



Rock County STAR HERALD

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Thursday, March 15, 2018

MDA releases nitrogen management draft; seeks more input on rules

By Lori Sorenson

Gov. Mark Dayton last week updated a draft plan that would continue efforts to reduce nitrates in groundwater.

"Clean, safe, reliable water in our communities is everyone's concern, and everyone's responsibility," Dayton said on March 6 when he and Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Dave Frederickson announced a proposed plan.

Protections would apply to vulnerable areas and areas with high nitrate levels in public drinking waters.

Proposed rule includes additional protections for drinking water based on public input from 1,500 farmers and landowners and over 820 written comments; Additional opportunities for public comment on the proposed measure will begin in May, with more public hearings to be scheduled this summer

The measure also would create a system of voluntary and mandatory mitigation practices in areas with high nitrate concentrations in the public water supplies.

Several townships in Rock County are considered "vulnerable areas" with high nitrate contamination.

Rock County leads efforts to reduce nitrates in water

Doug Bos of the Rock County Soil and Water Conservation District was on the original advisory team that wrote the MDA draft plan last year.

He said he felt that all interests are adequately represented with the

25-member team.

"They worked with all Minnesota producer groups, universities and soil and water folks like me," he said last summer when the draft plan was released. "It's a very good group of people who put this together over a two-year process."

Since then, 1,500 farmers, landowners and others participated in public comment on the proposal in 17 public meetings across the state and over 820 written comments.

"This proposal responds to what we heard," said Ag Commissioner Frederickson. "It balances the needs of farmers and modern agricultural production with the need of all Minnesotans to have safe drinking water."

For nearly 20 years Bos has worked locally to encourage farm-

Nitrogen management/see 5A

RCO director joins rally for disability service funds

RCO and others face 7-percent funding cut amid struggle to hire and retain workers

By Lori Sorenson

Luverne's Elizabeth Schear traveled this week to the Minnesota Capitol where she rallied with others to support people with disabilities.

Schear is the director of Rock County Opportunities in Luverne where adults with disabilities find employment and other opportunities for independent living.

RCO depends on state funds for its operations, but that funding has historically been unstable, making it difficult to retain staff and maintain services, Schear said.

"Over the last few years we have found ourselves in a state of continuous change and uncertainty when it comes to funding," Schear said.

"It would sure be nice to have a more certain future for our staff and clients."

Tuesday, March 13, was Disability Day in St. Paul, and Schear joined roughly 1,000 others to oppose anticipated budget cuts to non-profits that serve people with disabilities.

RCO and other non-profit providers have been struggling for years under a complex disability service system, according to the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR).

"All we are looking for is for some sense of long-term stability," said MOHR president Mike Burke.

"... stability in a system that will allow us to pay our staff competitive wages, which ultimately helps thousands of people with disabilities across the state who rely on our services for their quality of life."

He said a direct threat to service providers is a recently announced 7-percent funding cut for services.

Complex formulas that determine rates paid to disability service providers are tied to an inflationary

Workforce disparity funding/2A



Mavis Fodness photos/0315 4H Adventures Horse

Meagan Stueven (far left) and Natalie Fick (center) talk to Cloverbuds in the "All about Horses" 4-H Cloverbud program Saturday morning at their family's farm east of Hills. In addition to petting "Jake" they learned about the equipment frequently used by horse owners.

Cloverbuds learn 'All About Horses'

By Mavis Fodness

Twenty-five children and adults received a Saturday morning lesson and up-close look at horses as part of the Rock County 4-H Animal Adventures program.

"All About Horses" is one of a series of Cloverbud programs (kindergarten through second grade) that focus on animals.

The first of the "All About" programs involved dogs, dairy, sheep and rabbits last fall.

"All About Beef" is scheduled for April 7.

Participants spent time in small groups completing worksheets before gathering for group presentations.

The hourlong event concluded with participants meeting the animals and learning more about the county's horse project.

On Saturday participants traveled to the Harlan and Sue Stueven farm east of Hills. Daughters and former 4-H'ers Natalie Fick and Meagan Stueven led the sessions.

"With horses they are a big animal," Fick cautioned. "But if you run around and make a lot of noise you could scare them. I don't want you to get hurt."

Participants met horses named Bill, Jake and Indy.

All the programs are free.

For more information contact the Rock County 4-H Program at 507-283-1302.

Lori Oechsle helps daughter Alayna fill in the worksheet identifying the parts of a horse.



Robert Cale feeds Jake a treat. Below, brushes, a halter, bridles and a saddle pad stack up on the table for use with horses on the Stueven farm.



County road and bridge plan approved for 2018

By Mavis Fodness

Rock County Commissioners approved a plan to spend almost \$5 million on county road and bridge improvements this year, according to discussion at their March 6 meeting.

Details of the annual plan will be presented to city and township officials at an April 3 road and bridge meeting.

Highway Engineer Mark Sehr outlined his department's five-year

work plan that includes almost 70 miles of paved roads and six bridges.

Improvement costs are estimated at over \$4.7 million, budgeted from federal, state and local aid.

"This is the work we would like to do if we can," Sehr said. "Some will fall back because we won't get funding."

Three miles of county roads are

Road and bridge plan/see 8A

St. Patrick's Day Parade set for Saturday; celebration continues into evening

By Lori Sorenson

St. Patrick's Day festivities in Luverne will have more of a weekend flavor this year with the annual Irish holiday falling on Saturday, March 17.

The parade on Main Street starts at 4:30 p.m. and evening celebrations begin after that.

For those who want to join the parade, registration isn't necessary, according to Luverne Area Chamber Director Jane Wildung Lanphere.

"Decorations don't have to be complicated," she said. "Just wear green and have some fun."

Parade entrants — businesses, families and

individuals — will meet in the Living Rock Church parking lot on East Main Street between 4 and 4:30 p.m.

The parade route ends at the Palace Theatre on Freeman and Main.

Four \$25 cash prizes will be awarded in both youth (18 and younger) and adult categories.

St. Patrick's Day parties in Luverne start at 11:30 a.m. at the Eagles Club which will host the Fourth Annual "Harvest for Hunger" Reuben dinner feed.

A St. Patrick's Day block party will be from 4 to 10

St. Patrick's Day celebration/continued on 3A



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Meetings

Parkinson's Support Group will meet at 1 p.m. Thursday, March 15, in St. John Lutheran Church, Luverne. Call 507-283-4255.

MS Support Group will meet at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 15, at Southwest Health and Human Services in Luverne. All persons with MS, family and friends are invited. Call 507-283-2069 or 507-283-2964.

Blue Mound Cemetery Association will meet at 7 p.m. Monday, March 19, at the home of Randy and Kathy Remme.

Caregivers Support Group will meet from 5-6:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 27, in the conference room of the MaryJane Brown Good Samaritan Society Home. Anyone dealing with caregiving or with questions concerning available resources is encouraged to attend.

Courthouse elevator under repair

The elevator in the Rock County Courthouse in Luverne will be inoperable through March 28 because of equipment upgrades, affecting handicap-accessibility to several offices. Affected departments include auditor-treasurer, land records, county administration, veteran services, district courts, emergency management and department of motor vehicles.

Contact department personnel if accessibility to the courthouse is necessary during the repair period.

Green Earth performs 'KOLD Radio' The Green Earth Players will perform "KOLD Radio — Whitefish Bay" March 16-18 and March 23-25 at the historic Palace Theatre in Luverne. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday both weekends.

Tickets are available at the Palace Theatre Box Office, 102 East Main Street, Luverne, or by calling 507-283-4339.

Band and choir concert March 17

The high school band and choirs (grades 9-12) will present a concert at 7 p.m. Saturday, March 17, in the high school gym. The band will be under the direction of guest clinician, Amy Roisum-Foley from Minnesota State University of Dr. Bret Amundsen from St. Scholastica in Duluth. The concert will feature music that has been prepared for Large Group Contest. There is no admission for this concert and it is open to the public.

St. Patrick's Day parade March 17

Luverne's St. Patrick's Day Parade will be at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, March 17, starting at the Living Rock Church parking lot on East Main Street and ending at the Palace Theatre. All businesses, families and individuals are invited to participate. Registration isn't necessary; just meet in the lot between 4 and 4:30 p.m. Four \$25 cash prizes will be awarded in youth (18 and younger) and adult categories.

Blood drive March 19 in Luverne

Sanford Luverne and Community Blood Bank will host a blood drive from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m. Monday, March 19, at Sanford Luverne to help those patients in need throughout the local area. For more information or to schedule an appointment call 507-283-2321 or see www.cbllifeblood.org. Walk-ins are welcome.

Register for 8-hour defensive driving

Luverne Community Ed will offer the full 8-hour defensive driving class in two 4-hour evening sessions from 5:30-9:30 p.m. March 19 and March 26 for anyone 55 years of age or older who wants to qualify for a 10-percent car insurance premium discount. For more details or to register, call 507-283-4724.

Sign up by March 19 for summer ball

All students in grades K-12 who want to play baseball or softball in the summer community recreation program need to register by March 19 at the Community Education Office. Registration forms and details are available on the Luverne School website at www.isd2184.net under Community Education, or call 507-283-2413.

Library hosts Harry Potter Escape Room March 20-22

The Rock County Community Library will host a Harry Potter Escape Room for teens from 4-7 p.m. March 20-22. Teens of one to four people can sign up for a time slot by calling the library at 507-449-5040.



Tuesday, March 13, was Disability Day in St. Paul, and Luverne's Elizabeth Schear of Rock County Opportunities joined roughly 1,000 others to oppose anticipated budget cuts to non-profits that serve people with disabilities. (Submitted photos)

Funding services for people with disabilities/continued from 1A

factor and funding agreements with the federal government, he said.

If left unaddressed, it could mean damaging cuts are permanent. "It is extremely difficult to create budgets and forecast future revenue when we rely completely on funding that is controlled by the State," Schear said.

"And those in charge frequently, and without much warning, cut that funding."

She said the administrative paperwork ends up harming the very people her organization intends to help.

"We are then forced to spend time and energy trying to prevent the cuts or look for ways to restructure to accommodate cuts when our prevention efforts are unsuccessful," Schear said.

"All of this time and energy should be spent providing services that the people we serve need."

Rep. Joe Schomacker, Luverne, told the Star Herald Tuesday that he is chief author of a bill that he hopes will address some funding issues.

He said recent federal cuts have been due to confusing language between state health officials and federal offices about inflationary adjustments and base rate adjustments.

His new bill, which passed the House Committee Tuesday morning, would refer to all rate adjustments as "workforce disparity adjustments" in



Elizabeth Schear of Rock County Opportunities (far right) joins Leslie Swartling, Stephanie Reed, Connie Tropicke, all from Winona Occupational Rehabilitation Center, at the Capitol.

the formal language.

"We're hoping this will have some affect on federal funding going forward," Schomacker said.

Tuesday's rally also included the Association of Residential Resources of Minnesota (ARRM) and the Best Life Alliance, a statewide coalition of people with disabilities, their families and providers of home and community-based services.

Legislators, disability staff members and others impacted by legislative decisions offered testimony at the rally, as did individuals who receive services.

Burke said the rally put faces and names before state leaders to help them understand that they are not simply talking about policies and money, but people's lives.

"It's important for senators and representatives to hear

from individuals with disabilities, their families and the people who work closely with them," said Burke.

He said the issues often come down to the "person-centered" concept of allowing people with disabilities and their families to make choices.

"If you give someone three more choices, awesome, but if you give three more choices and eliminate two things, that's not a choice," Burke said.



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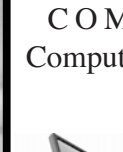
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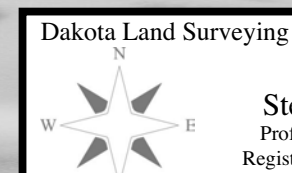
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