

Wauneta and Palisade see populations drop in 2010 Census

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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By Tina Kitt

The Wauneta Breeze

And the 2010 Census says ... the trend of fewer folks in rural Nebraska continues.

Western Nebraska saw a continued population decline during the past 10 years, with the towns of Wauneta and Palisade seeing their populations dip proportionally with the rest of the region.

Wauneta's population dropped from 625 in 2000 to 577 in the most recent head count. The last time Wauneta had an official population below 600 was in 1920 when that year's census tallied 572.

Palisade saw their population drop from 386 in 2000 to 351 in 2010. This marks a departure from the previous decennial report when Palisade experienced a slight population increase of five between 1990 and 2000 in contrast with the rest of the region's number drop.

Hamlet has seen a small increase since the 2000 Census, with the town's current population tagged at 57, up from 54 in 2000.

Imperial also saw a population increase over the past decade, with 2010 Census data showing Imperial's population at 2,071, up from 1,982 in 2000.

Chase County's unincorporated communities were tabulated at 103 in Champion and 42 in

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Enders, according to 2010 Census data.

Lamar, which is incorporated, saw its population rise to 23 in 2010, up from 19 in 2000.

Nebraska's eastward shift

According to 2010 Census data for Nebraska there are more people living in the state now than in 2000 when the last official census was completed. Nebraska's population now stands at 1.8 million according to the once-a-decade nation head count, up 115,078 from 2000.

That growth, however, was not experienced proportionately across the state. Instead, only 24 of the state's 93 counties gained population during the decade, and most of those counties are east of U.S. Highway 81 which runs north through York, Columbus and Norfolk to Yankton, S.D.

According to 2010 Census data made available at www.census.gov, more than half of all Nebraskans now live in three eastern counties — Lancaster, Sarpy or Douglas counties.

That population shift came at the "per-body" expense of western Nebraska counties like Chase, Dundy, Hayes and Hitchcock.

During the past 10 years, Chase County's population dropped from 4,068 in 2000 to 3,966 in 2010. This marks the first time in 100 years that Chase County's official head count has come in under 4,000. The last time that happened was with the 1910 census when Chase County numbered 3,613.

This county is certainly not alone in its population slide in the southwest corner of the state.

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Dundy County's population dropped from 2,292 in 2000 to 2,008 in 2010.

Furnas County saw a decline from 5,324 in 2000 to 4,959 in 2010.

Hayes County declined from 1,068 in 2000 to 967 in 2010, marking the first time the county's population has come in under 1,000 since 1880.

Hitchcock County dropped through the 3,000-mark for the first time in 130 years as well, with the county's population dropping from 3,111 in 2000 to 2,908 in 2010.

Perkins County's population also dipped below 3,000 for the first time in decades, coming in at 2,970 in the 2010 Census, compared to 3,200 in 2000. The last time Perkins County had less than 3,000 people was 1910 when the county numbered 2,570.

Even some of the more populous counties in the area experienced population declines: Red Willow County fell from 11,450 in 2000 to 11,055 in 2010 and Keith County fell from 8,875 in 2000 to 8,368 in 2010.

Lincoln County proved to be the exception in southwest Nebraska, growing from 34,632 souls in 2000 to 36,288 in 2010.