

# FOOTBALL THE N'WEST IOWA PREVIEW

# THE N'WEST IOWA REVIEW

Your comprehensive guide to the area's high school football teams. Find quotes from the coaches, team rosters, district outlooks, past records and much more! See SECTION D & E

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## Shouts grow louder ahead of Iowa's pipeline hearing

Summit finally set to face IUB on Tuesday

BY ELIJAH HELTON  
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REGIONAL—Scores of people for and against the proposed Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline are making their final preparations before the CO2 project's hearing with the Iowa Utilities Board set for Tuesday, Aug. 22. Proceedings are set to start at 10

a.m., although protesters expect to show up at least an hour early at the Cardiff Event Center in Fort Dodge. The IUB will meet for at least a month, with every week-day adding to testimony.

The Iowa Farmers Union, one of several statewide groups organizing against Summit and similar pipelines, held a virtual meeting Thursday afternoon to discuss the hearing.

"It's super important for people to take action," said IFU presi-

dent Aaron Lehman.

The hearing will start with Exhibit H landowners. These are people who are on Summit's proposed route who have not signed a voluntary easement with the Ames-based company.

There are about 1,000 parcels still unsigned in Iowa, about a third of the route. The landowner total is likely smaller since one person can own multiple parcels.

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Jess Mazour of the Sierra Club's Iowa chapter speaks at an anti-pipeline rally last year in Des Moines. On Tuesday, Aug. 22, the Iowa Utilities Board will hold its first CO2 pipeline hearing, which could grant a permit to Summit Carbon Solutions. Photo submitted

"It's a really beautiful town, there's so many things there, and it's just all gone. And it's just a sad, sad situation." —LINDA RUSCHE

BY MIKAELA MACKAY MMACKAY@NWESTIOWA.COM

## PERILS IN PARADISE



LAHAINA, HI—Getting on a plane as a 12-year-old to go to Hawaii may be one of the best back-to-school celebratory vacations ever. But for Damon Rusche's daughter, Jaden, this was not the case. The Rusches were among families caught up in the devastating wildfires that broke out in Hawaii last week. Damon grew up on a farm near Hartley before building a family in Omaha, NE. They had gone to Lahaina before and figured Aug. 5-12 would be a great

time to hit the beach, right before the fall school season. The family stayed at Hyatt Vacation Club at Ka'anapali Beach, right on the ocean. After exploring downtown Lahaina on Monday, Aug. 7, they ended the night eating at Captain Jack's Island Grill. When the Rusches woke up on Aug. 8, their hotel room had no power. Not thinking much of it, Damon, his wife and their daughter hopped in their

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## WILDFIRES HALT HARTLEY NATIVE'S FAMILY VACATION

## Doon train derailment result of negligence?

Lawsuit filed against BNSF for 2018 crash

BY MARK MAHONEY  
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DOON—Members of a Rock Valley family have sued BNSF Railway over the damage caused to their land by a 2018 train derailment and oil spill near Doon.

According to the lawsuit, Philip, Kristi, John and Helen Koolima have accused the Fort Worth, TX-

based railroad company of negligence and regulatory violations as well as causing their property to decrease in value due to oil and contaminants that still are in the ground.

Efforts to reach BNSF, which operates one of the largest railroad networks in North America, for comments on the civil case went unanswered.

The Koolima family originally filed the eight-page lawsuit in

See LAWSUIT on A7



Crude oils flows into the swollen Rock River south of Doon after a BNSF train derailed during the early Friday morning of June 22, 2018. No one was hurt. Photo by Jacob Faber

## Private schools' ESAs ready for first day of class

Area is a hot spot for state program

BY MIKAELA MACKAY  
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REGIONAL—A wave of speculation and uncertainty has accumulated ahead of the 2023-24 academic year since Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds signed the Students First Act into law on Jan. 24.

The process works this way: Parents who choose to enroll their eligible children in an accredited K-12 nonpublic school will receive an amount equal to the per-pupil funding

allocated to public school districts for the same budget school year.

Funds will be deposited into an education savings account, referred to as an ESA or a voucher, to be used for tuition, fees and other qualified education expenses as specified in the legislation.

Students with accepted applications will have \$7,635 eligible to spend on tuition and education-related costs.

N'West Iowa is among the areas of the state in which the ESAs are being

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**WEEKEND WEATHER:**  
**SATURDAY**  
HIGH: 96  
LOW: 66  
CHANCE OF PREC: 1%



**SUNDAY**  
HIGH: 85  
LOW: 65  
CHANCE OF PREC: 2%

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## NEWS

## Public schools fret widening rift with private K-12

## ESA

Continued from page A1

utilized the most due to its high percentage of students attending nonpublic schools.

Beyond financial relief to parents who choose to send their children to nonpublic school, the bill is meant to lessen "taxation without representation" in the state, according to state Rep. Zach Dieken (R-Granville), who was among the legislators voting in favor of the bill.

"We're going to home-school our children, and I don't think South O'Brien would ever let me go to one of their school board meetings and critique the things they have going on at their school because my children won't go there, but they get my tax dollars," Dieken said.

The Iowa Department of Education reported it had approved 18,627 Students First Act ESAs as of Aug. 4. It reported less than 1,000 applications remained in review while parents or guardians provide additional information or documentation to confirm eligibility.

Sioux County had the fourth-most approved ESAs with 1,183, but the most per capita as the three counties in front of it — Polk County with 3,144 approved ESAs, Linn County with 1,318 and Scott County with 1,306 — are the largest counties by population in the state. Sioux County ranks 19th in population.

O'Brien County had 250 approved

ESAs as Aug. 4. Lyon County had 196 approved ESAs and Osceola County had 18 ESAs.

The Department of Education did not respond to requests for the total number of applications in time for publication.

Even without a specific number, the pool for ESA eligibility will increase during its three-year rollout. It is open for the 2023-24 school year to all students whose family is at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level, which is currently \$83,250 for a family of four.

The eligibility figure will rise to 400 percent of the federal poverty level for the 2024-25 school year and then will be open to all K-12 students in Iowa regardless of family income in 2025-26.

One of the biggest fears the Students First Act has brought about is that it will impact funding for public schools — specifically teacher pay — in future years to fund further ESAs for nonpublic school students.

MMCRU School District superintendent Dan Barkel was an educator at Western Christian High School for 27 years — including serving as the principal for the last seven years — before making the move to the public school system in 2018. He predicts the weight of ESAs will come to fall on the latter.

"Already, the amount of vouchers that have been requested has far outstripped the amount that the state budgeted for," Barkel said.

"The money's got to come from somewhere. And if that happens, obviously that's going to depress wages for public school teachers, there's no question. But maybe we're being a bit premature; we'll see what happens."

Beyond public school fund cutting, Barkel predicts a raw barrier to wedge further segregation between public and nonpublic schools.

"My fear is that long term the private school will become the domain of the higher socioeconomic groups and the public schools will become the domain of the lower socioeconomic groups," Barkel said. "Now, I don't know for sure that will happen, but I'm just concerned about that long term because the private schools can charge whatever they want."

He said another fear among public schools is the Students First Act gives nonpublic schools tax dollars accompanied by no accountability, allowing nonpublic schools the ability to inflate tuition prices.

Wayne Dykstra, the head of school for Unity Christian High School in Orange City, and Marlin Schoonhoven, the head administrator at Sheldon Christian School, said tuition costs for the 2023-24 academic year at their schools increased 3 percent to 5 percent, which was about the same as last year, not showing significant inflation following Iowa's Students First Act.

"The year you don't raise your

tuition you know you're only going to come back a year later and raise it even more," Dykstra said. "We are usually in the 3, 4, 5 percent range for tuition increase and that was the case this year. There's a perception out there that, 'Hey, with the ESAs we can really rack our tuition up,' and we didn't."

The final fear is that public schools will see a drop in enrollment.

There have been no large fluxes of former public school students into nonpublic schools, according to superintendents from MOC-Floyd Valley, Sheldon, Sioux Center High School, South O'Brien and MMCRU public schools. Official conclusions can be drawn in October, when the Iowa Department of Education finalizes enrollment counts.

One of the reasons for this consistency comes down to the teachers.

Jaime Miranda works full time at MOC-Floyd Valley High School in Orange City as an intervention specialist and part time at Northwestern College in Orange City as a data analyst.

Miranda attributes MOC-Floyd Valley's current static enrollment to the school's intentionality in finding new ways to provide services to students and families.

"I work a lot with Hispanic families, and so they all talk about the kind of resources that we can provide, and they all want to be here. They know about the quality of education and teachers that our school and school

district," Miranda said. "And I've even talked to people who have graduated from other schools in Sheldon and stuff like that and talked about how when they were kids, they wanted to come here and moved closer to here to put their kids in the MOC high school district."

Other communities, specifically Sioux Center, Miranda names as "doing well at making strong connections and deep relationships." With that, he isn't afraid of seeing many of his students leave MOC-Floyd Valley, or other public schools for that matter.

As an employee at a private college, Miranda said he thinks he "falls in the middle" when it comes to the Students First Act and doesn't think anything can answer his questions the way time will.

"I just feel like it's going to hurt public education a lot," Miranda said.

"But I do think as a Christian and working at a Christian institution now, there is value in Christian education. It's just sad that it's going to have to hurt public education, and I don't think it was probably the best way to go about it."

In talking with N'West Iowa public school administrators, there seems to be a lingering fear that will continue to fall as schools try to navigate the impact of ESAs.

"I believe that people will fix it, and it'll improve," Miranda said. "Hopefully."

## IUB does not delay process on Summit's CO2 pipeline

## HEARING

Continued from page A1

While the critics are vocal, having a majority signed onto the project shows ample approval in the view of Summit spokesperson Jesse Harris.

"There is overwhelming support among Iowa landowners for this project and importantly more easement agreements are being signed every day and that will continue throughout the upcoming hearing," Harris said.

Exhibit Hs could eventually be subject to eminent domain. After the hearing concludes, the three-member board will decide the scope of land seizures, if any, if it decides to grant Summit construction permission in the first place.

"Ultimately, the IUB decides whether the applicant will be allowed to exercise eminent domain and, if so, exactly what rights can be condemned," said IUB communications director Don Tormey.

After Exhibit Hs testify, it will be Summit's turn to make its case in the hearing's second phase.

The main argument is financial. The proposed five-state pipeline system would sequester carbon dioxide from 32 ethanol plants, including 13 in Iowa such as Sioudand Energy Cooperative near Sioux Center, and pump it underground to be stored indefinitely in North Dakota.

Keeping CO2 out of the atmosphere earns those plants a more climate-friendly rating, making the biofuels more profitable in green-conscious markets such as California.

Without CO2 pipelines, the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association said the state could lose up to 75 percent of its ethanol production within a decade, more than \$10 billion.

Summit missed out on a permit Aug. 4 in North Dakota with a similar process to the IUB's. That led some Iowa anti-pipelers to argue the Hawkeye State should postpone its Aug. 22 hearing. They call Summit's project "a



After more than two years of prelude, the Iowa Utilities Board will start its hearing on the Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline Tuesday, Aug. 22. The CO2 project has met vocal resistance, though about three-fourths of the route has been secured via voluntary easement. Photo by Elijah Helton

## WATCH IT LIVE:

■ The Iowa Utilities Board hearing on the proposed Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline will be streamed on the IUB website starting 10 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 22, and continuing every weekday for what is expected to be several weeks. The live video will be available at [iowautilitiesboard.eduvision.tv/LiveSched.aspx](http://iowautilitiesboard.eduvision.tv/LiveSched.aspx).

pipeline to nowhere."

"Rushing this only benefits Summit. It does not benefit any of the landowners who never asked to be a part of this process in the first place," Jess Mazour said.

Mazour spoke to the IFU and its virtual audience Thursday. She is one of the leading public faces of the anti-pipeline movement in Iowa, working for the Sierra Club.

But postponement isn't happening. Tormey

said the IUB's process is separate and unaffected by North Dakota.

"Any action taken by the IUB regarding this matter would be filed in the Summit Carbon docket that is pending before the IUB," Tormey said.

Harris said everyone has had plenty of time. "Our project was announced two and a half years ago. We completed county informational meetings nearly two years ago. We submitted our permit application more than a year and a half ago," Harris said.

"Having met those important regulatory milestones, scheduling a start date for the hearing in August is well within the typical timeline for projects such as this and clearly provides substantial time for participation by all stakeholders."

The third phase of the IUB hearing features interveners. These are Exhibit Hs as well as outside actors, such as the IFU and Sierra Club, to argue for or against the project.

"Some of these Exhibit H landowners have intervened to participate at a higher level in the

process and some haven't. That's fine. They're all going to get their 'day in court' to testify in front of the IUB," Mazour said.

IUB approval would not green light the entire project, although it would be the biggest state-level step forward for Summit. The company plans 720 miles of its 2,000-mile route to be in the Hawkeye State.

Summit has reapplied in North Dakota. Harris said the company is still on schedule to break ground in the first or second quarter of 2024.

"We look forward to starting the hearing next week and continuing to move the project through the regulatory process," Harris said.

Besides North Dakota, the company faces a variety of processes in Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota, all with different CO2 pipeline approval rules.

But for right now, Lehman said, the fight is converging on Fort Dodge.

"We know that we are strongest when we have the best voice, when we all work together," he said.

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