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Capital improvement bill funds ports

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The Chillicothe, Mo., women's prison isn't the only perk this year's capital improvements bill has for Northwest Missouri. An amendment to the bill in committee this week added \$500,000 for improvements to the state's seven publicly owned ports, including the one in St. Joseph.

That would mean a total of \$1.5 million for ports in fiscal year 2007. For St. Joseph, it would mean continued funding for a new access road and parking area for the Missouri River port.

The project was funded by a \$970,000 federal earmark and \$250,000 in state money. The state put half of its share in this year. Had the additional money not been put in for 2007, the other \$125,000 might not have materialized.

The \$160 million capital improvements bill still needs approval from the House and Senate before the May 5 deadline.

Putting a hand behind handfishing

Handfishing could become fully legal in Missouri, thanks to a positive vote in the Senate — and a weekend visit by one enthusiast to Senate Floor Leader Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph.

Gary Webb of Ludlow, Mo., has sought for years to legalize the controversial sport, in which fishers grab the fish from the water with their bare hands. A limited, experimental season was offered last summer.

Mr. Webb contacted Mr. Shields to urge him to give the bill floor time. But rather than place a phone call or stop by the senator's Jefferson City office, Mr. Webb showed up on the doorstep of Mr. Shields' home south of St. Joseph on a recent Sunday evening.

Mr. Shields was a bit taken aback, but sure enough, the bill was brought up for debate Tuesday. A second vote of 23 to 6 was taken Thursday, sending the measure to the House. Mr. Shields, however, voted against it.

Clarksdale woman appointed

The Senate on Thursday confirmed Dixie J. Crider of Clarksdale, Mo., as a member of the Missouri Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities. The council advises the state on providing services to people with such disabilities.

Legislators on Easter break

The Missouri Legislature is on break today in observance of the Easter holiday and will resume its work Tuesday afternoon. It's the last break legislators will get before the session ends May 12.

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