

Bounty of bins

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 14 July 2011 18:04 -



New storage at Farnam's All Points elevator nearly finished.

Randy Edson claims he still has his sanity after eight months of construction at the All Points Cooperative elevator in Farnam.

Three shiny bins, with the capacity to hold 1.17 million bushels of corn, now sparkle in the sun at the bottom of a hill in this agricultural town of 235 residents.

Edson, who's the elevator manager, is hopeful that the \$4.5 million project will reduce the number of times employees have to fill and empty the bins.

"If you fill the elevator and empty it twice, you've had a good year," he said.

Last year, Edson said employees filled and took grain six times from the elevator's concrete bins and three steel ones.

Before the new bins, capacity was about 800,000 bushels, Edson said, noting that the elevator took in about 5 million bushels on average over the last few years.

"We're gaining customers each year," he said.

The elevator buys corn, beans, wheat, milo and oats from an estimated 350 farmers within about a 30-mile radius.

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Construction began in September of 2010 with land leveling followed by what Edson described as the punching of 245, 40-foot deep holes for pilings in each bin.

Both Edson and Preventive Maintenance Inc. (PMI) field superintendent Michael Beaty said weather has been the biggest challenge.

PMI is the general contractor.

For example, Beaty said frigid and snowy days last winter and spring delayed the pouring of concrete pads for the bins.

Rain and wind have also been factors, they said.

Last Thursday, Edson said the project is basically finished—including new bins, drags, legs, a dump pit, conveyor and a retrieval system for extracting grain.

Electrical work is left that includes the installation of a computer system to switch grain from bins.

“We’ve done everything by hand,” Edson said.

Once completed, corn will be stored in the new steel bins.

The last construction occurred six years ago when the elevator moved two steel bins and a leg from Brady on site and created a dump pit.

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Prior to that, he said two new drags to pull grain from the dump pit were installed.

In retrospect, Edson said the current project has been the most difficult.

“I know it’s necessary but man has it been a challenge,” he said.