

'DROUGHT' CON'T FROM PAGE 2

find state-by-state drought impacts by intensity for specified time periods by exploring the drought monitor website.

I dug into North Dakota data to see how many weeks within 2014-2024 some part of the state suffered from D2 drought. Drought intensity level D2 is important because it can trigger responses from the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program, the Livestock Forage Disaster Program and the Conservation Reserve Program Emergency Haying and Grazing. It is also at a level of intensity that crops, pasture and range losses would be expected to occur. Of the 572 weeks in the time period, 269 were reported at a drought intensity level of D2. That was 47% of that timeframe! It ranged from zero weeks in 2014 to all 52 weeks in 2021.

The point is, most of North Dakota is in a semi-arid environment. In semi-arid environments, drought frequency is much more common than in eastern regions, receiving 30 to 70-plus inches of rainfall per year. If you live in a semi-arid region, you expect drought, but it's still a seven-letter bad word that no one wants to experience.

Management goals need to focus on the long term so that when the inevitable drought comes, you are prepared to withstand, survive and recover. If you are a pasture and range manager producing forage harvested by livestock, your goal is to have healthy, deep-rooted, robust plants entering a dry weather event. Then, you maintain the vitality of those plants through grazing management so plants can recover quickly once favorable growing conditions return.

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Fences and gates help with that.

In other regions where I have worked, many folks wanted to open all the gates and give the livestock free access to all grazeable areas once a dry weather period hit. By opening gates, you lose management control of the intensity and duration of grazing. Livestock-selective grazing will intensify, and the more desirable plants will suffer. Close the gates and maintain grazing management using your fence as a drought management tool. Even if permanent fencing is already in place, temporary cross-fencing can still give management advantages to help you get through a dry weather event. If crop residues are available for grazing, a temporary fence can help you get them grazed.

If you know of typically underutilized areas, a fence can help you push livestock into those areas. I have used temporary fencing to push livestock into an underutilized area due to no access to water. After getting them into the area and holding them for an hour or so, I pulled the fence and let them drift back to water. It worked well and gained me some additional grazing days. Poor water quality can develop during dry periods, and a fence can help you to exclude poor water sources.

Fence installation, charging and tools have changed a lot over the years. If you have never installed a fence or want to improve your fencing skills, I invite you to attend the fencing school held on April 30 at NDSU's North Central Research Extension Center in Minot. The school will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST and will cover fence law, virtual fencing, conventional and electric fencing and cost-share opportunities. The afternoon session will be held out in the field where attendees can see actual fence installation and hands-on instruction. This will be an open forum event, and people are invited to share their own fencing ideas, tips and tricks. The fencing school is a free event, but registration is required for an accurate meal count.

To register and learn more, visit ndsu.ag/fencingschool25.

Useful thinking: Understanding cooperation

By Bill Patrie

I have spent much of my professional career helping people build cooperative business. I have been given a lifetime membership in the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA).

Human cooperation is not limited to business. Robert Kurzban, an evolutionary psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania wrote an article on why humans cooperate. I invited Kurzban to the Peace Garden in North Dakota to discuss his findings.

My summary of his findings include: A general population can be broken into three types of people relative to the willingness to cooperate.

About 13% of any population are **born cooperators**. They serve on the church and school boards; they know how to organize and solve problems and they are the first to call others to organize solutions.

The second group are **intolerant reciprocators**. They follow the cooperators but quit cooperating when they feel they are being "free ridden." They give in order to get. This group is about 63% of a population.

The third group is the **free riders** who make up 20% of a population. They take advantage of the cooperators and the intolerant reciprocators and they think there is nothing wrong with that.

Kurzban couldn't classify 4% of the population. In my own experience it is the free riders that destroy human cooperation.

Human cooperation achieves more for an individual than one could by acting alone. An example in North Dakota is the Nonpartisan League which created the Bank of North Dakota, The Mill and Elevator, and Workers Safety and Insurance. That level of political cooperation may never be seen again.

Nationally, the United States' effort to win World War II was the high point of cooperation between the American people.

The stock market crashed in 1929. The Great Depression and the dust bowl of the dirty thirties followed. The new deal and the war effort brought the United States out of that depression and the happiness index peaked in the United States in 1958. Social clubs, churches, and bowling leagues were full.

The happiness index has been declining and selfishness and isolation have been increasing since then. In a tragic way, current political leaders are actually celebrating being free riders, while accusing the poor or the immigrants, or other minority groups for any perceived international or domestic problems.

Robert Putnam wrote "Bowling Alone" in 2000, chronicling the rise and decline in "social equity" and the loss of engagement in churches, clubs, bowling leagues and the collapse of "American Community."

He wrote "The Upswing" in 2020. Punam predicts a severe enough economic or international crisis would once again trigger a rise in human cooperation.

J. Henry Carpenter wrote the book "Peace Through Cooperation" during World War II. Carpenter was an executive with the Federal Council of Churches which became the National Council of Churches. He also worked with the Cooperative League of the United States (CLUSA) now known as the National Cooperative Business Association.

Carpenter writes "Our conception, our definition of the Church, states just that: the Church is the organization whose primary purpose is to establish co-operation and to render love operative –When I speak of the Church, I am not referring to ministers and priests, ruling boards or bodies, its "political" or business aspects – -But the real thing we are talking about is the Church in relation to people."

Carpenter saw the teachings of Jesus as a foundation for democracy. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, the most conflicted city in history. One of the seven Cooperative principles is concern for community. I, too, believe that human cooperation is the work of the church and all of us. May it be so.

Bill Patrie is a retired planner and economic developer having worked in regional and statewide positions. He is the author of "Creating Co-op Fever" printed by USDA as a service bulletin, and "100 Stories of Hope" a book about his interviews with 100 people in poverty.



Stephen-Argyle Central

is seeking licensed candidates or those with the ability to obtain MN license for the following teaching positions for the 2025-2026 school year:

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