



**Rifle Team!** The Coke County 4-H Rifle Team hosted the 4th annual Coke County 4-H Invitational Shoot at the Red Canyon Gun Club on June 22, 2019. They had kiddos from Callahan, Coke, Jones, Llano, and Tom Green counties competing this year. The coaches and teams that attended the shoot were greatly appreciated. As always, everyone had a great time, which makes for a successful shoot.

Julian DeLaGarza placed third in Junior Silhouettes. Tristan Grantham placed first in Intermediate Light Rifle and second in Intermediate Silhouettes. Juan Orlando DeLaGarza placed second in Senior Light Rifle and third in Senior Silhouettes.

This shoot was the last of the season for Coke County and will start back up in August with the new school year. If you have kiddos that are interested in shooting sports, August will be the time to get them registered in 4-H and started with the team. The Coke County 4-H Rifle Team appreciates everyone for their amazing generosity and support throughout the season.



**USDA moves prevented plant haying, grazing date to Sept. 1**

by Macie Clugston  
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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) adjusted the 2019 final haying and grazing date from November 1 to September 1.

Farmers and ranchers who planted cover crops on prevented plant acres will be allowed to hay, graze or chop those fields earlier than November due to excessive rainfall and flooding this spring.

“We are making a change in our rules for 2019 only,” Martin Berbre, RMA administrator, said. “We will allow haying and grazing of cover crops planted after a prevented plant crop provided you do not harvest until after September 1.”

USDA anticipates many farmers and ranchers will plant cover crops on prevent plant acres this year.

“We recognize farmers were greatly impacted by some of the unprecedented flooding and excessive rain this spring, and we made this one-year adjustment to help farmers with the tough decisions they are facing this year,” Bill Northey, undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation, said. “This change will make good stewardship of the land easier to accomplish while also providing an opportunity to ensure quality forage is available for livestock this fall.”

Silage, haylage and baleage should be treated the same as haying and grazing for 2019.

Farmers and ranchers can hay, graze or cut cover crops for silage, haylage or baleage on prevented plant acres on or after Sept 1 and still maintain eligibility for their full 2019 prevented planting indemnity.

Berbre noted the agency will evaluate the need for a permanent adjustment.

“The best advice I can give to producers is to talk to your crop

insurance agent,” Berbre said. “That agent has your specific numbers, your approved production history records and can tell you exactly what your prevented plant payments would be.”

**...Good, Clean Fun**

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Have you ever attended an exciting sporting event - high school, college, or professional - and celebrated wildly with perfect strangers? You might’ve discussed the action or, in the heat of the moment, high-fived or even hugged someone you had never seen before and haven’t seen since. You didn’t know their story and they didn’t know yours, but in the moment, you were unified.

Our rural communities have a limited number of public spaces that offer that same opportunity for unity, particularly for our children. The public swimming pool is often the foremost such public space. Unlike other swimming pools that we may visit, a public swimming pool doesn’t require a membership, a hotel

reservation, or permission from the property owner. A public swimming pool is available to everyone who can pay the admission fee.

My grandfather has spoken of the importance of the public swimming pool to his childhood. Growing up in Seymour, Texas, in a family of limited means, the city’s public swimming pool was one of the few forms of good, wholesome recreation that was accessible to anyone and thus, accessible to him. His childhood summer revolved around the pool. That lesson has stuck with me. In a socioeconomically diverse community, the public swimming pool may be the only “good, clean fun” available to all children and adults of all ages.

In 2018, accessibility was on my mind as pool season opened. Pool admission fees were not exorbitant, but still came with a cost. For a child of limited means, attending the pool every day might not be affordable. For a parent or guardian, taking multiple children to the pool would be pricey, much less

attending multiple times. In mid-June, a few weeks after the pool opened, a donor in the community offered to underwrite the city’s estimated revenue for the rest of the summer, so that any child could swim in the pool every day, without worrying about the cost. As many of you know, that effort was a great success. Our daily pool attendance almost tripled. We heard from parents and grandparents who said just what I suspected—free admission made the pool much more accessible. This summer, it was a no-brainer to continue that free admission.

On Saturday, July 1, I attended our annual “Splash Day” to open the pool and I was blown away. In the past, 100-150 was a standard turnout on Splash Day. This year, 244 folks visited the city pool. For a town of 3,000 people, a substantial portion of its youth were at the pool on that Saturday. As I looked around the pool, I thought about the pool as a unifying space. Toddlers splashed gleefully. Elementary school kids played. Teenagers threw footballs

and jumped off the diving boards. Adults relaxed. People conversed and enjoyed a carefree Saturday.

City pools are not a profit center. They cost money to operate. Even when an admission fee is charged, the pool still loses money. But so do city streets and other city parks. Just like streets and parks, a public swimming pool should be viewed as a necessary service that benefits the citizens. This service is a unifying space, open to all, providing better quality of life.

Whether you’re reading this in Stamford or elsewhere, I encourage you to think about the spaces that unify your community. Do you have any? What are they? How can you make them more accessible and more unifying, for the betterment of all?

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, and the creator of the forthcoming “West of 98” podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.

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