

August rains rinsing away water crisis

By **TOBY MOORE**
Staff Writer

Despite recent rains that have helped alleviate water shortages, North Carolina's drought is still lingering, according to National Weather Service officials.

"The August rains have alleviated a great deal of the problems," said Don Clontz of the National Weather

Service in Charlotte. But, he added that the area is still 14.5 inches below normal for this time of the year.

Clontz said the drought, which began in the spring and was aggravated by what he called "the driest June ever," is being eased by an August rainfall that has been well above normal.

Charlotte received only 0.41

inches of rain in June after a May in which only 2 inches of rain fell.

"We've had 8.6 inches of rain so far this month, compared to a normal rainfall of 4.19 inches," said Bob Drummond of the Greensboro weather office.

He noted that July and August are traditionally North Carolina's wettest months, with September and

October being much drier.

"We need four or five more inches to bring this area's precipitation back to normal," Drummond said.

The mountains have been hardest hit by the drought, with some areas still 20 inches below normal. The northern Piedmont is still 11.48 inches below normal for this time in the year.

Consumer group calls for nuclear plant closures

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — The only way to protect the American public from atomic power risks is to shut down all U.S. nuclear plants, a Ralph Nader-affiliated organization asserted Thursday.

"The message from the operating experience of U.S. reactors in 1984 and 1985 is clear: the plants are unsafe and their safety record continues to worsen," the Critical Mass Energy Project said in its 1984-85 Nuclear Power Safety Report, which said it was dedicated to the victims of the nuclear accident in Chernobyl in the Soviet Union.

"The likelihood and consequences of an accident, so dramatically demonstrated at the Chernobyl disaster, strongly argue for rapidly phasing out the nation's nuclear power program," said the report written by Joshua Gordon.

Critical mass is the amount of

energy required to sustain a nuclear chain reaction. The Critical Mass Energy Project was founded by Nader 12 years ago.

Based on data from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and other sources, the group contends 1985 was the worst year for U.S. nuclear safety. Among its findings, some of them released in May after the Chernobyl accident, were these:

- Ten serious accidents — "abnormal occurrences" ranging from high radiation exposures and loss of radioactive material to management problems affecting safety — happened in 1985.

- 2,977 plant mishaps — "licensee events" ranging from minor to significant breakdowns in plant systems or procedures — were reported to the NRC in 1983, a 23 percent increase over 1984.

- There were 764 emergency

shutowns at U.S. plants in 1985, a 28 percent rise over 1984.

- Nine plants accounting for 12 percent of the U.S. nuclear power generating capacity were indefinitely closed in 1985.

Nuclear

government when it builds a national repository, probably by 1990, Shearin said.

Future plans for the power plant do not hold much change or expansion, Paster said.

Although the Shearon Harris plant was originally designed to accommodate four reactors, only the existing reactor will serve the facility.

Locations for the other three units on the construction site remain conspicuously empty. Back-up diesel generators have been built for the second absent reactor to operate in case of a power failure.

"Because of current regulations and the regulatory climate, we have no plans to expand. Regulations now are phenomenal," Paster said.

He added that further construction on the \$3.4 billion plant would be very expensive.

Shearin said the use of nuclear power as an alternate to coal will save money. "It will pay for itself. Nuclear power is expensive . . . but has already saved hundreds of millions of dollars because the cost of coal is very high," he said.

He acknowledged that there are many more hazards to operating a nuclear power plant than a coal plant, but he said that he thought employee safety training and equipment would compensate for that.

The plant's negative reactivity is an example of one safety precaution because it causes the plant to

Don Winston, a spokesman for the Atomic Industrial Forum, said he did not know how Critical Mass could say the nuclear safety was at an all-time low in terms of safety last year.

from page 1

automatically shut down if something is amiss, Shearin said. He compared this to the Chernobyl plant's positive reactivity, which causes the facilities to steam up after a mistake.

But people living in the surrounding area feel threatened by the nuclear power plant.

Paster said that he and Shearin try to inform these people about the plant and its operations.

"The more informed they are and the more they can understand the operation, the more comfortable they are with it," he said.

Working as a field surveyor and talking to these families, Paster said he tells them he lives in the area also.

"It seems to ease them when they know we're not sponges — we live here too. I tell them we have families and homes and dogs just like they do," Paster said.

But the people receiving CP&L power will also feel the financial impact of the emerging emphasis upon nuclear power plants. The base rate people pay for their power will increase.

"Utilities are in the business to borrow money to build power plants that will generate electricity . . . (for) demands," he said.

CP&L has no other plans to construct more nuclear reactors, so the rate increase will eventually level off, Shearin said. But that could take ten years, he said.

Police brutality protested by South African students

From Associated Press reports

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Rock-throwing students clashed with police Thursday at the University of Witwatersrand after a meeting called to protest violence in the black township of Soweto in which at least 21 people were killed and 98 injured.

Students called their meeting to protest riots in Soweto on Tuesday night and Wednesday in which the government said 20 blacks were shot by security forces. The students began throwing stones at cars and a police film crew, witnesses said, and police responded with tear gas.

N.C. radium not a threat

RALEIGH — State and federal officials say excessive radium levels recorded in North Carolina drinking water don't pose an immediate health hazard, but may slightly raise the risk of some cancer if the water is drunk for an entire lifetime.

The Environmental Protection Agency is trying to force 28 small North Carolina water systems to meet federal standards for radium, a product of the radioactive decay of uranium. The well-based systems have been found to exceed the conservative federal

State & National

standards for radium.

Officials aren't sure how the radium is getting into the water systems, but some experts suspect the problem is rock layers penetrated by deep wells. Some commonplace materials, such as granite, sometimes have elevated amounts of radium.

In search of Noah's Ark

ERZURUM, Turkey — Former U.S. astronaut James Irwin arrived here to climb Mount Ararat in his continuing quest to find Noah's Ark, the independent Hurriyet news agency reported.

Kutlu Aktas, governor of the Agri province where Mount Ararat is found, said Irwin had obtained permission from the Turkish Interior Ministry for his team to explore the 17,000-foot mountain in eastern Turkey.

The Bible's Book of Genesis says Noah's Ark washed up near Mount Ararat.

"We think the time is ripe to remind people on earth that we have a fragile existence," Irwin told reporters Tuesday. "God might have preserved the Ark all these years to remind us (of) that."

Cocaine victims to speak

By **NANCY HARRINGTON**
Staff Writer

Charlotte Hunter wants to talk about something that took less than 30 seconds to become addicted to and more than three years to recover from.

She wants to talk about something that made her lie, cheat and steal from those who knew and trusted her.

She wants to talk about cocaine, and, as one of the 13 guest speakers at the Cocaine Connection Conference to be held Sept. 11-13 in Chapel Hill, she'll get the chance. The conference will examine why cocaine, once the drug of the yuppie, has become prevalent in today's society, according to organizers.

Hunter wants to share her experiences with cocaine, in the hope of helping others.

"I never experienced anything so alluring and seductive," Hunter said of the "monster" that made her turn her back on every ethical system she had valued since childhood. "Cocaine made me feel inside the way I had always wanted to feel on the outside."

Cocaine addiction recoveries such as Hunter's, however, are only one topic of the three-day conference sponsored by UNC's Student Health Service, CHAPS Health Services, and the Justice Foundation of North Carolina. The conference includes a registration fee of \$50.

Other topics include cocaine's effect on young people, drugs in sports, and the influence of heroes, especially sports personalities, on

society.

The aim of the conference is to unite educators, law enforcement officials, coaches and counselors and to raise the awareness level concerning cocaine, according to Sue Gray, one chairwoman of the conference and director of health education at the Student Health Service.

"We want to get across that cocaine (addiction) is a con and all the talk about 'it not happening to me' is a lie," she said. "It's important for people to know that what can happen to a Leonard Bias can happen to them."

According to Gray, planning for the conference, which is open to the public, had begun before University of Maryland basketball star Len Bias died from a cocaine overdose this summer. Drug use by stars like Bias often influences the decisions that young people make concerning drugs, she said.

That's one reason the conference will include discussion focusing on athletics, Gray said. Special guests include former UNC athletes Charlie "Choo-Choo" Justice, Brad Daugherty, Steve Hale, Sam Perkins, Michael Jordan, James Worthy and Al Wood.

Mercury Morris, a former Miami Dolphins running back who served three years in prison for cocaine use and possession, will give the keynote speech on Thursday.

More information concerning registration is available through Gray or DeVetta Holman at the Student Health Service.

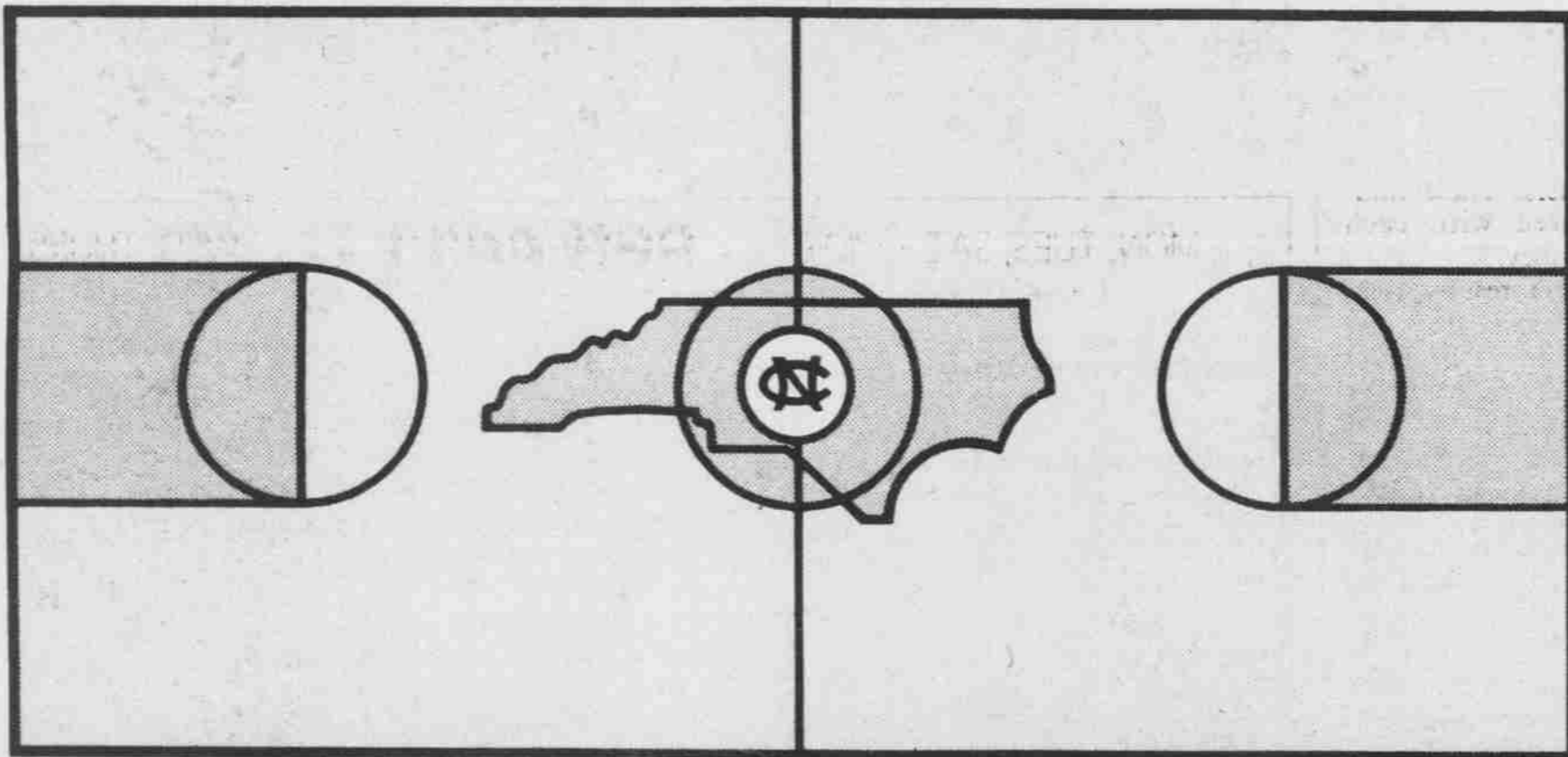
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