

SIMPLY DELICIOUS
Big-batch salad is perfect to share with friends, LIFE

The Forum

OF FARGO-MOORHEAD

UNLOCK DIGITAL AT INFORUM.COM/ACTIVATE

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2021

▶▶▶ INFORUM.COM

BIGGEST WATER USERS FARGO & WEST FARGO

IN GALLONS



FARGO

- 162,874,000 City of West Fargo
- 60,635,000 Cass Rural Water District
- 17,709,000 NDSU (campus & multiple athletic fields)
- 14,778,000 Fargo Parks (pools, parks, golf & athletic fields)
- 10,214,000 Sanford Health (multiple facilities)
- 6,147,000 Fargo Schools (multiple facilities)
- 3,926,000 Cass Clay Creamery (200 20th St. N.)
- 2,231,000 Custom Express Car Wash (two southside locations)
- 2,198,000 Essentia Health (multiple facilities)
- 1,855,000 VA Medical Center (2101 Elm St. N.)

WEST FARGO

- 20,463,000 Cass Rural Water District
- 10,860,000 West Fargo Schools (multiple facilities)
- 5,458,000 Latitude 46 Apartments (2195 Bluestem Drive)
- 4,311,000 Cargill (250 7th Ave. NE)
- 3,941,199 Strata Corporation (210 12th Ave. NW)
- 3,024,000 Eventide Sheyenne Crossings (225 13th Ave. W.)
- 2,654,000 Brookwood Estates (825 1st Ave. E.)
- 2,472,000 Weisgram Metal Fab, Inc. (822 5th St. NE)
- 2,375,000 Holiday Station Stores (2020 Sheyenne St.)
- 2,192,000 Coborn's, Inc. - Cashwise (755 32nd Ave. E.)

Sources: City of Fargo, West Fargo Utilities Dept.

Troy Becker / Forum News Service

Officials fear ND hospitals could be overrun

'Disaster' looms as COVID infections reach levels seen 1 year ago

By Patrick Springer and Jeremy Turley
The Forum

FARGO — The number of active COVID-19 cases in North Dakota is on par with infections one year ago — a prelude to a fall outbreak that threatened to overrun hospitals and produced death rates that for a time were the worst in the world.

North Dakota reported 1,688 active COVID-19 cases on Tuesday,

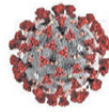
Aug. 24. A year earlier, on Aug. 24, 2020, the state reported 1,541 cases.

But testing for COVID-19 is way down from last year, and the rate of positive tests is up to 5.9% over the last two weeks — much higher than the 3.3% rate on the same date a year earlier. Finding more infection on fewer tests indicates the coronavirus is spreading at a more rapid pace than it did last year, said North Dakota Department of Health Disease Control Director Kirby Kruger.

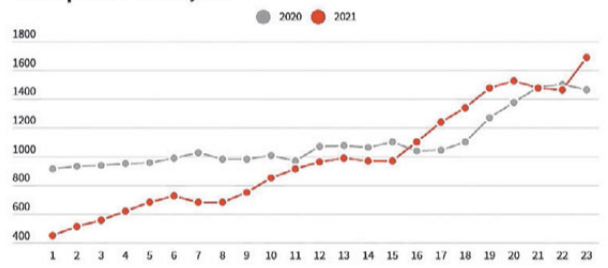
COVID: Page A3

Comparing Augusts

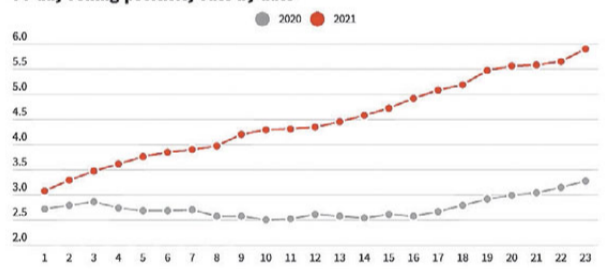
North Dakota's reported COVID-19 cases this August are comparable to 2020 infection rates. The positivity rate is considerably higher in 2021.



Active positive cases by date



14-day rolling positivity rate by date



Source: North Dakota Department of Health

Forum News Service



THE BIGGEST USERS

Fargo, WF's largest water consumers

Fargo
Cities in the metro area are asking their residents to further reduce flows from the faucet as the region faces a prolonged, widespread drought.

New restrictions that limit lawn watering to one day a week rather than every other day took effect in Fargo, Moorhead and Dilworth



early this week.

West Fargo, which previously adopted the same restrictions as Fargo, said it's reviewing its water contract with Fargo to determine requirements, so it

cannot confirm any action at this time. In light of the worsening drought, The Forum recently requested data from Fargo, West Fargo and Moorhead about their largest water consumers.

When asked, West Fargo provided a list of its top ten users, while Fargo provided a list of the top 200 users based on largest water meter

readings, from which The Forum compiled a list of top 10 users. Moorhead Public Service, a public utility provider to Moorhead and Dilworth, denied multiple requests to provide water user data, citing a Minnesota law that allows electric customer data to remain private.

WATER: Page A6

'One-of-a-kind' teacher, coach, radioman

Colleagues share memories of Maple View patient who died after alleged assault

By April Baumgarten
The Forum

FARGO — A Maple View Memory Care patient who died after police said he was assaulted by a caregiver at the Fargo facility was a teacher, coach and radioman who owned a station in Grafton and launched another in Devils Lake.

Gary Curtis Pearson died Thursday, Aug. 19, at age 78 from complications due to a broken hip, according to Cass County prosecutors. That injury, according to police, happened when Rachel Wede Cooper, of

Fargo, pushed Pearson to the ground on Aug. 3.

Cooper, 59, was arrested Wednesday, Aug. 18, and appeared Friday in Cass County District Court on felony charges of manslaughter and endangering an eligible adult. She was released from custody Friday on a \$500 cash bond.

According to his obituary, Pearson grew up on a farm in Gunkel Township, which is between Arthur and Gardner north of Fargo.

PEARSON: Page A10



Contributed / Don Haney

Don Haney, left, and Gary Pearson pose at the KXPO radio studio in Grafton in this undated photo. Pearson owned KXPO radio for some time.

Get the newspaper format you love EVERY DAY.



Open your phone or tablet's camera and point it at this code any time after 6 a.m. each day to access that day's print replica.

SCAN ME



Available even on days your print paper is not delivered!

INSIDE TODAY'S FORUM



WEST FARGO PIONEER: West Fargo superintendent recommends masks for unvaccinated, **INSIDE**

NDSU sees lowest enrollment in 15 years, preliminary numbers show

By April Baumgarten
The Forum

FARGO — North Dakota State University could have its lowest fall semester enrollment in 15 years, marking a seven-year decline that was cited in a critical review against the school's president before he was asked to step

down next year. NDSU reported a first-day fall enrollment count of 12,390 students, which was down from its first-day count of 12,712 in 2020, according to a campus update. First-day counts are preliminary, but if the numbers hold, enrollment will fall below the

2020 official total of 12,846 students. That would equal about a 3.5% decline since last year. If nothing changes, NDSU will see a nearly 16% drop in enrollment since numbers started to fall seven years ago.

NDSU: Page A6



Today's weather



Mostly cloudy

73°
54°

Details, B8

- Classifieds C1-8
- Comics..... B7
- Crosswords..... C4-6
- Life.....B5
- Obituaries A7-9
- Opinion A5
- Sports B1-4



It's still a smart time to buy or refinance. Let's talk today.

Western Bank • Invest • Insure

Your Hometown Bank

701-277-5003 • westernbanks.com



School bus service suspended in Grand Forks

Severe driver shortage is to blame, says company that handles busing for the district

By Hannah Shirley
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS — Due to a severe driver shortage, there will be no school bus service in the Grand Forks Public School District to start the school year.

Dietrich Bus Service, the company through which the district charters its school buses, informed parents of the service suspension shortly after 5 p.m. Monday, Aug. 23. Dietrich General Manager Brian Yanish said he doesn't expect the service suspension will be permanent, but he also doesn't know when service will resume.

Most Grand Forks students begin the school year Wednesday, Aug. 25.

"My hope would be that this news triggers some people to come in the door to help us out, and we could get rolling as soon as we can get enough people licensed," Yanish said. "If they're not licensed, the best-case scenario would be a month. If they are licensed, a few days, maybe. But really, I don't know."

The service suspension leaves working parents and those without transportation asking: How will I get my kids

to school?

One parent in the Grand Forks Public School District, Karla Mongeon-Stewart, said she's fortunate her job and her boss offer enough flexibility to allow her to take her kids to school during the work day. However, she's alarmed for the many families in the district whose situations might not be as forgiving.

Her concerns aren't limited to the logistical bind the service suspension creates. She wonders whether this will mean a dangerous traffic crunch around schools as hundreds of parents try to get kids to school on time, and also whether tough decisions and compromises for families could exacerbate the existing labor shortage across town.

"As a citizen, I feel like this is more of a Grand Forks problem," she said. "We're a pretty significant school district. We're not a small town, and to not have any busing service available is, I think, hugely detrimental to our community. We have people that rely on those services. I'm worried that it's going to cause a lot of attendance issues. I mean, you can imagine. It's just going to spiral."

The service suspension announcement also came just after an open house night at the district, at which Mongeon-Stewart purchased bus tickets for her children as normal. She said she has received no communication from the district about a refund for the tickets.

Yanish said the district coordinates the sale of bus tickets, and Dietrich has nothing to do with that process. When contacted for this story, Tracy Jentz, a spokeswoman for the district, suggested Dietrich employees would be better equipped to answer questions. Later, the district sent a written statement from Superintendent Terry Brenner.

"We are disappointed to learn that Dietrich is not able to (provide) busing services due to its driver shortage. As a school system that contracts with Dietrich, we only learned of this situation last Friday, Aug. 20, from Dietrich," Brenner wrote. "The company has known since last May our projected enrollment and necessary bus routes needed on day 1, so to hear of this the week school begins is distressing for our families and the entire school district."

The bus driver shortage is not just a local problem, Yanish said — districts across the region and nation have been plagued by concerns of a shortage since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, at a local back-to-school meeting with bus drivers last week, some drivers unexpectedly announced retirements, and others didn't come to the meeting at all.

That's when Dietrich employees realized the depth of the problem locally, Yanish said. They collaborated with the district to try to find other solutions, such as consolidating routes or changing bell times, but ultimately made the decision to suspend bus service, in collaboration with the district, Monday afternoon.

"This was really our only option," he said.

Dietrich needs 25 drivers to run every afternoon route in the school district, Yanish said. Right now, the company has 18. Dietrich will use those 18 bus drivers to continue to transport students from Grand Forks Air Force Base, as well as special education and English language learning students to and from school. The district's eight general education routes

for all other students will be left unstaffed.

Yanish said the company is in full recruitment mode, papering the town with ads for drivers, but finding bus drivers can be difficult even in the best of times — often, the work is best suited for retired or semi-retired people who are looking to work only a few hours a day. In an attempt to make the jobs more appealing, Dietrich has started offering \$20-per-hour full-time options for drivers to work in their dispatch center or around Dietrich buildings and grounds when they aren't running routes.

In the meantime, Yanish said he's continuing to field questions about what parents are expected to do without the bus service.

"That's been the number one question we've been asked since we've seen this as a possibility," he said. "And frankly, I don't know. I feel for them. We absolutely feel for them. We understand the hardship this is going to put them in, and we're going to do everything we can to get our buses running so that they can utilize them again. In the meantime, that's 100% our focus — to get these buses back on the road."

WATER

From Page A1

Moorhead Public Service says its customer water data is bundled with customer electric data so it won't provide any data. The Forum will challenge that interpretation with state authorities.

Largest users of water in the metro include schools and universities, parks, hospitals, senior care facilities, large apartment complexes and food processors, which together use tens of millions of gallons of water a month.

However, their consumption isn't the reason for the peak demand for water this summer.

Troy Hall, Fargo's water utility director, said that push comes from residents watering established lawns.

Fargo implemented odd-even address watering restrictions on July 27 and West Fargo followed a week later, aiming for a 5-10% reduction in water use. That target was not met.

After a 13% drop the very first week, water use now is down only 3% compared with use prior to restrictions taking effect, Hall said.

Recent rains pushed up river flow levels briefly but they quickly dropped, he said. Moorhead Public Service stated Moorhead and Dilworth have a sufficient supply of water to meet demand for now, as does Fargo, but that may be only a short-term assurance.

"I am more concerned about where we may be a couple months down the road without rain," said Fargo's Hall.

A \$70k water bill for July alone

Fargo's two biggest water consumers, by far, are its neighbor to the west and a fellow water provider.

West Fargo has been getting water from Fargo since 2016; the Cass Rural Water District based in Kindred, N.D., gets water from Fargo and West Fargo, in addition to its primary source of



Mickelson Field in north Fargo.

groundwater.

After that, North Dakota State University, Fargo Parks and Sanford Health are the third, fourth and fifth largest water users.

Rounding out the top 10 are Fargo Public Schools, Cass Clay Creamery, Custom Express Car Wash, Essentia Health and the Veterans Administration Medical Center.

In West Fargo, after Cass Rural Water, the West Fargo Public Schools, Latitude 46 Apartments, Cargill and Strata Corporation make up the top five. Eventide Sheyenne Crossings, Brookwood Estates, Weisgram Metal Fab, Inc., Holiday Station Stores and Coborn's/Cash Wise round out the top ten.

NDSU, with its large campus and multiple athletic fields to maintain, is perhaps not a surprise as a large user.

The university paid \$74,378 for the 17.7 million gallons of water used in July alone, according to a Forum analysis of the list provided by the city of Fargo.

Michael Ellingson, director of Facilities Management, said NDSU will continue to follow the city's watering restrictions.

"A drier landscape will inevitably be the result, but fortunately there are factors that will lessen the impact given the time of year," Ellingson said.

Those factors, he said, are cooler temperatures, less intense rays from the sun and more morning dew.

'Can't afford' to let golf courses go dormant

For some of the largest users, water is the very focal point of their operations and the services they provide.

In the case of Fargo Parks, think swimming pools, athletic complexes and golf courses that need to be

maintained.

The district paid \$50,590 for 14.77 million gallons of water in July, according to the Forum analysis.

Dave Bietz, parks director for the Fargo Park District, said they plan to follow the new watering restrictions.

Most of its golf courses use water pumped directly from the Red River.

Bietz said the park district will work with the city to see if it may continue watering tees and greens at Prairiewood, as it's the only course that gets its water through the city system.

"We just can't afford to let those go dormant or it would be a greater expense in the long run," he said prior to the latest restrictions taking effect.

The park district is also trying to transition more of its landscape beds from annual flowers to perennials that require less watering.

They do feature annual flowers in certain areas for a "wow factor," he said, including the entrance to Lindenwood Park in south Fargo, but are finding that native flowers can provide a similar impact.

Water is also crucial to operations at Cargill in West Fargo, which used 4.31 million gallons from late June through late July.

Most of its water use is for operation of steam boilers and cooling towers.

"This equipment is critical to our operations and used to produce food and feed products including sunflower oil and meal as well as canola vegetable oil and meal," according to a statement from Cargill.

The company added that it's always looking for ways to improve efficiency.

Water-saving technology helps

For other large users, water is crucial but not necessarily the focus



Photos by Chris Flynn / The Forum
A water tower in West Fargo. West Fargo is the City of Fargo's largest water customer.

of the services they provide.

The fifth largest water consumer in Fargo in July was Sanford Health, which operates multiple hospitals, clinics and other facilities.

Sanford paid \$44,036 for 10.21 million gallons of water, according to the Forum analysis.

Michael Erickson, executive director of facilities, said Sanford Health buildings take up three million square feet in the Fargo metro.

The biggest use of water is for cooling systems needed to care for patients and keep facilities cool, he said.

"High amounts of water are also needed for sterile processing, which properly cleans and disinfects equipment and tools used during surgery," Erickson said.

Its newest facility, Sanford Medical Center Fargo at 5225 23rd Ave. S., is more than one million square feet alone and was built with low-flow technology, featuring the industry standard in energy and water efficiency, he said.

Water-saving technology is also in place in West Fargo Public Schools in the form of faucets, toilets and urinals in all new construction or as retrofits in older buildings, said Jeff Goebel, director of buildings and grounds.

He said schools will comply with the updated watering restrictions, and that recent rain has helped keep athletic fields ready for the fall season.

West Fargo Schools used 10.86 million gallons of water from late June through late July. Heavy irrigation is not sustainable, he said, for a long period of time.

"Our best strategy

moving forward will be to reduce the number of hours per week that the natural grass fields are used and maximize the use of our artificial turf fields," Goebel said.

Keeping the water supply stable

At Eventide Sheyenne Crossings in West Fargo, 3.02 million gallons of water were used in the late June-late July period.

Most of that was taken up with laundry services, dishwashing and bathing and showering, said Executive Director Brady Johnsrud.

Those activities need to continue for adequate care of those in its 103 senior living apartments, 64-bed skilled care center and 24-bed memory unit, he said.

But when it comes to lawn watering, the facility is following the restrictions.

"Hopefully we can ride out the rest of the summer. We're not going to look as green as we want to," Johnsrud said.

The bottom line in this time of drought is to have stability in the water supply.

Fargo keeps its water towers at least 50 percent filled for emergency use, Hall said.

If people use more water than the city can produce, there's a danger the system could become depressurized.

"Then, the water's off for pretty much everyone," he said, until the city gets back in a position to supply it.

If supplies can be maintained through Labor Day, Hall said, water demands should start to drop off.

Readers can reach reporter Robin Huebner at rhuebner@forumcomm.com

NDSU

From Page A1

NDSU's highest enrollment was in 2014 with 14,747 students.

It also would be the school's lowest enrollment since 2007, when 12,527 students enrolled for the fall semester.

North Dakota University System Chancellor Mark Hagerott noted in a critical evaluation of NDSU President Dean Bresciani that enrollment declined despite Bresciani's goal to increase the school's student body to 18,000 by 2020.

The review questioned enrollment efforts, whether the school's research position was "eroding" and if Bresciani risked NDSU's reputation in his handling of a provost search.

Less than two weeks after that evaluation, the State Board of Higher Education asked the president to step down from his position by the end of 2022. Bresciani has been NDSU's president since 2010.

He will remain at the school as a distinguished professor.

He may be forced to leave the leadership position early if the board finds his replacement before December 2022. The search has begun, and Hagerott said he would like to have a successful candidate chosen by March.

Bresciani said in the campus update the drop in enrollment for this year was expected. Several factors impacted overall enrollment, including the coronavirus pandemic and smaller first-year classes in 2018 and 2019.

He noted first-year enrollment came in at 2,521, which is 8% higher than last year's class. Transfer numbers to NDSU also were up 8% compared to the start of the 2020-21 school year, and new graduate and international students rose 7% each, he said.

"These significant increases tell me that students are interested in NDSU's combination of rigorous academics and exceptional student experience," he said. "It also shows that our academic offerings appeal to a diverse audience of students. This is a key component for helping the workforce needs of our state and region."

More students could still enroll, but the number also could drop off before the official census is taken on Sept. 21.

NDSU said no one was available for interviews for this story.

Readers can reach Forum reporter April Baumgarten at 701-241-5417 or abaumgarten@forumcomm.com. Follow her on Twitter @aprilbaumsaway.