

LOCALNEWS

State gas prices rise slightly in past week

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Average retail gasoline prices in Minnesota have risen 2.8 cents in the past week, averaging \$3.22 per gallon Monday, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 2,856 gas outlets in Minnesota. This compares with the national average that has increased 1.2 cents in the last week to \$3.34 per gallon, according to gasoline price website MinnesotaGasPrices.com.

Regular gas prices in International Falls ranged from \$3.17 to \$3.24 per gallon, according to the site. No prices were reported for midgrade, premium or diesel fuel prices.

Including the change in gas prices in Minnesota during the past week, prices Monday were 13.4 cents per gallon lower compared to the same day one year ago and are 13.1 cents per gallon lower than a month ago. The national average has decreased 8.5 cents per gallon during the last month and stands 8.6 cents per gallon lower than this day

one year ago.

"Hard to believe, but in a week that saw U.S. airstrikes on Iraq targeting the Islamic State of Iraq & Syria terrorism, the resulting 'spike' in crude oil prices was barely a ripple," GasBuddy.com Senior Petroleum Analyst Gregg Laskoski said in a release. "The benchmark West Texas Intermediate ended the week just two dollars per barrel higher than it started. Undoubtedly, robust U.S. oil production this year has greatly reduced the potential volatility in global markets that such events would have otherwise induced."

GasBuddy.com is a tool to help motorists save money at the pump by collecting gas price data and displaying it on websites and on a free smartphone app that has been downloaded over 37 million times. The site operates MinnesotaGasPrices.com and more than 250 similar websites that track gasoline prices at more than 140,000 gasoline stations in the United States and Canada.

Letter urges action on proposed rule

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Twenty-three Minnesota organizations sent a letter to Minnesota's congressional delegation opposing a proposal by the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers which the groups say will significantly expand the definition of "waters of the U.S." under the Clean Water Act.

The organizations are asking members of the U.S. House of Representatives to prevent the agencies' "over-reaching authority" by passing H.R. 5078.

The letter stated H.R. 5078 will prevent the EPA and Army Corps from developing, finalizing, adopting, implementing, applying, administering or enforcing the proposed "waters of the U.S.," called WOTUS, rule.

"This legislation is imperative in protecting landowners, farmers and Minnesotans in their ability to perform normal land use activities without requiring permission and permits from a federal agency," said a news release from the Minnesota Farm Bureau. "The proposed rule inappropriately seeks to extend federal power and place more top-down regulatory burdens on all types of land use activities."

The news release said the EPA is implying only the federal government is capable of protecting small bodies of water which is not supported by science

or facts.

"The unintended consequences of imposed, one-size-fits-all federal regulation often stifles conservation activities as well as the flexibility necessary to resolve site-specific circumstances," the release said.

The Koochiching County Board and the International Falls City Council are expected to take a position opposing the proposal by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Mayor Bob Anderson on May 5 told the Falls City Council he would continue discussions with county commissioners and recommended a response from the council after the potential impact of the proposed rule is understood.

In August, the Koochiching County Board heard from former county commissioner Mike Hanson, representing North Star Electric Cooperative, and North Star Electric Cooperative General Manager Dan Hoskins. They asked the

board to seek more information about the proposal, and copies of testimony and a presentation provided at a May 28 hearing held on the proposal.

A formal comment period on the proposal closes Oct.

20. Hanson told commissioners it's crucial the public be made aware, should it be adopted, the proposal would impact use of the land and waters in Koochiching County and could drive up local electricity costs.

Hanson said he fears the area's federal delegation is unaware of the proposed changes to the Clean Water Act. He said he's frustrated by attempts to get more information about the May 28 hearing and the proposal. He asked the county board to request the information and to provide it to federal representatives of the area.

It's not only important to comment on the proposal that could be detrimental to the lifestyle

and livelihoods of many in northern Minnesota, but to also ask why more public information on the proposal isn't forthcoming, Hanson said.

The proposal discusses regulating ephemeral waters, which are streams and creeks that flow periodically. "That's what we have here," Hanson said.

Groups signing on the letter include: Builders Association of Minnesota, Central Minnesota Cattlemen's Association, Chicken and Egg Association of Minnesota, Cooperative Network, Douglas County Commissioners, Minnesota Agri-Growth Council, Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Corn Growers Association, Minnesota Crop Production Retailers, Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Milk Producers Association, Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association, Minnesota Pork Producers Association, Minnesota Rural Electric Association, Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association, Minnesota Turkey Growers Association, Southeast Minnesota Irrigators Association, Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative, Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association, and Winona County Board of Commissioners.

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