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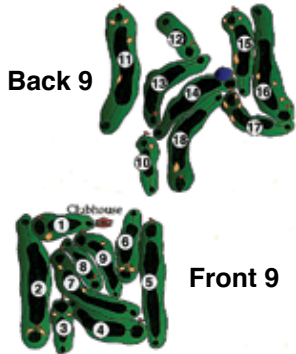
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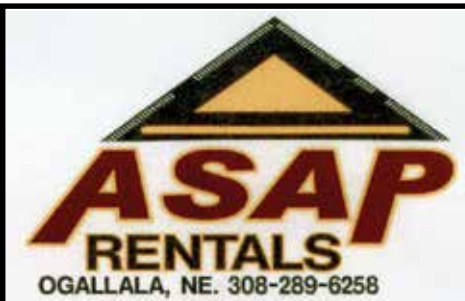
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2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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JANUARY THROUGH MARCH

Eagle viewing at Lake Ogallala. December through March. Contact Nate Nielsen at 308-284-2332 for more information.

JANUARY

Jan. 17-18: Gun show at the Keith County Fairgrounds. Stefani Thompson at 308-233-2501.

FEBRUARY

Feb. 21-22: Brule Gun Show in the Brule Activity Center. Contact 308-233-2501.

Feb. 21-22: Oregon Trail Home Show at the Keith County Fairgrounds. Adam Peters at 308-289-0151.

MARCH

Crane migration near Lewellen. Contact the Ogallala/Keith County Chamber of Commerce at 308-284-4066.

MAY

May 2: Season-opening races at Wild West Soap Box Derby. Dave Barrett at 308-289-1464.

May 2: Catfish Classic, call Chad Vogl at 308-289-8457.

Late May: Shut Up & Fish Tournament. Chad Vogl at 308-289-8457.

JUNE

June 5 and 19 and July 3 and 17: Chamber's Sounds on the Square at Rendezvous Square at Ogallala. Music starts at 6 p.m. Fridays June 5 and 19 and July 3 and 17. Contact the chamber at 308-284-4066.

June 6-7: 21st annual Ogallala Drivers Invitational Golf Tournament. Contact the chamber at 308-284-4066.

June 13: 22nd annual Terry McCormick Memorial Wall-eye Tournament, Rose McCormick at 308-778-7216.

June 13: All-American races at Wild West Soap Box Derby. Dave Barrett at 308-289-1464.

June 20: Junior Fishing Tournament, hosted by Youth Outdoors Nebraska. Shawn Rubek 402-699-3297.

JULY

In July, on a date not determined at press time,

McConaughy Massacre demolition derby. Wilbur Steinbeck at 308-340-9067.

July 11-12: Lac Mac Racetrack horse racing.

July 11-12: Hobie Tropical Dreams. Bill McBride at 308-284-2400.

July 17-18: Lake Mac Racetrack horse racing.

July 25: 37th annual Kites and Castles sand castle building contest and kite flying event. Chamber at 308-284-4066.

July 25-26: Ogallala Round-Up Rodeo. Steve Krause at 308-289-0285.

July 29-Aug. 1: Keith County Fair. Dave Baltzell at 308-289-2605.

AUGUST

Aug. 1: Brule Day. BJ Van Velson at 308-287-2149.

Aug. 8: All-American rally races at Wild West Soap Box Derby. Dave Barrett at 308-289-1464.

Aug. 28-30: Hobie Mac Attack Regatta. Bill McBride at 308-284-2400.

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 5-7: Paxton Labor Day Celebration.

Sept. 12-13: Stetson's Fall Classic Walleye Tournament. To register, go to stetsonscornerstore.net or call 308-726-2369.

Sept. 17-19: 41st annual Indian Summer Rendezvous, Keith County festival at Ogallala. Chamber at 308-284-4066.

NOVEMBER

Nov. 21: Ogallala's annual Arts and Craft Show. Chamber 308-284-4066.

DECEMBER

Dec. 3: Christmas Parade of Lights and other Christmas activities. Chamber at 308-284-4066.

ADDITIONS

To add your event to the 2027 Calendar of Events, contact the Keith County Chamber of Commerce at 308-284-4066.

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THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Ash Hollow State Historical Park

Grounds open year-around. Nebraska Game & Parks Park Entry Permit required. Museum open Friday through Sunday from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children under 12.

Boot Hill

Authentic cowboy cemetery from Ogallala's pioneer days. Located at West 10th & Parkhill Drive (four blocks west of Spruce at West 10th).

Eagle Viewing Center

At Lake Ogallala below Kingsley Dam.

Front Street

Free cowboy museum. Crystal Palace Revue Dance Hall Show (family show – reservations required). Phone 308-284-6000.

Golf

Bayside Golf, south side Lake McConaughy, Gate 18, 18-hole course. Men's yardage 6,500. Restaurant and lounge, pro shop, cart rental, driving range, chipping green, patio homes and cabin rentals. Phone: 308-287-4653.

Crandall Creek Golf Club, 18-hole golf course, east on Prospector Road, east of Travel Centers of America, Men's yardage 6,320. Lounge, pro shop, cart rental, driving range, putting green. 308-284-4358.

Goodall YMCA, Ogallala

Indoor pool open mid September through mid May. Features a hot tub, infrared sauna, indoor pool, weight training and exercise equipment, and indoor walking track. All-

weather outdoor basketball court. Splash pad. Outdoor sand volleyball courts. Located at 505 W. G St.

Kathleen Lute Public Library, Ogallala

Located at 610 W. A St. Fully accredited library with computer and Internet access.

Lake Mac Water Interpretive/Visitor Center

Located south of Kingsley Dam. Features educational look at Platte River water use.

Little Church at Keystone

Free admission. For a tour, phone 308-726-2281 or 308-726-2006.

Mansion on the Hill

1887 residence, West 10th & Spruce. Open Memorial Day through Labor Day. Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children (ages 5-12).

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Outdoor Pool, Ogallala

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Parks and Diamonds

Western Diamonds Sports Complex is a lighted complex consisting of four softball and baseball fields and two AYSO regulation soccer fields.

A 1.8-mile hiking and biking trail runs through the complex and playground equipment is available. WDSC hosts several youth baseball and

softball tournaments each year.

The American Legion Field is a lighted complex with a concession stand and bleacher seating. There are four lighted tennis courts at Glines/Nye Park, West 10th and B streets.

The city parks have numerous picnic shelters. Four parks have playground equipment. Williams Park, located in north Ogallala, has a disc golf course.

Tri-Trails Historic Park includes markers from historic cattle trails, including the Great Western, Chisholm and Oregon, and also marks the Pony Express Trail.

Petrified Wood & Art Gallery

Located at 418 E. First St. A museum of natural history specializing in ancient woods and fossils collected by the late Howard and Harvey Kenfield. Gift shop.

Western Trails Creative District

Established in 2023, the Western Trails Creative District has implemented the Sculpture Walk Across Nebraska at Ogallala.

It also has created green space at the Mansion on the Hill and community mural projects, establishing nine murals at Ogallala and Brule.

The group was designed to enhance community vitality, support artists and strengthen the regional economy.

Wild West Soap Box Derby

One of only 24 tracks in the nation, the Wild West Soap Box Derby track at Ogallala hosts a national championship qualifier and local rally races in the spring and summer. Located near Western Diamonds Sports Complex, the lighted track hosts between three and four weekend racing dates each year.



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FOURTH OF JULY FIREWORKS SHOW

The Ogallala Fireworks Show, annually put on by the Keith County Chamber of Commerce, is the best July 4 fireworks show in western Nebraska. Choreographed to music, the show includes the electronic firing of shells of different sizes and at different altitudes, providing a layered display. Annually, the fireworks display is set off at 9:30 p.m. July 4 near Western Diamonds Sports Complex. Those planning to view the display are asked to arrive one hour before the show.



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Nebraska's 'Cowboy Capital'

Named for the Oglala band of Dakota Sioux and located on the Union Pacific Railroad, Ogallala was a lusty cowtown of the Old West.

Chief gateway to the northern plains – that was Ogallala from 1875 to 1888.

During this decade Texas drovers delivered their trail herds of longhorn cattle by the thousands.

Cattlemen met in Ogallala's hotel and saloons with Texas cattle kings and haggled about prices to be paid for the longhorns, which were used to stock the northern plains in Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, the Dakotas and Montana.

Cattle also were shipped east on the Union Pacific. Indian agencies and mining camps also provided markets for Ogallala beef.

During summer months, business boomed. Saloonkeeper, storekeeper and hotelkeeper all shared in the prosperity.

At least 10 or 12 herds, each of 2,500 head, could usually be located south of the town, a bawling mass carpeting the plains, while waiting for their new owners. The presence of a hundred or more trail hands taxed the facilities of Ogallala.

Many cowboys spent their nights napping on the "soft side" of a walnut board.

The saloons carried such colorful names

as "Cowboys Rest" and "Crystal Palace." The Ogallala House became the center of social activities for the townspeople and the big cattlemen.

Activity at Ogallala continued at a fever pitch until the end of August. By then, the drives for the season were ending and the drovers who had brought the herds up the trail were gradually drifting to their native Texas.

Business revived briefly during the fall months in October, when the cattlemen of the area began to bring their steers in off the grass for shipment east.

By November, however, Ogallala settled back in quiet and peaceful repose.

The floaters, gamblers, tradespeople and dancehall hostesses, who made up a large portion of Ogallala's mobile population, drifted off to Omaha or Cheyenne to spend the winter. Only the hotel, one supply store and a single saloon remained open for the winter.

From 1879 to 1884, 100,000 to 125,000 cattle each year were trailed to Ogallala.

By 1884, the trail driving days were virtually ended and the Old West and Ogallala turned to other ways of life. But cattle remain the area's No. 1 industry.

(The word *Oglala* means to "scatter one's own.")

Ogallala, The Gomorrah of the Plains



"Gomorrah of the cattle trail."

That's how trail driver Andy Adams described early Ogallala. In his book, "Log of a Cowboy," Adams, who first came up the trail in 1875, said:

"We finally scaled the last divide and there below in the valley of the South Platte, nestled Ogallala, the Gomorrah of the cattle trail. From amongst its half hundred buildings, no church spire pointed upward, but instead three-fourths of its business houses were dance halls, gambling houses and saloons."

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Lake McConaughy touted as one of best vacation spots in America by 'Travel & Leisure'

Recently on the "Today" show, a segment allowed the magazine "Travel & Leisure" to showcase some of the best vacation spots in the nation and among the four named was Ogallala, winning under the heading best small town lake town.

The recognition came under Travel & Leisure's listing of towns with populations of 45,000 or fewer. The magazine also cited the best year-round mountain town, best food and drink town, and iconic beach town, all of which have populations of 45,000 or fewer.

The Travel & Leisure representative on

the show said Ogallala and Lake McConaughy was at the top of the list for Lake McConaughy and Lake Ogallala and Lake Mac's 100 miles of beaches, crystal clear water and scuba diving, and for its reputation as a birding paradise.

"People wouldn't necessarily know how beautiful the scenery is," the "Travel & Leisure" representative said. Ogallala is the Cowboy Capital and offers rodeos and Wild West re-enactments, she added.

"There are lots of things to do" and "it really is an unusual place."

Other towns mentioned in the segment

included Boone, North Carolina, best year-round mountain town; Bardstown, Kentucky, best food and drink town; and Asbury Park, New Jersey, iconic beach town.

Boone, which is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains, was cited as an outdoor paradise with its mountains, hiking trails and music culture.

Bardstown is the bourbon capital of the world with many iconic brands being distilled there, including Maker's Mark and Jim Beam.

Asbury Park was listed for its historical boardwalk and as a haven for artists.

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Sounds on the Square



The Keith County Chamber of Commerce sponsors outdoor music concerts on Thursdays in the summer in Rendezvous Square, located just south of the chamber. This year's concerts will be held on June 5 and 19 and July 3 and 17. The concerts begin at 6 p.m. Those attending are asked to bring their lawn chairs. Beverages and food are available.



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Boot Hill marks early western history

Even Ogallala folks' tolerance had a limit, so after three days of drinking and shooting up the town, they sent Sheriff "Buffalo Joe" Hughes in pursuit of rioting Texas cowhands.

His shotgun felled one going out the barroom door. Another died three days later of a gutfull of shot. A third joined his compadres on Boot Hill later in the summer from wounds suffered that night.



A bronze horse and rider, made by Eagle Bronze Foundry of Wyoming, includes incredible detail.

Boot Hill was Ogallala's only official burying site during the "end of the trail" decade from 1874 through 1884.

A hundred or more people were rolled in canvas and dropped into shallow graves during that time, a remarkable death rate for a settlement with only about 130 permanent residents at that time.

In May 1867, the first bodies were buried on the hill. They were three Union Pacific tracklayers killed in an Indian raid a mile east of what is now Spruce Street.

Robert Webster, a drover, was shot to death August 1875, while bathing in the North Platte River. Naked and unarmed, he was gunned down by a fellow cowhand traveling under the name of Woolsey, the final chapter in what began as a practical joke on their Negro camp cook.

A sage said, "The West was hell on women and horses." Boot Hill records agree – though no horse burials were recorded there.

Sarah Miller, the young wife of a local rancher, was buried with her newborn

baby. When her body was exhumed 30 years later for reburial in the "new" cemetery, west of town, it had petrified, one of the gravediggers reported.

However, that gravedigger also called her "Lillie," the name of Bernard Miller's second wife who left town with her husband in good health when the open range era began to shut down.

Other women and children, too, were buried "on the hill," including Cynthia McCey died of consumption, 4-year-old Ida Alice Aufdengarten, who died of snakebite; Mary McMurdo Bleasdale, who died in childbirth; Sheriff Joe Hughes' only girl child, who was crushed by a falling timber; and teenager Gertrude Fisher, who died in the typhoid epidemic of 1884.

The county commissioners paid \$5 to bury one of Dull Knife's braves, who had died traveling north during the Cheyenne Outbreak of 1878-79.

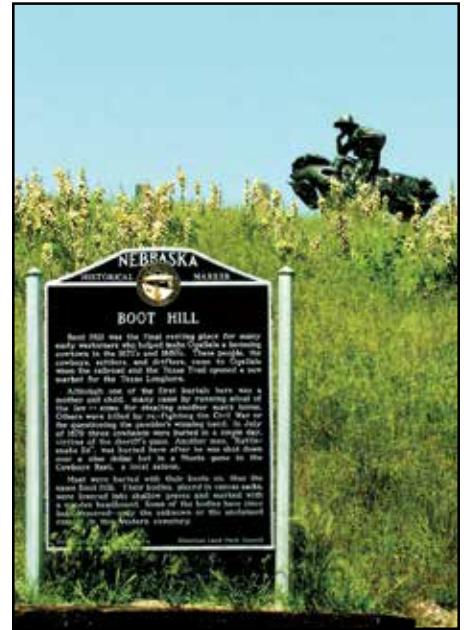
Joseph Hayden won \$100,000 gambling with Texas cattle barons one night and tried to escape east on the 2 a.m. train with a suitcase of gold coins. William Bland and a gang of cowboys took him off the train at Alkali (now Paxton) and somehow, Hayden was shot three times trying to escape.

Pedro, "other name unknown," was shot near Roscoe by a Cheyenne County posse that had trailed him driving a herd of stolen horses.

Bill Campbell, who had achieved almost mythical fame for his exploits on the trail, got drunk in Ogallala one day and accused one of the Moy brothers of being a "Yankee bean eater."

The Texan, once-removed from Georgia, took exception to the slur and later killed Campbell in a duel across the dance floor in the Cowboys Rest Saloon.

A 14-year-old cowboy on his first trip up the trail woke up one morning behind the Crystal Palace Saloon, Ogallala's other



Boot Hill Cemetery, one of Ogallala's most-visited tourist attractions, was the town's only official burying ground during "the end of the trail" decade from 1874-1884. In 2007, an old concrete statue was replaced with a bronze horse and rider. The old concrete statue was refurbished and placed along Highway 30 at the Ogallala Livestock Auction Market near the west end of the city of Ogallala.

establishment, lying between "two fellows with their heads bashed in."

"Rattlesnake Ed" Worley was killed in 1884 by Lank Keyes in a fight over a \$9 monte bet. The following year, Lank's brother, John, killed a man in a barroom battle.

Some of the bodies buried at Ogallala's Boot Hill Cemetery have never been identified.

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Horse racing, casino open at Ogallala

Lake Mac Casino Resort and Racetrack officials will continue to work this year toward a \$100 million overall plan for a complete Quarter Horse racetrack and an accompanying full-fledged casino and hotel.

In August 2025, resort officials held opening-day ceremonies, which included more than 2,000 people attending the first races at the new track.

Gov. Jim Pillen was one of the keynote speakers during the opening-day ceremonies, which included a ribbon-cutting event that involved horse racing and gaming officials, other state officials and local dignitaries.

The resort, as it stands now, offers a five-eighths of a mile oval horse racing track, with paddock and winner's circle. The horse barns have a capacity for 400 stalls, with outdoor horse circulation, RV parking and state-of-the-art facilities to support horse racing activities.

The opening day, Aug. 19, 2025, also included the opening of the temporary casino



A Keith County bred Quarter Horse, Dear Dash (No. 4 in photo) won the first ever horse race at the new Lake Mac Casino Resort & Racetrack.

building, which features more than 300 slot machines, elec-

tronic gaming tables, a sportsbook and simulcast area.

Hastings Exposition and Racing, which is partnering with Elite Casino Resorts, are working together on the project.

The property includes 174 acres to the west of Walmart and extends south, including ground west of Nebraska Harvest Center in the southwest quadrant of the Ogallala Interstate 80 interchange.

Initial dirt work on the race track and casino had begun and progressed in December 2024, and work on the grounds and facility continued in 2025 and through the current year.

Officials plan to expand the offerings. Completion of the facility is expected within three years. Once done, it will include a 180-room main hotel that will feature a casino floor, Draft Day sports lounge, show lounge with live entertainment, 15,000-square-foot convention center, indoor and outdoor pools, and three restaurants.

Horse races are slated to be held July 11 and 12, and 17 and 18 this year.

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Gallery features Native American works

Although Ogallala's Petrified Wood Gallery retains its title as Ogallala's hidden gem, the local gallery also remains as one Keith County's most visited tourist attractions.

Located at 418 E. First St., the family-friendly gallery is a museum of natural history specializing in ancient woods and other art exhibits.

A relatively new space offers an area for artists to give lessons and for local and traveling art showings. It is also available for private receptions and other functions.

Gallery items have been collected since 1952 and gifted to the community by twin artists-craftsmen Harvey and Howard Kenfield.

A gallery highlight is the prize-winning collection of three-dimensional petrified wood pictures of ghost towns, houses and barns reminiscent of the Great Depression era.

The scenes are created by taking small pieces of thin, shale-like petrified wood and hand-gluing them to canvas backgrounds.

Also popular with gallery visitors are pictures of birds made with naturally col-

ored pieces of petrified wood.

There are also pieces of petrified wood transformed into pine cones, flowers, insects, butterflies, toadstools and even mice and a piece of cheese.

Visitors also will find a unique collection of lapidary art, including beautifully polished rounds of wood, limbs, agates, spheres and carvings artistically displayed.

There also are fossil cones and fossilized leaf imprints, as well as Native American artifacts, which were found within a 25-mile radius of Ogallala, mostly in the Lake McConaughy area.

It is an amazing collection of natural history, rivaling any in much larger cities.

The collection has won prizes at gem and mineral shows throughout the nation. During one event at St. Louis, Missouri, the exhibit won both top awards, the first time in the history of the show that both awards went to the same exhibit.

Gallery visitors also will find a unique gift shop, which helps support operations.




The gallery allows Ogallala and its residents to treat their visitors to an education in natural history.



NATIVE AMERICAN ARTIFACTS – The gallery features many Native American artifacts, including a large collection of arrowheads, pictured in the background, pewters and other statuettes.

The Petrified Wood and Art Galley

This "little gem" of a gallery all began with a couple of rockhounds and it has become a highly acclaimed gallery of fine art, natural history, ancient woods and gems and and Native American artifacts.

The gift shop features artwork, hand-crafted jewelry and other treasures from local and regional artists.

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Local YMCA offers everything for fitness

The Ogallala Goodall YMCA, located at 505 E. G St., has been under the day-to-day operation of the YMCA for more than a year.

The YMCA, through its national brand, has improved the facility and the exercise options for those residents and visitors who want to train and stay in shape.

During its first year of operation, the YMCA has taken steps to not only improve the exercise equipment and classes, but also the center facility and the outdoor pool.

Prior to the YMCA taking over the day-to-day operations from the city of Ogallala, which remains the owner of the infrastructure, the community undertook two fundraising projects that have transformed the facility into one that offers almost everything for the fitness conscious.

The most recent is a splashpad and playground, while another recent addition involved an outdoor basketball court named in honor of former Ogallala High School coach the late Mark Etzelmliller.

The community raised more than \$400,000 for the splashpad and playground and nearly \$36,000 to improve the concrete court to a new all-weather surface with glass-backboard basketball goals. Both of the new additions are located east of the



THE CENTER HAS A LARGE, INDOOR SWIMMING POOL.

facility. The center has served the community since 1973.

The community improvements and recent involvement of the YMCA are welcome additions to a facility that features an indoor pool (open mid September through mid May), infrared saunas, weight training and exercise equipment facilities, walking track and shower areas.

The indoor pool is closed when Ogallala opens its outdoor facility at 307 W. Seventh St., a facility the YMCA also operates under its current contract with the city.

The Goodall YMCA is open from 5:30

a.m. until 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 5:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. Friday, noon until 5 p.m. Saturday, and 1 until 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Keyless entry is available for the weight and exercise equipment room, and the walking track.

Daily rates for both adults and youth are no more than \$6.

An annual single, adult membership is \$155 and senior citizen rates are \$114 annually. Both those include keyless entry.

The facility's phone number is 308-284-8735.

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Downtown statues



The Western Trails Sculpture Walk brings rotating public art to Ogallala with the community participating in the program for the first time in 2025. Sculptures in place this year will be rotated out, with new sculptures placed in May. The focus on public art is an effort by the Western Trails Creative District, which was established in 2023.



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Arts Council places statue at Mansion

The Ogallala Regional Arts Council has added another sculpture under the flagpole at Mansion on the Hill, a fifth such sculpture on display at Ogallala by South Dakota sculptor Lee Luening and his shop Bad River Artworks.

The sculpture, titled “Stand for the Flag,” depicts a Vietnam veteran who has lost a limb – a daily reminder of his personal sacrifice – who, proudly stands with a salute, pant-leg pinned up like the old-timers, recognizing the flag.

The Sculpture Walk Across Nebraska rotates its sculptures, with the new ones expected to be placed sometime in May.

All but one of those sculptures, “Saturday’s Distraction, which is located in front of Second Chapter Brewing at the corner of West A and Second streets, will be changed in May.

“Saturday’s Distraction,” which is of a boy with the book, an ice cream cone and dog, has been purchased as part of the Ogallala’s first-year involvement with the SWAN program, will remain at Ogallala in front of Second Chapter.

The Regional Arts Council sponsored the cost of the pedestal for the “Stand for the Flag” sculpture and the sculpture placement in support of Luening and Sherri Treeby,

who have placed more than 250 public, life-sized sculptures, making them one of South Dakota’s most prolific bronze sculptors. The pair had five sculptures at Ogallala as part of the SWAN program.

Under the Sculpture Walk Across Nebraska program, all sculptures can be purchased and then would remain in the community that made the purchase. Sculptures in the SWAN program come from all over the United States.

The Regional Arts Council is trying to raise funds to purchase a permanent sculpture for the Mansion and the organization will continue to work on that project until enough funds are raised in order that a sculpture may be purchased.

Located at Spruce and 10th streets, Ogallala’s 1887 Mansion on the Hill, which is made from bricks kilned at Ogallala, is open during the summer as a period house museum. In recent years, the Historical Society had funded refurbishing efforts to the museum.

Hours are from 9 a.m. through 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays.

The facility also is available for rent.

For more information, contact the Mansion on the Hill at 308-284-0821.



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| Eagle Canyon Hideaway | 308-287-2673 |
| Kingsley Dam Resort | 308-284-2775 |
| Marina Landing | 308-355-3535 |
| North Shore Lodge | 308-355-2222 |
| Otter Creek Lodge | 308-355-2372 |
| Vogl's Lodge & Lure | 308-355-2321 |

Lodging - Ogallala

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Sandy Spurs House | 303-810-0069 |
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Campgrounds

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Arthur Bay RV Park & Storage | 720-581-1018 |
| Admiral's Cove | 308-355-2102 |
| Cedar Vue | 308-471-1414 |
| Ogallala/TriTrails KOA Journey | 308-284-2415 |
| Lake Ogallala | 402-471-1414 |
| North Shore Lodge | 308-355-2222 |
| The Lodge - RV Park, Paxton | 308-239-4510 |
| Lone Eagle | 402-471-1414 |
| McGreer's Campground (Big Springs) | 308-289-4137 |
| Ogallala/I80 KOA Journey | 308-284-1300 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Oregon Trail Trading Post | 308-778-5879 |
| Otter Creek Lodge | 308-355-2372 |
| Riverside Campground (Brule) | 308-287-2474 |
| South Platte Cabins & Kennels | 308-284-2266 |
| Van's Lakeview Fishing Camp | 308-284-4965 |

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| Motel 6 | 308-889-3671 |
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Motels - Lewellen

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| Lewellen Lodge | 308-672-0690 |
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| Quality Inn | 308-284-3623 |
| Stagecoach Inn | 308-284-3656 |
| Super 8 Motel | 308-284-2076 |

I-80 Motels - Paxton

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| The Lodge Days Inn | 308-239-4510 |
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The bays are relatively calm, offering serene pools for visitors to get wet. Life jackets are strongly recommended for those who get in the water. While there have been few losses to drowning over the past 10 years, no one wearing a life jacket has ever drowned in Lake Mac.



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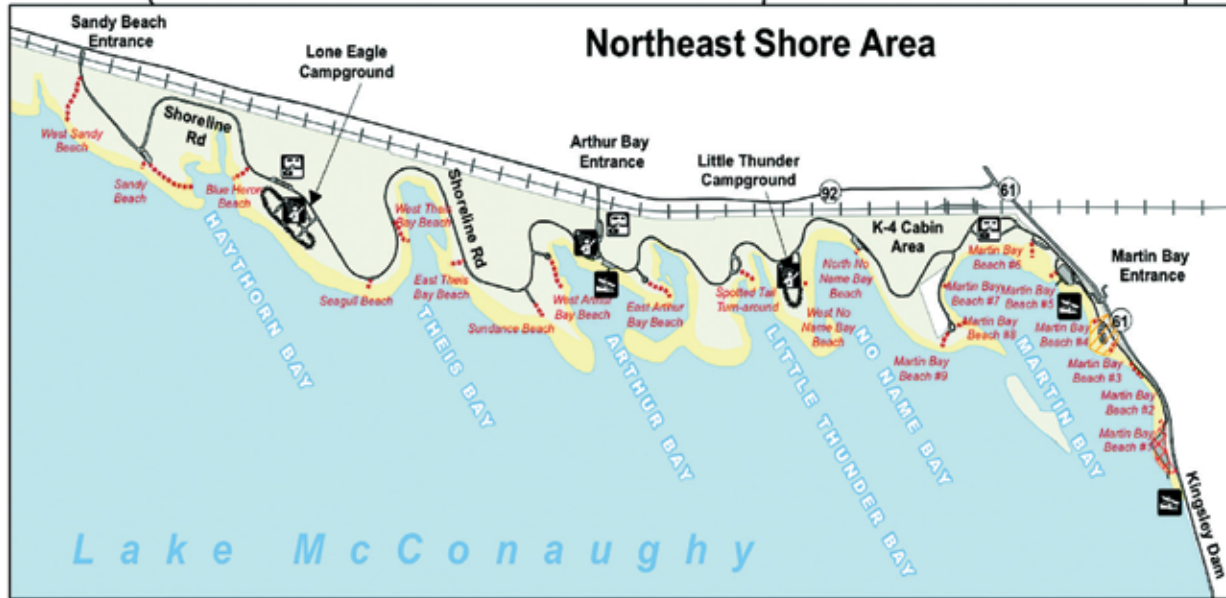
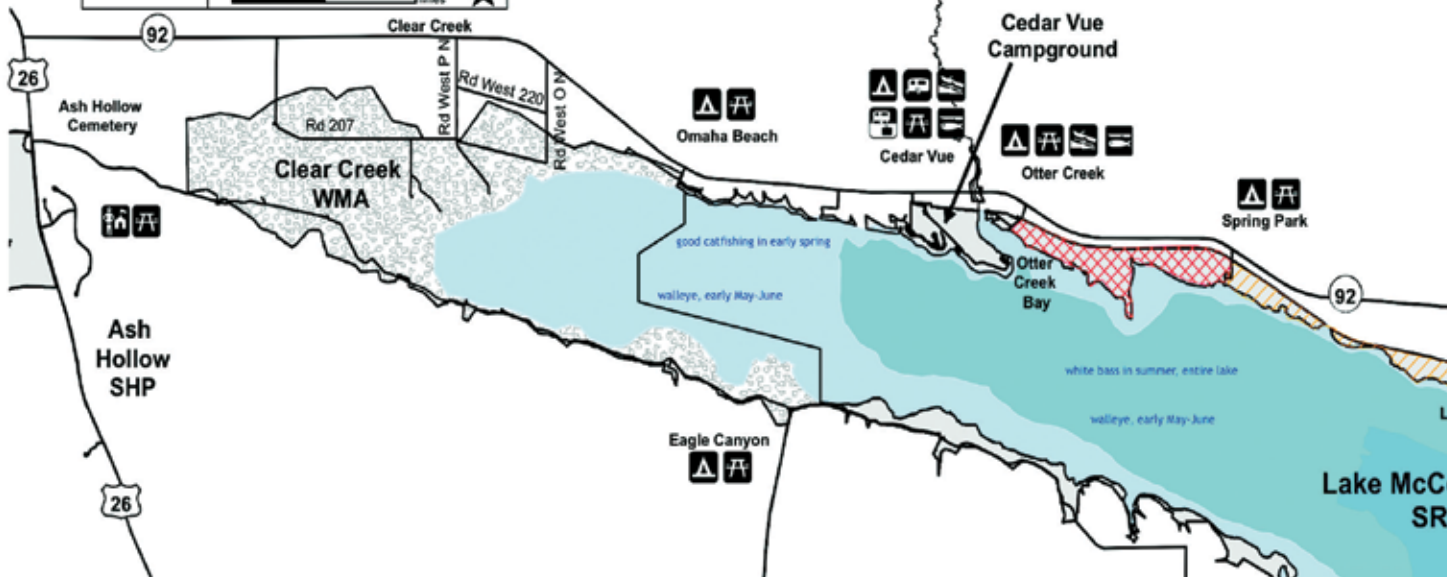
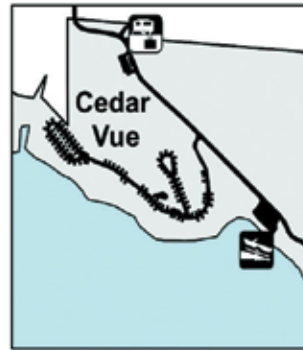
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Lake McConaughy

NEBRASKA

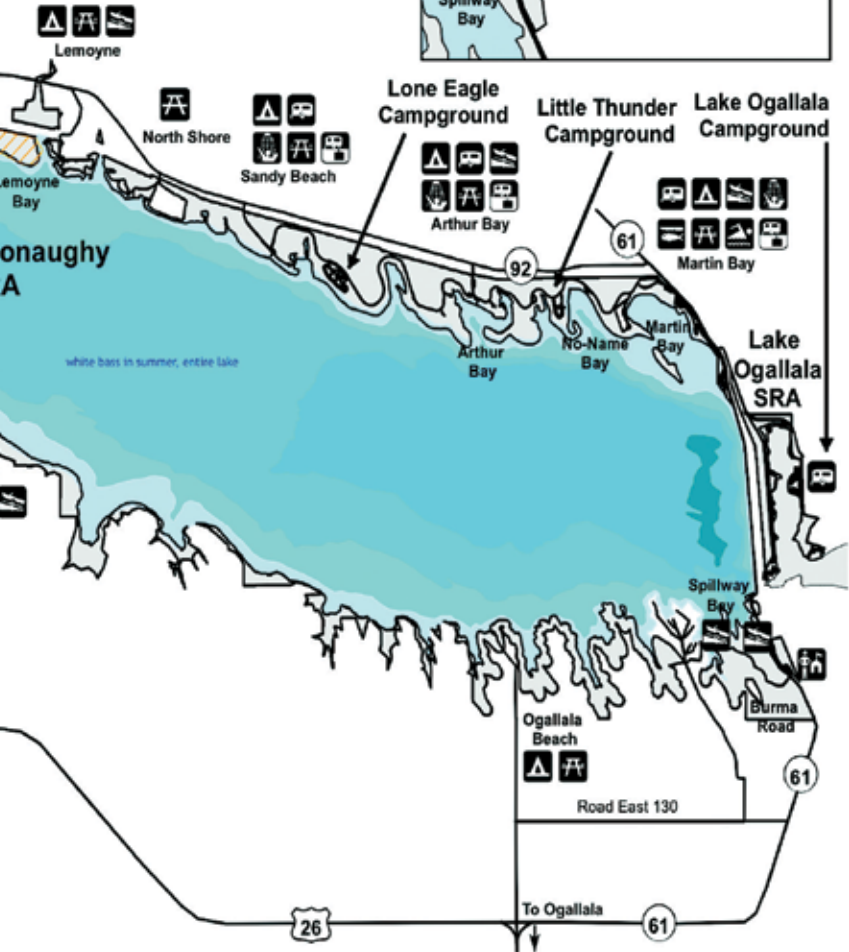
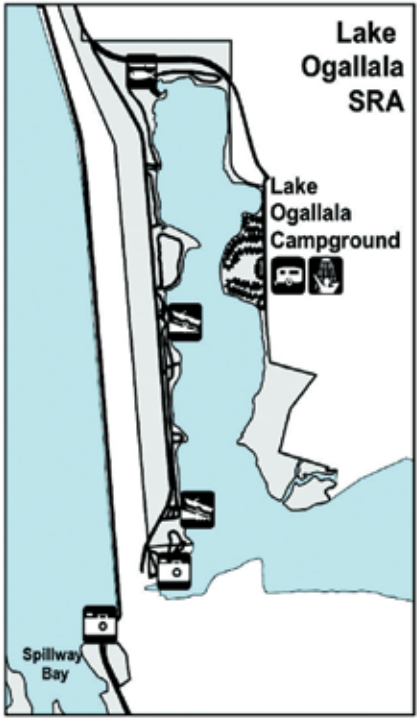
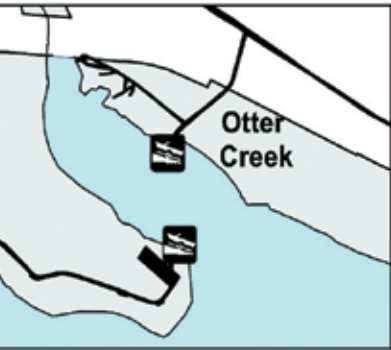
- GAME PARKS -

| Lake McConaughy Depth (Feet) at full pool | Key |
|---|---|
| 0-30 | Headquarters |
| 31-70 | Primitive Camping |
| 71-100 | Picnic Areas |
| 101-140 | Boat Ramps |
| 141+ | Shower/Latrine |
| | Threatened/Endangered Species Zone - closed to all traffic April 15 thru August 15. Open to foot traffic August 16 to April 14. |
| | Day Use Zone |
| | Electrical Campgrounds |
| | Dump Station |
| | Swimming Beach |
| | Fish Cleaning Station |
| | Viewing Area |



Lake McConaughy

Recreation Area



STOP

Stop the Spread of Harmful Aquatic Plants & Animals. Protect our waters. Self Check.

CLEAN Remove all plants, mud, and debris from boat and equipment.
DRAIN Drain all water from your boat, bilge, livewell, motor, bait bucket.
DRY Disinfect and dry all equipment for 5 days before entering a new waterbody.

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!
Prevent the transport of invasive species. Clean all recreational equipment.

For more information, contact the Nebraska Invasive Species Project
<http://snr.unl.edu/invasives> or 402-472-3133

EMERGENCY NUMBERS
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 Keith County Sheriff,
 Ogallala Police Department and
 Nebraska State Patrol 308-284-2011
 Hospital 308-284-4011

VISITORS, PLEASE NOTE!
 No three- or four-wheeled ATVs, mini-bikes, dirt bikes or golf carts are allowed in the recreation area. A current Nebraska park entry permit is required on all vehicles entering the recreation area. Camping fees are charged at all areas.

NO ALCOHOL OR FIREWORKS ARE ALLOWED AT THE LAKE McCONAUGHY STATE RECREATION AREA



VISITOR CENTER – Opened in 2001, the \$2 million, 9,000-square-foot Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center serves the area, its citizens and visitors. In addition to serving as lake headquarters for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, the center includes aquariums, a 50-seat theater and interpretive displays, explaining the role of water in Nebraska’s past, present and future. The center, located south

of Kingsley Dam, is open year-round, and often is the first place newcomers visit as they approach Lake McConaughy, obtaining the necessary permits and information needed to enjoy one of the state’s finest outdoor recreational areas. The center also offers written materials that will help visitors enjoy their stay, not only at Lake McConaughy but also the amenities that Keith County offers to its visitors. A gift shop also features items detailing Lake McConaughy and Keith County.



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McConaughy is year-round playground

Can you name Nebraska's biggest playground? Or one of Nebraska's top outdoor vacation destinations? Nebraska's No. 1 site for eagle viewing? Or the site of Nebraska's largest hydroelectric plant?

The answer: Lake McConaughy and Kingsley Dam.

With 35,000 surface acres and 105 miles of shoreline, it is the state's biggest playground and offers year-round fun.

At full storage, McConaughy is 20 miles long, 4 miles wide and 142 feet deep at the dam.

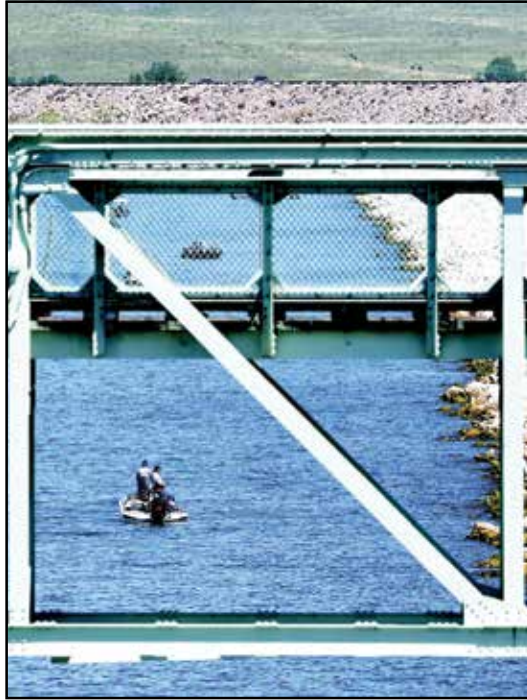
With its cool, clear-blue waters, fishing is the lake's primary drawing card but, because of its white sandy beaches, Lake Mac also is noted for its sailing, camping, windsurfing, scuba diving, water skiing and picnicking.

But, it also has year-round activities such as hunting, ice skating and backpacking.

Kingsley Dam, which impounds the North Platte River for irrigation and power generation, was completed in 1941.

The dam is 3-1/2 miles long and 162 feet high. It is 1,100 feet thick at the base.

Construction started on Kingsley Dam in 1936 and was built on the controlled shooting area and much of the lake.



FISHING THE DAM – Fishermen flock to work Kingsley Dam, especially during the walleye spawn.

at a cost of \$43.5 million.

The 50-megawatt Kingsley Dam hydroelectric plant, the state's largest, was completed in 1984 at a cost of \$49 million.

The hydroelectric plant is owned by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and was financed by the Nebraska Public Power District, which purchases the power generated by the plant.

At Lake Ogallala, just below Kingsley Dam, is Nebraska's premiere eagle-viewing facility.

The Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District operates a heated eagle-viewing observation facility at Lake Ogallala.

The facility is open from early January to about mid-March, depending on weather conditions.

Special group tours are offered by calling 308-284-2332.

Nearby attractions include Ash Hollow State Historical Park near Lewellen, and Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge north of Oshkosh.

Clear Creek Waterfowl Management Area at the west end of McConaughy attracts Canada geese, which can be hunted

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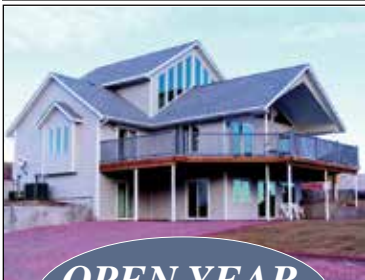
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HYDRO – Completed in 1984 at a cost of \$49 million, the Kingsley Hydroelectric Plant is Nebraska’s largest hydroplant. Owned and operated by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, the plant has produced an annual average of 76.4 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, all of which is sold

at wholesale to the Nebraska Public Power District. In addition to generating electricity, water released from Kingsley Dam is used to irrigate 222,000 acres in the Platte River Valley. The system is served by canals and provides groundwater recharge to another 310,300 acres irrigated by wells.



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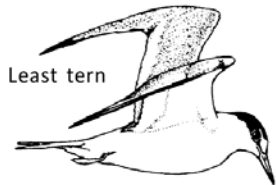
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EAGLE VIEWING CENTER

The Eagle Viewing Center is open from January to March below the Kingsley Hydroplant at Lake Ogallala. Bald eagles congregate near Lake Ogallala during the winter months to feed on fish. The Lake McConaughy area provides habitat for hundreds of species of birds.



Least tern

Sharing the Shoreline

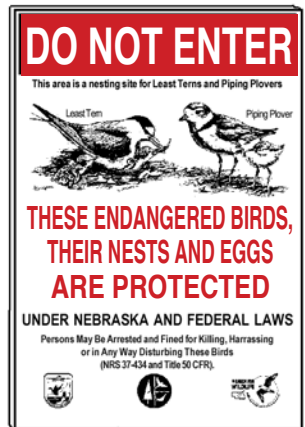


Piping plover

The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (owner and operator of Kingsley Dam, Lake McConaughy and Kingsley Hydroplant) hopes you enjoy your visit to Lake McConaughy, but remember, you're sharing the shoreline with others. Please be courteous to others who are enjoying the lake's many opportunities for recreation.

You may also notice other visitors: endangered **least terns** and threatened **piping plovers** that often build their nests on the beaches. If you encounter these birds or their nests (shallow scrapes in the sand), or if you see signs indicating their presence, please avoid the area. Help ensure these birds' future by

"Sharing the Shoreline."



Lake Mac area is state's birding hot spot

If Nebraska is "Grand Central Station" for birds, then Keith and Garden counties are the turnstile.

The passage of cranes is Nebraska's best-known bird phenomenon, but the central Platte Valley is not the state's birding hot spot.

That honor goes to the area around Lake McConaughy in Keith and Garden counties, according to Paul Johnsgard, professor emeritus of life sciences at the University of Nebraska.

His colleagues have identified 365 species of birds in Keith and Garden counties and 112 breeding species — what Johnsgard called a "cornucopia of birds."

"It's the best place in the state and the third-best in the country to go birding," Johnsgard said. "It has the third largest local list for any locality in the entire United States.

"The area around Cedar



A GULL NEAR THE SHORELINE.

Point Biological Station (below Kingsley Dam)...is one of the richest ornithological attractions in the Great Plains, with a species list that is unmatched by any area north of Texas," Johnsgard said.

Lake Ogallala also ranks No.

1 in the state for viewing of bald eagles.

When Lake McConaughy and Lake Ogallala freeze over, eagles gather to feed below the Kingsley hydroplant.

An indoor, heated eagle-viewing facility, built by the

Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District on the shore of Lake Ogallala, is open from early January until March.

Group visits to the center can be arranged by calling (308) 284-2332.

The west end of Lake McConaughy also is a favorite stopover for sandhill cranes.

Two threatened species, the least tern and piping plover, can be watched from just a few feet away at special areas at the Martin Bay parking lot on the north end of Kingsley Dam.

Christmas bird counts, held annually for years, regularly place the number of bird species at Lake McConaughy at 100 or more.

Just west of Lake McConaughy, Garden County and, specifically, Oshkosh has long carried the title of Nebraska Goose Capital, with some of the finest goose hunting in the United States.

Lake Mac's Fishing & Hunting Headquarters



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Cabins & Vacation Homes available all year! Think Vogl's when planning your next vacation!

Certain rules apply to those wanting to be on the water

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission officials remind visitors to observe existing laws so everyone remains safe on the water at Lake McConaughy.

All boaters must display an aquatic invasive species decal. Those decals are available in the Lake Mac Visitor Center or at www.outdoornebraska.org.

Boaters should take care to avoid transporting aquatic nuisance species, such as zebra mussels, by making sure to clean, drain and dry their boats before launching at Lake McConaughy or any other waterway.

Those boating on Nebraska's largest reservoir should always keep an eye on the weather and head for shore early when storms approach.

Paddlesports enthusiasts should remember that they are required to carry and use life jackets.

Boating safety gear and preparation is a must. Life jackets are required on every type of vessel and people of certain ages are required to wear life jackets.

Water enthusiasts must ensure their boats have all other necessary safety gear before hitting the water.

Nebraska law requires any person born after Dec. 31, 1985, to complete a boater safety course and have proof of completion with them in order to operate any motorboat, including personal watercraft.

Nebraska's boater safety course is recognized in all other states and those from out of state will meet the state's requirement provided their course is NASBLA-approved.

Various classroom courses and test-out option courses are offered throughout the state.

For a complete listing, visit www.boat safenebraska.org or contact the Lake McConaughy Visitor Center at (308) 284-8800. Those living out of state are asked to contact their state's boating authority.

Alcohol consumption is illegal at Lake McConaughy and should be avoided while boating or participating in any water recreation.



Banner Health. Ogallala Community Hospital

Rooted in Tradition, Driven by Innovation

Founded in 1952, Ogallala Community Hospital has long been a cornerstone of healthcare in western Nebraska. As a community-owned, 18-bed Critical Access Hospital, it blends small-town values with cutting-edge medical care. In partnership with Banner Medical Group for over 30 years, the hospital continues to evolve while staying true to its mission of compassionate, patient-centered service. Attached medical and specialty clinics further enhance access to care, ensuring that residents receive comprehensive treatment close to home.

Excellence in Rural Healthcare

Ogallala Community Hospital stands out as one of the few Critical Access Hospitals in Nebraska to earn accreditation from The Joint Commission – a prestigious recognition of its commitment to safe, high-quality care. The facility also holds a Level 4 Trauma certification, supported by a team of certified Emergency Registered Nurses who are trained to respond swiftly and effectively in critical situations. These achievements reflect the hospital's dedication to best practices and its unwavering focus on the health and safety of the community it serves.

Clinic:

**Monday to Friday
7:00am to 5:00pm**

Saturday Walk-in Clinic:

8am to 11:45am

**FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:
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Camping reservations needed

To create a safer, family-friendly environment, all camping at Lake McConaughy and Lake Ogallala State Recreation areas will continue to be by advance reservation only during peak season, May 22 to Sept. 11, annually.

Campers will need a reservation to stay at either SRA during the peak season. This includes all campgrounds and beach camping areas. All overnight visitors should book a campsite on the reservation system before leaving home.

The reservation system allows for campground reservations up to 180 days in advance and beach camping reservations 30 days in advance of a scheduled stay.

Reservations can be made online, on the mobile app ReserveAmerica Camping, or by phone at 308-284-8800 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily.

Same-day reservations may be made online or by phone until 5 p.m. MT, if sites remain available.

Once capacities are reached, no additional overnight camping will be allowed. For alternative lodging options, including private campgrounds, hotels or cabins, those are listed in this Lake McConaughy Visitors Guide, or visit the website www.ILoveLakeMac.com.

Campers must arrive and check in with park staff, in-person, in the Visitor Center



THE RE-DESIGNED ENTRANCE, INCLUDING KIOSKS, AT MARTIN BAY.

or at a staffed entrance booth between 2 p.m. and 11 p.m. MT.

Registered campers will receive an email with more details regarding their reservation prior to arrival.

Day-use activities are not limited and do not require a reservation. Vehicles will be allowed on beaches where the Game and Parks Commission has a managed access point.

During the off-season, through May 21, and after Sept. 12, all overnight camping on designated camping beaches and in campgrounds will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Each vehicle entering the park needs a park entry permit. Those permits may be purchased online or at the park.

For more information, visit Outdoornebraska.gov/lakemcconaughy.



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| <p>St. Luke's Catholic Church 417 East 3rd St., Ogallala 308-284-3196 Mass Times: Weekdays at 8 a.m. Saturday at 5 p.m., Sunday at 10 a.m. www.kccatholics.com</p> |  | <p>St. Patrick's Catholic Church 301 East 4th St., Paxton Mass Time: Sunday at 8 a.m.</p> |
|--|---|---|



The Little Church at Keystone was built in 1908. The frame church was built by Catholics and Protestants, and remained in use until 1949. The church has been undergoing renovations during recent years, including a new roof, inside refurbishing and a new sidewalk leading up to the building.

Little Church at Keystone is an early area monument toward religious harmony

KEYSTONE – In 1908, in a town “too small” for two churches, the community of Keystone needed a church.

In a rare display of togetherness, townsfolk built a “combination” church to serve both Catholics and Protestants.

The church is approximately 18 feet wide and 40 feet long.

At the north end was a Catholic altar; at the south end, a Protestant altar. Pews with reversible backs were installed. The stove was an old Union Pacific depot stove.

For Catholic Mass, parishioners faced the Catholic altar. Then, pew backs were flipped over and the Protestant congregation faced the Protestant altar.

The church, with seating capacity of 70 to 75 people, remained in use until 1949.

The first idea for a church was conceived by 11 teenage girls led by Mrs. Bill Paxton Jr., who had organized them into a club similar to present 4-H clubs. Mrs. Paxton also helped found the Keystone Library. Mr. Paxton was a well-known rancher, after whom the town of Paxton is named. When completed, the church cost \$1,200. When it was dedicated on Aug. 16, 1908, it was debt-free.

The first wedding in the church, a marriage between Miss Anna Knight and Mr. William Fenwick, was held four days later, on Aug. 20, 1908.

The Little Church at Keystone still stands as a monument to Catholic-Protestant amity and is put to use occasionally for weddings. It is operated by the Keith County Historical Society.

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Ash Hollow features 30 million years of history

LEWELLEN – Nebraska’s “most intriguing and unusual” state park.

That’s how the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission describes Ash Hollow State Historical Park, located 3 miles southeast of Lewellen on U.S. Highway 26 – or about 30 miles northwest of Ogallala and just minutes from Lake McConaughy.

Settlers on their way west came through the area starting in the 1830s and called the valley “Ash Hollow” because of

the ash trees growing there.

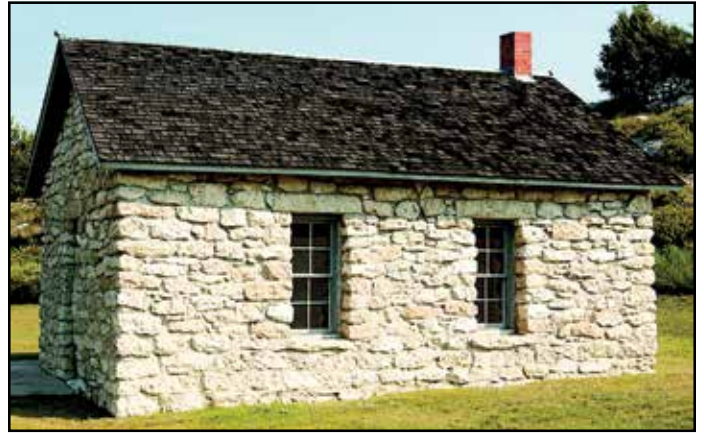
Open daily, the park is operated by the Game & Parks Commission. A state park entry permit, available at the park, is required. Structures at the park were recently made handicapped accessible.

A modern visitor center interprets the geological, paleontologic, prehistoric, native American Indian, military and 19th Century fur trappers, explorers and pioneers.

The Ash Hollow Indian Cave, now covered with a building for protective purposes, further interprets the geologic history of the area.

More than 30 million years of geologic history can be examined at the park. The geologic history of rocks exposed in the park spans that many years. A large number of fossils from various species, including tertiary mammals, can be found in sediments and rocks.

A visual show traces how man used Ash Hollow from prehistoric times through the emigrant days of the mid-1800s.



THE ROCK SCHOOLHOUSE.

Ash Hollow has evidence of prehistoric animals including rhinoceros, mammoths and mastodons and also of prehistoric man dating back 8,000 to 10,000 years.

Ash Hollow was visited by the Plains Indians, fur traders and trappers, and was the site of U.S. troop maneuvers. Modern-day gatherings in the park re-create those times.

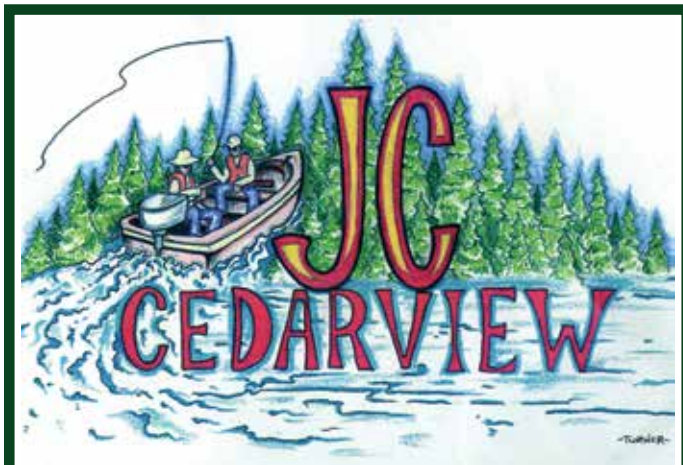
The area was a principal stopping point on the Oregon,

California and Mormon trails with up to emigrants passing through or by Ash Hollow.

In 1835, the area was the site of a major battle between the Pawnee and the Sioux and is near the site of one of the largest engagements between U.S. troops and the Sioux ever fought in Nebraska Territory, the 1855 Battle of Blue Water, a retaliatory attack more often referred to as a massacre committed by the U.S. Army.



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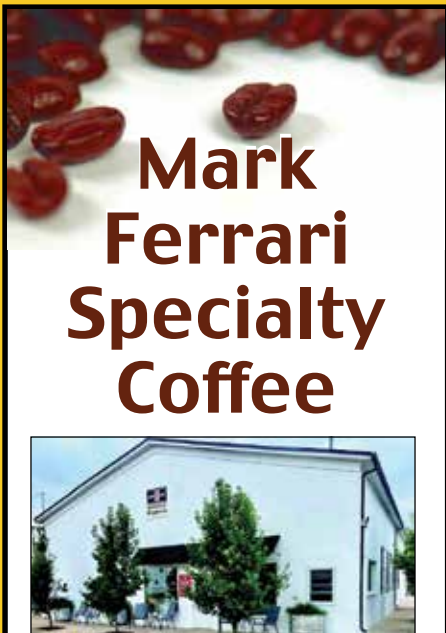
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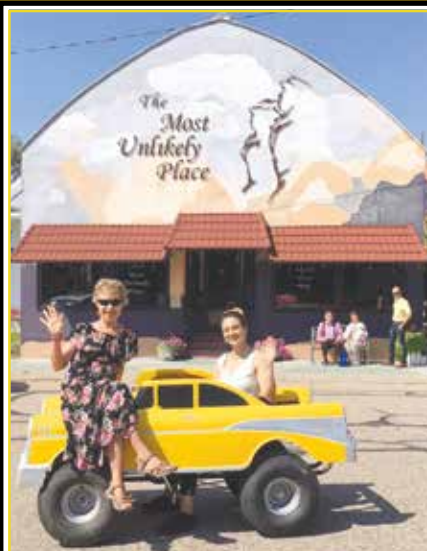


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Ole's features a 'wild kingdom'

PAXTON – Paxton, a community of about 500, has its own wild kingdom – 200 plus animals to be exact.

The private collection of the late Rosser O. "Ole" Herstedt that dates back to the 1930s, which is located in Ole's Big Game Steakhouse & Lounge, features more than 200 mounted trophies from every continent in the world.

The warm welcome that awaits you in Ole's is a direct reflection of Herstedt, the man who founded what is often called "Nebraska's favorite watering hole."

Born and reared at Paxton, Ole never tired of the friendly people and easygoing lifestyle of this tiny western-Nebraska community.

In fact, his desire to remain in his hometown was what led him to seize a unique business opportunity in 1933.

Ole's opened at 12:01 a.m. Aug. 9, 1933, the night Prohibition ended. The tavern became the local gathering spot. Ole and his friends would spend hours swapping stories of their hunting exploits. In 1938, Ole bagged a deer that he was especially proud of, had the buck mounted and displayed it in the bar. And, that is how it began.

Now, hundreds of pictures and memorabilia share the rustic, knotty pine walls with



This 1,500-pound polar bear is one of approximately 200 mounted animals on display in Ole's Big Game Lounge & Steakhouse, which is located on Main Street at Paxton. Ole's opened the night Prohibition ended on Aug. 9, 1933, and has grown to become known as one of the Nebraska's favorite watering holes.

more than 200 trophy heads of North American and African big game. Many are still world-class records.

Always one to follow his dreams, Ole traveled to every continent and the lounge

became a showcase for his adventures. The feature attraction is an 11-foot-6 polar bear that weighed more than 1,500 pounds when Ole shot it in March 1969 near the Chukchi Sea off Siberia.

It's the wild kingdom atmosphere that includes an elephant, giraffe, buffalo, leopard, deer, jaguar, mountain sheep, bobcat, moose, wart hog, hartebeest, wolverine, kudu, topi, zebra, lion and many others that bring the curious to Ole's Steakhouse & Lounge.

Ole's retirement gave another Paxton native, Tim Holzfaster and his wife, Deb, an opportunity to become the owners of this oasis for weary travelers.

"We just try to provide good food and service," Holzfaster said.

Proof of that lies with the local people, including women and children, who are as likely to be seated under a five-point white-tailed deer as a family from Omaha or a salesman from Michigan.

Ole's and Swede's are located on Main Street at Paxton, just one minute north of Interstate 80 off exit 145. Ole's Big Game Steakhouse & Lounge is a link between the past and the future you won't want to miss.

Be sure to stop. You'll love the food and the adventure.



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Renovation producing great results

It's coming up on two years since the renovation of Lake Ogallala and creel surveys are showing a trout fishery full of potential.

The lake and its associated waters below the Keystone Diversion Dam – the North Platte River and the Nebraska Public Power District's Sutherland Supply Canal – are producing lots of trout and big ones.

Darrol Eichner, fisheries biologist for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at Lake McConaughy, said since early spring, the creel clerk has interviewed more anglers on the river and canal than on the lake, translating to better angling success on the river and canal.

But, Eichner said anglers caught Master Angler rainbow trout (23 inches or 5 pounds) from the lake, with most of the fish measuring 16 to 17 inches long. He said the catches in the river and canal average about 17 inches.

"Trout in the lake, river and canal have grown at phenom-



(Jeff Kurrus, Nebraskaland Magazine/NGPC)

RAINBOW – Large rainbow trout, and good numbers of them, are being caught by anglers at Lake Ogallala and its associated waters following the lake's renovation in 2023.

enal rates because of the abundance of aquatic invertebrates available for their diet since the fall 2023 renovation," Eichner said.

The renovation eliminated common carp and white sucker fish that were abundant in the lake. It then was stocked with rainbow trout, tiger trout, smallmouth bass and yellow perch. In the past two years, nearly

104,000 rainbow, tiger and cutbow trout and 79,000 yellow perch have been stocked. Cutbow trout are a rainbow-cutthroat trout hybrid.

Tiger trout stockings have since been discontinued due to difficulty raising them and poor growth after stocking. They have been replaced by cutbow, which show excellent growth rates and catchability.

All trout stocked at Lake Ogallala in 2025 were stocked at 12 inches rather than the previous 9-10 inches.

The daily bag limit for rainbows, tigers and cutbows is five, of which only one fish may be 16 inches or longer when fishing in the lake and river. To allow for more harvest, the one over size restriction does not apply to fish caught in the Sutherland Supply Canal.

Lake Ogallala's cold-water fishery is unique in Nebraska, facilitated by low-level water releases from Lake McConaughy's Kingsley Dam. Ideal conditions, such as clear water, abundant aquatic vegetation and thriving invertebrate communities, ensure exceptional growth rates and angling experiences for trout. In addition to trout, species like yellow perch, smallmouth bass and channel catfish also have found success in the lake.

For more information on fishing in Nebraska, visit OutdoorNebraska.gov/fish.

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Lake McConaughy's most family friendly event



The Keith County Chamber of Commerce sponsors the annual Kites and Castles event the last Saturday in July on the beach near Martin Bay at Lake McConaughy. This year, Kites and Castles will celebrate its 37th year as one of Lake McConaughy's most family friendly event. Those wanting to register a sand-sculpting team for the event are asked to contact the chamber at 308-284-4066.

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in part, by the Keith
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FISHERMEN'S PARADISE – While walleye are the most sought-after fish, Lake McConaughy is home to several other species, including white bass and northern pike, all of which draw interest from anglers. Lake McConaughy has proven,

year after year, to have the best walleye fishery in Nebraska and one of the best fisheries in the Midwest. The smallmouth bass population has done quite well over recent years and trophy fish are waiting for fishermen.



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