannah McLendon said. "We did so much."

Most memorable, she said, were the three days the students spent teaching engineering concepts to underprivileged high school students, many of whom had never heard of the profession before.

"These young students had no idea what an engineer does," said Marty Walker, an associate dean of the college who came up with the idea for the trip.

After dismantling a disposable camera, testing boats made of water bottles and other engineering activities, some of the high schoolers left the camp saying they are now interested in engineering careers, he said.

"They already knew some of the concepts we were teaching them, but they had never heard all the different possibilities or what being an engineer even means," McLendon said. "We taught them every type of engineering discipline and what they can do with it to help other people."

McLendon is interested in becoming a high school teacher, and this was the first opportunity she has had in a classroom.

"They really wanted to learn, which makes you even more willing to teach them and answer their questions," she said. "I learned so much from them. It was not just engineering but about their culture."

It was the first time many of the high school students had interacted with white people close to their age, and how they worked together and accepted one another, Walker said, "speaks volumes."

The South African students weren't the only ones affected, he said, noting that MU students later wrote in journals saying they didn't realize what a difference they could make.

That particular trip is the only part of the college's new slate of study-abroad options that offers an outreach component, but it also included trips to companies and engineering sites. Engineers working at the site of a new advanced coal-fire plant being built included MU alumni, who joined the students for a lunch.

Visiting companies and engineering sites will make up the bulk of what students will do during other study-abroad trips the college will offer in the coming year, said J.R. Swanegan, study-abroad director for the college.

On deck, he said, are 10 programs, including trips to Turkey, Singapore and Ireland. The trips will be taken during winter, spring and summer breaks and will be preceded by a semester class.

Providing specialized overseas programs is critical for engineering students because the major is so tough that students would delay graduation if they tried to spend an entire semester abroad, Swanegan said.

"We're giving our students a better understanding of the way business works across the world," he said. "We want to be able to ensure our students are well-rounded going into the workforce."



Multimedia storytelling adds twist to therapy

By Janese Silvey

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A University of Missouri professor is using a first-of-its-kind digital storytelling therapy to help children who have experienced abuse.

Kim Anderson, an associate professor of social work, is using the program in partnership with the Coalition Against Rape and Domestic Violence in Fulton. There, children and parents who have been exposed to domestic violence go through a four-month program where they learn relaxation and coping techniques. It culminates with the making of a video.

The technology is standard moviemaking software that allows users to string together photos with a vocal narrative or background music. The children work with therapists to figure out how best to tell the story of their experience, then spend a few sessions putting it together in video format.

Making a movie has several therapeutic benefits, said Jason Zoellers, a Columbia-based licensed professional counselor contracted to work with the Fulton agency. First, it incorporates visual and auditory elements, which can be triggers for people who have experienced trauma, he said. For already computer-savvy youths, it gives them a way to deal with an experience using tools they're already comfortable with.

And putting a traumatic experience into a movie format that has a beginning and an end allows someone to view a situation in its entirety.

"People have fragmented memories," he said. "This allows them to bring everything together in one place. You're taking something that's a very disorganized experience and organizing and dealing with it in one place."

Narrating their story also empowers children. "Voice is important to tell the story," Anderson said. "They need to get used to having a voice."

The child and parent typically watch the video together. The children tend to be proud of the final products, which show them as heroes who have overcome adversity, she said.

Anderson got the idea to incorporate moviemaking into therapy a few years ago while working with a woman who had gone through a traumatic situation. The woman was already making

videos, and Anderson could see the therapeutic benefits of organizing photos and narratives in a movie format.

Anderson got training from the Center for Digital Storytelling and then developed curricula to help therapists apply the strategies.

Anderson and the coalition in Fulton have funding from a private corporation and plan to seek renewal next year.

She also hopes to introduce a similar program at Douglass High School next year to allow teens to talk about how they've overcome adversity. Anderson sees broader application, too, such as using the moviemaking therapy to help returning veterans deal with post-traumatic stress.



Public housing factors in youths' tobacco use

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune Saturday, July 14, 2012

Black youths who live in public housing communities are more likely to use tobacco than other black teens, a University of Missouri study has found.

Mansoo Yu is an assistant professor in the Master of Public Health program and in the School of Social Work, which is part of MU's College of Human Environmental Sciences. He and his research team surveyed 518 urban black youths ranging in ages from 11 to 20 who lived in public housing in three U.S. cities. The survey measured attitudes toward tobacco use, depressive symptoms and delinquent behaviors.

They found that those living in public housing were more likely to be fearful, live around crime and have poorer social relationships — all factors that contribute to smoking. The study concluded the black urban youth population is 2.3 times more likely to use tobacco than other black youths.

That could lead to other problems, Yu said. "As previous research suggests, early use of tobacco increases individuals' chances of using more serious drugs later," he said in a statement. "In addition, early drug use is related to other serious problems, such as delinquent behaviors and family and social problems."

The findings show that tobacco-prevention programs should target young children in public housing communities, Yu said.

"Early interventions are critical for these individuals since the likelihood of being exposed to risky behaviors dramatically increases as the children age," he said. "In public housing communities, adolescents may have easier access to drugs and social activities where drugs are used."

Yu's co-authors included researchers from the University of Illinois at Chicago, Boston College and the University of South Carolina. The study, "Understanding tobacco use among urban African-American adolescents living in public housing communities: A test of problem behavior theory," was published in the journal Addictive Behaviors.



Hospital chosen for national breast-feeding collaborative

By Caroline Dohack Sunday, July 15, 2012

The University of Missouri's Women's and Children's Hospital has been selected to participate in Best Fed Beginnings, a national effort aimed at improving breast-feeding support in hospitals.

The purpose of the 22-month collaborative, led by the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is to increase the number of hospitals and birthing centers nationwide that meet the standards outlined by the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, a global program sponsored by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, which seeks to encourage and increase awareness for breast-feeding.

Courtney Barnes, an obstetrician-gynecologist at Women's and Children's Hospital who helped put together the hospital's application to participate in Best Fed Beginnings, describes the hospital's role as two-part: It will make changes to its own program as it works toward a "Baby-Friendly" designation, and it will communicate with other hospitals about what has worked and what hasn't, so they can seek the designation, too.

"We should help other hospitals progress along the way. In 10 years, I hope every hospital is Baby-Friendly," Barnes said.

Barnes said that within the past three years, documented benefits of breast-feeding for both babies and mothers had inspired hospital staff to encourage the practice by making changes to its postnatal care procedures. Some of these changes include keeping families together during delivery, promoting immediate skin-to-skin contact after birth and keeping the baby in the room with the mother during the entirety of her stay.

"Hospital stays are not very long, and we have a very short period of time to teach people to know what to do with their babies," Barnes said.

One of the hospital's next goals is to increase education on breast-feeding among nurses, who will be required to undergo 20 hours of education, and physicians, who will undergo three hours of education.

"Every nurse is going to be a breast-feeding educator by the time they're done," Barnes said. "The goal is that every nurse in our unit is going to be able to help women. We already have lactation consultants, but the nurses will be able to support women at every stage."

Jonathan Small, director of communications for the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality, said the group was looking for three main criteria when selecting participants for the program. The first was a location in a region with comparatively low breast-feeding rates and high baby formula supplementation rates.

"Missouri is kind of middle of the pack, but they were on the list," Small said.

The second thing the group looked for in the applicants was a high birth volume.

"We are having only 90" hospitals participating, "and we were hoping to tip the scales as much as possible," Small said.

Finally, the group was looking for hospitals that would be able to affect a wide geographic area.

Other Missouri hospitals selected to participate in the nationwide 90-hospital collaboration include Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis and Truman Medical Center in Kansas City.



New director to lead MU spinal program

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A biological sciences professor at the University of Missouri has been tapped to lead the UM System's Spinal Cord Injuries and Congenital or Acquired Disease Processes Research Program.

Andrew McClellan replaces Armon Yanders, who died in May after serving as director for more than 10 years.

The spinal cord program aims to advance research on spinal cord injuries and certain diseases. It is funded from the state's Spinal Cord Injury Fund, which is supported mainly by fines for intoxicated-related offenses.

Missouri lawmakers recently increased funding to the program, allowing McClellan to now distribute \$1.5 million for proposals, up from \$625,000 last year. The funding is available to research institutions across the state and is awarded on a competitive basis.

McClellan has been involved in spinal cord injury research since 1985.



South Farm has an array of uses

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The University of Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station's sprawling 1,452-acre South Farm is one of the largest of 22 such units around the state — and it's about to get bigger.

Most Columbians, Ol' Clark included, are not aware of the value of South Farm's research and teaching programs to the past, present and future of our state's agriculture.

Compared to Sanborn Field, the oldest research plot west of the Mississippi that has been around for 130 years, South Farm is a newcomer, dating back to 1938, when MU bought 14 tracts of land between Highway 63, Rolling Hills Road and New Haven Road.

Some of the original land has been sold or leased, including a strip along New Haven that now belongs to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey and a recent lease agreement with private business to establish Discovery Ridge Research Park. The Jefferson Institute, now defunct, remains in the hands of the group holding the loans, but it's still a part of South Farm.

South Farm's office is located at 3600 New Haven, and the entire operation and half of the maintenance of MU's 21 other farms statewide are the responsibility of John Poehlmann, who grew up on a family farm near Jamestown. He left the farm upon graduating from Jamestown High School in 1968, earned an agriculture degree from MU, taught at Linn and Rock Bridge and completed his master's degree in 1978. He moved to Bradford Research Center as director, a position he held until moving to South Farm.

John's role is to coordinate and support the following teaching and research divisions at South Farm — as well as those maintenance duties around the state.

- The Equine Teaching Facility, located just east of the South Farm offices. Marci Crosby is the supervisor of a program that no longer has draft horse management nor mules on the curriculum. Times change, huh?
- Beef cattle is the teaching farm that's the largest operation at South Farm, stretching from Sugar Grove Road to the KOMU television tower. Justin Sexton directs research into reproductive physiology, nutrition, stress physiology and genetics.

- Swine research is under the leadership of Tim Safranski and Randy Prather and actually operates in two areas. The working farm adjoins the beef farm, but classrooms and research are actually north of the South Farm office.

All three of these facilities enroll between 500 and 600 students.

- Working with smaller numbers are the atmospheric research station on Sugar Grove Road; the turf research is guided by Lee Miller, Si Xiong and Bud Friesenberg, who work with golf courses, parks and landscapers to solve the problems of your lawn.
- Other research programs are entomology under Wayne Bentley, the corns genetics lab directed by David Brown and a remote test facility used by the civil engineering lab at MU.

It is always interesting to see things change almost monthly at South Farm as one research project ends and another begins.

South Farm is now in the process of expansion. Wes and Simone Sorenson, both now deceased, gave their 400-acre farm on Rolling Hills Road between New Haven and Route WW to MU with the stipulation that it cannot be developed other than for teaching purposes for 75 years — a most welcome addition to the workload of John Poehlmann.

One of Columbia's most-fished lakes is South Farm Lake on Sugar Grove Road, managed jointly with the Missouri Department of Conservation. Ol' Clark has filed birding reports from the lake more than 225 times in the past six years, and more than 500 reports now make the 7-acre lake the third-most-reported conservation area in the state. It enjoys a list of 130 species, amazing for such a small area without a nearby woodlot.

The lake is an excellent example of the diversity of South Farm, a major role player in making MU the great research and teaching university it is.

NK-Lysin, Antibacterial Substance In Chicken, Could Fight Cancer

Could one key to fighting cancer lie in a chicken?

Perhaps, new research suggests.

A naturally occurring substance in chicken seems to be effective in fighting cancer cells, according to the new study in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Chickens naturally produce a substance called NK-lysin, which works as an antibacterial agent. Researchers have identified two genetic variations of this substance that are able to fighting disease. And one of those two kinds is particularly good at fighting cancer cells.

"It took all of us by surprise," study researcher James Womack, a professor of veterinary pathobiology at Texas A & M University, said in a statement.

Womack worked with Seoul National University in Korea scientists to look at the kinds of NK-lysin present in chickens, and their effects. They examined 62 White Leghorn chickens and 53 Cornish chickens.

"This could lead to other steps to fight cancer or in developing ways to prevent certain infections or even diseases," Womack said in the statement. "It's another door that has been opened up. We are looking at similar studies right now to see if this is possible with cattle."

Recently, a study from University of Missouri researchers showed that a substance in celery and parsley could have powerful effects against certain breast cancer cells.

Specifically, they found that the substance -- called apigenin -- seems to have an effect on certain kinds of breast cancer tumors associated with the hormone progestin (given along with estrogen to women as part of hormone replacement therapy for menopause, and is known to increase the risk of breast cancer).

Extreme Weather Of The Week

Extreme weather hit around the world this week as heavy flooding and mudslides killed at least 15 in Japan. The Associated Press reported that as much as 20 inches of rain fell overnight, destroying hundreds of houses and leaving about 22,000 homes without electricity.

On Thursday, a deadly avalanche hit France's Mont Blanc. Leaving nine dead and about 14 injured, the massive avalanche hit "two hours after 28 climbers had left a high-altitude climbing hut," explained AP. A 30-year-old Danish climber who survived the avalanche told AP, "All of a sudden big pieces of ice fell down right next to us. ... And then a split second after that it all came down and hit us and blew us away. I feel like I've been hit by a truck and did ten rounds (of boxing)."

In the U.S. Midwest, the recent heat wave and ongoing drought conditions are causing many farmers to worry about this year's corn and soybean crops. According to Reuters, "crop ratings have fallen to their lowest level in 24 years." **University of Missouri Professor of Plant Sciences William Wiebold reportedly said, "The attitude is not real good right now. For some farmers the crop is already gone. The longer we go without rain the more farmers will be in that situation."**

Recent research focusing on Texas and last year's heat wave has found that "global warming has made such a Texas heat wave about 20 times more likely to happen during a La Nina year," reported AP. Kevin Trenberth with the National Center for Atmospheric Research's climate analysis section said the increased likelihood "could well be an underestimate."



Drought brings local farmers on the brink

By Jacob Barker

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Standing on the dry, cracked earth on the edge of one of his fields, David Grant de-husks an ear of corn from one of the yellowed stalks. It's about 5 inches long, 3 inches shorter than it should be.

"That's actually a pretty decent ear, from what some of 'em look like," he said.

Grant, like most farmers in drought-stricken Mid-Missouri, is making his peace with what could be one of the worst harvests in years. With about 600 acres of corn planted that in a normal year would yield about 130 to 140 bushels an acre, Grant said he would feel lucky to get one-third of the regular crop. The heat and dry weather last week, he said, "finished it off."

"This corn really changed a lot in the last week," Grant said. "It went from being somewhat decent to just burning up."

Around Missouri and much of the Midwest, the harvest looks dire.

"It has the potential to be the worst corn crop in a long time," said Pat Westhoff, the director of the University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute. "We'll see how it plays out."

Almost the entire state is in at least a severe drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Boone County, like much of the state, received less than half its normal rainfall in June. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 97 percent of Missouri topsoil moisture was short or very short as of the beginning of the week, and 96 percent of subsoil moisture was short or very short.

The corn is getting scorched. Cattle-grazing land is burned up, and ranchers are depleting their hay supplies. And if it doesn't rain soon, the state's soybean crop could be at risk.

"Bumper crops are totally out of the question. Average crops are totally out of the question," Cooper County farmer Ronnie Felten said. "Let's just go and see what we can salvage."

The lack of rain over the past several months compounds a dry winter and a dry period late last summer that depleted the soil's moisture reserves. Not only that, but the record heat has sucked precious water from the ground at a dangerous pace.

"When you just look at the numbers, it's pretty bad in terms of how much rain we've gotten," said Bill Wiebold, a professor of plant sciences at MU. "But it's even worse for crop plants because we've had higher-than-normal evaporation."

Dry weather and scorching heat are hitting the corn crop at its critical pollination stage. With no moisture, the plant produces fewer corn kernels or, in some cases, is unable to pollinate at all. In Missouri, the percentage of the corn crop rated poor or very poor rose from 48 percent to 60 percent during the first week of July alone.

"Soybeans will wait; corn, it doesn't wait," said George McCord, who grows corn, soybeans and wheat east of Hallsville. "It's going to do its thing with or without water. It'll abort the ear. It'll abort kernels. ... The plant right now is in survival mode."

The corn crop hasn't looked this dire in nearly 25 years. The USDA cut its July production estimate by 12 percent compared to its June prediction and said the corn crop was in the worst shape it has been in since 1988.

"I think it's a little worse than '88 in my area," Felten said. "Some of the guys are talking '54 now."

Few farmers in the area have irrigation systems, Wiebold said. The systems are expensive, and many farmers opt to depend on Mother Nature.

"This year, it would have paid," he said. "But would it have paid the three years, four years before that? Probably not."

For some, the drought hurts even more because they increased acreage dedicated to corn after high prices for the grain last year. Missouri farmers planted 3.6 million acres of corn this year, 9 percent more than last year and the most since 1960, the USDA said. Nationwide, the department estimated this week that farmers planted 96.4 million acres of corn.

"We've got the highest corn acreage since 1937 right now, so unless prices really go through the roof, it's probably unlikely we can top that next year," Westhoff said.

The record acreage means this year's total production estimates are still higher than last year or the year before, though much lower than the record harvest the USDA predicted before the drought became so pronounced. That's little consolation, though, for farmers who thought they could cash in on high prices.

"I've got some neighbors who were chasing those high prices," Felten said. "Sometimes it's not the greatest thing to do is chase the market."

The drought has spooked commodity investors, driving up the price of most crops. Corn for December delivery has been trading above \$7 for much of July on the Chicago Board of Trade, a jump of more than 30 percent since the beginning of June. Despite the high prices, local farmers don't expect to harvest enough to turn a profit.

"At this point, I would be extremely grateful just to break even and move on to the next season," McCord said.

Even if it does start raining, much of the damage has already been done.

"You can't go back now," Wiebold said. "We want rain, but a lot of that yield loss is permanent."

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Many Mid-Missouri farmers have another worry: finding grazing land for their cattle. "The pasture's pretty much gone, and it's a long time till next spring," Grant said.

With about 70 head of cattle, he contemplated culling the herd. But Grant decided to try to make it through the winter, though he already is feeding them with his hay stocks, something he normally doesn't start until December.

"I think I've got enough," he said. "I usually sell some hay. This year, I've pretty much turned everyone away. ... I'm not selling any hay until I see where we're at."

Prices have dropped for cattle recently as ranchers liquidate their herds. Many don't have enough hay to get through the winter, so they're selling now, said Felten, who has about 180 head of cattle. One of his neighbors, he said, sold his entire herd in the middle of June, hitting the height of the market and freeing up hay that is still rising in price.

"I thought he made a silly decision three weeks ago," Felten said. "Today, he's probably the smartest cat I know."

Some farmers, pinched with too little pasture or hay and a failing corn crop, are opting to cut the cornstalks now and use them to keep their cows fed through the winter.

If they take that route, farmers need to be careful not to feed the cattle too much, Wiebold said. "Corn will accumulate nitrogen fertilizer in the form of nitrates," he said. "Nitrates will be poisonous to animals if they eat too much."

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Although it's not as dire as corn is yet, the soy crop is in jeopardy if it stays dry for much longer.

"The beans still look good. I don't know how they do, honestly," said Larry Douglass, a farmer near Hallsville. "If it don't rain soon, it's going to go south pretty quick."

Even so, area farmers said the lack of moisture hasn't finished off the soy crop yet. "I think we can still raise some beans," Grant said. "But it needs to start raining."

McCord estimated he needs rain in two weeks to avoid severe damage to his soybean fields. "If we got a dry spell coming right now, it's a knockout punch for me," he said. "There's not enough water to get me through."

Already, the markets are predicting a hit on the nation's soy crop. Soybeans for November delivery are up more than 20 percent from June 1 on the Chicago Board of Trade, trading above \$15.20 for the last week.

The dry weather will affect more than just farmers' profits. Consumers will see it in the prices at the supermarket later this year. Food price increases had been slowing, Westhoff said. Not anymore.

"Food price inflation had been getting less over time, not more," he said. "This will probably arrest that reduction."

Even with all the stress, many farmers are protected with crop insurance. "It's not cheap by any means, but in a year like this, it's a lifesaver," Grant said.

Crop insurance payments could "very likely" be the highest they have ever been, not adjusted for inflation, Westhoff said. But not all farmers carry it. "You've got some farmers, older farmers, who never had it, don't believe in it," Felten said. "They're probably going to struggle next year to put a crop in and finance it."

Even though crop insurance might keep many Missouri farmers from being ruined by the drought, their incomes and the state's economy will be affected. This year is not one many will soon forget.

"In my time, right now, I've never seen this kind of drought before," McCord said.



Death penalty foes laud progress

Group's study guides continuing dialogue.

By Rudi Keller

Sunday, July 15, 2012

Death penalty opponents believe they are making progress in Missouri when a bill eliminating capital punishment was sponsored for the first time this year by a Republican, who was joined by six other lawmakers from the GOP and 36 Democrats in pushing for repeal.

Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty held its annual membership meeting yesterday at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbia, where members discussed how to expand their efforts and heard a presentation about a study of how the death penalty is administered in the state.

"It is incredible how many more legislators are taking notice" of the movement to end executions, said Kathleen Holmes, state coordinator for the group. The group awarded Rep. Mike McGhee, R-Odessa, its Lighting the Torch of Conscience Award, for sponsoring the repeal. McGhee, who is term-limited, did not attend.

A recent study of how Missouri uses the death penalty found that the system works well in some ways and poorly in others, the group was told by University of Missouri law professor Paul Litton and former appeals court Judge Hal Lowenstein. Litton chaired and Lowenstein was a member of the Missouri Death Penalty Assessment Team, which produced a 436-page study comparing procedures, both legal and technical, against American Bar Association standards.

Issued in March, the report found that the state has good crime labs and a strong public defender system because the labs are certified and the public defenders are specialized in capital cases. But the law too broadly defines the reasons for imposing the death penalty and that can cause unfairness, Litton said.

In a death penalty case, a prosecutor must prove there was at least one aggravating circumstance that made the murder worse than others. Missouri allows vague standards that cover almost every murder, Litton said.

The report did not recommend a moratorium on executions in Missouri, partly because that would have been the only headline from the report and partly because Missouri handles executions better than many states, he said.

Missouri, with 68 executions since 1989, is fifth in the number of executions nationally since use of the death penalty was renewed in the 1970s. For a short period, executions were banned in the United States while new legal procedures were developed in response to a 1972 U.S. Supreme Court decision. Because of shortages of execution drugs and legal challenges, only two executions have occurred in Missouri since 2005.

There are 46 people on death row in the state, including two from Boone County. In May, after the state announced it was changing its lethal injection protocol to use only one drug instead of three, Attorney General Chris Koster asked the Missouri Supreme Court to set execution dates for nine prisoners.

Lowenstein, who opposed the death penalty as a lawmaker in the 1970s, said it is important to have absolute certainty before someone is executed. "To me the problem is that in most crimes or most sentencing decisions, you can have make-overs and make-ups, but in this you can't."



Lofty goal takes wing

By Catherine Martin

Columbia Daily Tribune Saturday, July 14, 2012

To earn his wings as an Eagle Scout, Austin Renwick has teamed with the Raptor Rehabilitation Project to help some creatures that already have wings of their own.

The Raptor Rehabilitation Project, a program of the University of Missouri's School of Veterinarian Medicine, works to rehabilitate injured raptors, or birds of prey, and release them back into the wild if possible.

While recovering, the birds are placed in a large flight cage. Renwick, 16, explained that his Eagle Scout project will be to help build a secondary entrance cage to stop the birds from escaping from that cage and possibly injuring themselves more.

There have been some issues with birds getting out in the past, said Michelle Walker, one of the education coordinators for the project, although the birds have always returned.

"It's just the fact that we knew for sure the birds will always be safe," Walker said. "What we want ... is to protect them from things they can't protect themselves from."

Renwick said the project is a good fit with his passion for animals and nature.

"One of the reasons I joined the Scouts was because I was really into animals and birds, especially birds of prey. I thought they were really cool, especially when I was younger," he said.

Now that he's older, Renwick is able to help the creatures he's been fascinated by and use the leadership skills he's learned in the Boy Scouts by passing his knowledge and interest to other youngsters. Other Scouts, mostly ages 12 to 14, will help him with the construction of the cage, with Renwick acting as the project leader.

He and volunteers from the raptor project also set up a booth outside of Bass Pro Shops Wednesday and yesterday to showcase three of the birds — Hephaestus, an American kestrel; Willie, a red-tailed hawk; and Mo, a great horned owl. The group provided information about the birds, Austin's project and the raptor project, and also sought donations. The cage project budget is around \$200, with about \$120 collected on Wednesday. Renwick said he hoped to collect the rest yesterday.

Even if passers-by didn't donate, Walker said it was a good chance to tell people about what the group does. Some even showed an interest in volunteering, like Lisa Snyder and her three kids, ages 8 to 11. The family has a love for animals and birds and even has a parrot with a broken leg, Snyder said.

"I feel a great empathy for a creature that's meant to fly and can't," she said.

The Snyders opted to contribute to Austin's project. They also have a strong interest in the Boy Scouts, Snyder said, as son Bradley, 11, is a Scout and her husband was an Eagle Scout.

The raptor group has a history with the Boy Scouts, Walker said. A few other teens have worked with the group for their Eagle Scout projects, including one who repaired flight cages and another who created an outdoor area for the birds.

Already, Renwick said and he's learned a lot from his project, and from his many years in the Boy Scouts.

"As I'm older, there's a lot of leadership opportunities that will help whenever I go into ... a career," he said.



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Illinois limits outside help for university executive searches

By [The Associated Press](#) | Posted: Sunday, July 15, 2012 12:27 pm | [\(0\) comments](#).

NO MU MENTION

CHICAGO • State universities in Illinois will no longer be able to use outside firms in most hiring searches.

Gov. Pat Quinn signed a law Saturday to limit the practice as a way to save money.

Starting next year, public universities will have to rely on their own personnel to cast a net for top talent. Outside firms will only be allowed in the hiring of university presidents or when a current president and board of trustees can demonstrate a need for such services.

Search firms can charge hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Quinn says Illinois wants the best talent but that "recruiting should not come at the expense of the education of our students."

The law goes into effect Jan. 1. Universities have six months from that date to implement it.