Thursday 5/16

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The U.S. Senate has passed an amendment blocking the Corps of Engineers from charging fees to access water in upper Missouri River reservoirs.

The effort spearheaded by senators from the Dakotas and Montana is part of the 2013 Water Resources Development Act, which now goes to the House.

The corps has proposed a fee system that would designate some water in the reservoirs as surplus because it hasn't been used for purposes authorized when dams were built.

The senators say the proposed fees would violate states' rights to waters that naturally flow through their boundaries. The states have promised to sue if fees are charged.

The corps has issued free permits to tap surplus water to oil drillers and other industrial users until a national policy is developed.

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Federal Reserve says farm income growth slowed across the Plains and western states in the first quarter as costs increased and the drought lingered.

The nation's central bank branch in Kansas City, Missouri, said Wednesday that the growth in farm income has slowed this year because farmers and ranchers are dealing with higher costs.

Bankers expect farm income to weaken further in the region over during the second quarter.

But land values continued to increase in the first quarter on top of several years of significant growth. Cropland values rose 20 percent over 2012, and ranchland values grew 14 percent.

The 10th Federal Reserve District covers Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Colorado, northern New Mexico and western Missouri.

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Iowa drivers will be able to renew their driver's licenses online under a bill signed into law by the governor.

Governor Terry Branstad signed the bill Wednesday. It allows drivers between 18 and 72 to renew their driver's licenses through the state Department of Transportation's website without passing a vision test. The bill also extends the time licenses are valid from five years to eight years.

Drivers previously could only renew their license at a county treasurer or DOT office. Branstad says the law will save Iowa residents time.

Iowa Department of Transportation Director Paul Trombino stood with the governor Wednesday and called the measure a top priority. He says the new online system will be available this summer

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A record-setting amputee athlete from South Dakota has died after losing a second battle with cancer.

Kober Funeral Home says 23-year-old Hunter Bork died Tuesday at a Vermillion hospital. Funeral arrangements are pending.

Bork lost his left leg to cancer shortly after high school and used a prosthetic leg while competing for Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell from 2009-11. In 2011 he set an American high jump record at the U.S. Paralympics competition.

The Daily Republic newspaper reports (http://bit.ly/13yNk5o) that Bork's cancer went into remission after his leg was amputated but it returned in 2011.

DWU track and field coach Pat Belling and athletic director Curt Hart say Bork was an inspiration to many people.

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — The University of South Dakota and South Dakota State University will begin offering four existing degree programs online.

The state Board of Regents says it has approved requests from the two universities to offer the programs online with no new state resources required. The programs are designed for adults who want to pursue new careers or advanced study without relocating or commuting to a campus.

Starting this summer, USD will offer its master's degree in interdisciplinary studies online.

Beginning this fall, SDSU will offer its master's degree in human sciences online, and USD will offer its bachelor's degree of business administration in management and its master's degree

in kinesiology and sport s
cience online
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