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County agent Harold Kerr holds a couple young struggling wheat sprouts in a handful of dry North Lex. soil.

DROUTH

Could mean economic disaster in wheat fields

By Wil C. Phinney
Editor, Gazette-Times

Nobody is arguing the facts. There has been darn little moisture since August and that rain was lost in cultivation and evaporation.

If hollering helped, the skies would have opened up long ago. You can bet there are more than one farmer in the area who's hoping it'll rain before this paper and this story hit the streets on Thursday.

If it doesn't rain soon, it could, seriously, mean economic disaster in Morrow County. That's a heavy line, but it's true.

Harold Kerr, Morrow County extension agent, calls the "serious situation" a "drouth." He's plain talking about the problem.

"If it turns off real cold with no moisture in the ground, there's a good chance of killing off the wheat crop," Kerr said emphatically.

"The soil is just dry," he said. A trip to the furrowed fields will tell that. A blind man can feel the dust running through his fingers.

Kerr adds another chapter to the story. "We need rain more than snow," he said. "If it snows and the ground freezes, we're liable to get a snow run off when it thaws. The surface will thaw before the ground."

That means erosion. Kerr said, however, that there's hardly enough moisture in the ground to freeze. If that can be good, that's the only way.

Kerr, forecasting the worst, said a farmer can reseed with spring wheat or seed with winter wheat up till about Feb. 15. "Before then," Kerr said, "a farmer really doesn't know if he's lost his stand yet."

"If we get the right kind of winter, we can have the right kind of crop," Kerr said.

What about the August rains? They set records themselves.

But that was in August. The rain is needed in November and that ground just hasn't been able to hold the moisture that long.

"The August rain helped," Kerr said. "But the ground didn't save much. It evaporated and cultivation drew it out." That August moisture was the last good drops of water this county has seen, outside of a couple sprinkles.

The problem is not a scientific one to deal with.

"Every day it doesn't rain, it makes it worse," Kerr said.

"The same amount of August rain would have done a lot more good in October or November."

Farmers in the area echo Kerr's thoughts, but they add their own, too.

"It's getting kind of rough," Roy Martin, the 1976 Conservation Man of the Year in Morrow County said Tuesday. "You have to go back to 1967 to get a comparison." In that year, Martin said he raised wheat on 4-5 inches of rain for the entire year.

In 1967, he said his North Lex. ranch took on three small rains from May through the year. His records showed 90-100 degree weather with northeast winds that dried the soil even more.

"You could smell the wheat cooking," Martin said, noting that in 1967, there were 81 straight days without rain.

What about 1976? "It's a different kind of fall," Martin

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By March 15

Child center faced with move

Only months after finances slowed a Nov. opening, the Heppner Child Development Center is strapped again. This time it isn't a financial problem.

The center is crying out for help in finding another building to house the 22 children presently taking advantage of the city's child development center.

The center has been occupy-

ing the Seventh-Day Adventist Church gymnasium for two and a half years.

But, due to growth in the church, it was decided this week that the center should find another building so the church could utilize the gym for programs and a possible school.

Much credit must be given to the members of the SDA church, who have unselfishly

provided the gym, church kitchen, classroom and restrooms rent free to the center.

The church has grown from three children two years ago to 15 today. Pastor Lloyd Perrin said a school may be planned for the building and that it would be utilized with programs.

The church and center set March 15 as the date of departure, but Perrin said it could be extended to June 1 if needed.

Perrin said the church members were "really sensitive" because they know the center is a "valuable asset to the community." Perrin said

the church was "interested in the center" but decided on the move "in terms of church growth."

Linda Johnson, spokesperson Monday for a group of center board members, said the board was "totally grateful to the church" and that there were no bad feelings.

The center is now in need of a new building.

The building would have to be pretty large, to house 22 children, including infants. Monica Swanson, center supervisor, said the building would preferably have two restrooms, an outside playground area, and a couple

different rooms would be "more practical" but not necessary.

The plea for help will be part of a meeting of parents, the board and staff on Thursday, Dec. 16, at 7:30 p.m. at the center. The persons interested will discuss and explain the move with ideas of a new building.

The board will also be expanding. There are six board members at present, including Anne Doherty, Linda Johnson, Joyce Grasser, Carol Goodyear, Ken Lemley, and Nova Gaylord. Two more persons will be added to the board.

The board also wished to publicly thank again all the donors that helped them through a financial crisis in October. Their doors are open again, but they need new doors, now.



Bert Huff & Larry Mills (G-T Photo)

Bert Huff, First National Bank of Oregon vice president, spoke Friday at the Heppner, Morrow County Farm-City Banquet.

The banquet drew more than 200 persons into the Elks' Lodge for a dinner, served by Jim Rogers and honor presentations.

The Morrow County Livestock Association meeting preceded the Farm-City banquet.

Some of Huff's remarks are on page seven. Pictures and story about award winners appears on pages four and five.

Tad Miller elected OWGL President

E.H. "Tad" Miller, Heppner, was elected president of the Oregon Wheat Growers League last week at the OWGL annual business meeting in Portland. The Oregon Wheat Growers League is a statewide organization composed of nearly 9,000 Oregon wheat farmers with offices in Pendleton.

Tad Miller follows in the footsteps of his father, E.H. Miller, who was president of the OWGL in 1936. Tad still

owns the 3600 acre ranch located in the north Lexington area between Lexington and Heppner in Morrow County.

The Oregon Wheat Growers League celebrated its 50th anniversary in February of this year. The OWGL has been active in foreign market development for Oregon wheat and established the first U.S. commodity office in Tokyo, Japan. This led to the formation of Western Wheat Associates and promotion of

other U.S. agricultural products overseas.

Tad and his wife, Melba, have four children: Michelle Burns (Mrs. Don), Pendleton; Mark, who recently graduated from the University of Idaho and who has decided to stay home and help his dad farm; Nancy, 13 and Steve, 9.

Tommy Martin was recently elected Morrow County Wheat Growers League president and Jim Swanson, vice-president.



E. H. 'Tad' Miller



Climbing to the county court house clock tower is no easy chore. See page for feature story

Holly Hoyt

While the Heppner Child Development Center toys with a major move, it also will be feeling the energetic grips of a new manager.

Holly Hoyt, a 23-year-old Troutdale woman, has started at the center under the supervision of Monica Swanson. Ms. Swanson will be in that supervisory position for the next six months.

Ms. Hoyt has a bachelor of science degree in child development from the University of Washington.

She said she "really loves it here" and that she will find the task "challenging." Saying she's looking forward to taking over, Ms. Hoyt said that the move won't be a "tremendous deterrent to any energy I was planning to extend."