

# Baker City experiencing higher than normal temps

By Jayson Jacoby  
WesCom News Service

That 2018 was the warmest year on record in Baker City might not seem surprising to anyone who endured the August heatwave that incinerated a record that had lasted more than half a century.

But it turns out that typically chilly January played a bigger role than sizzling August.

The average temperature at the Baker City Airport during January 2018 was 9.4 degrees above average.

August, despite all-time record highs being set on consecutive days, was not quite 3 degrees warmer than average.

Both July and May were also hotter, relative to the long-term average, than August was — May's average temperature was 6.3 degrees above average, and July's was almost 4 degrees.

Ten of the 12 months in 2018 were warmer than average. February was cooler than average by about three-quarters of one degree, and September, in a statistical anomaly, was exactly average.

All told, tallying all the daily high and low temperatures during 2018 yields a yearly average temperature of 48.0 degrees.

That's 2.5 degrees above the long-term average at the airport, where detailed temperature records have been kept since 1944.

With its 48.0-degree average, 2018 eclipses the two previous record-setting years — 1992 and 1973 — each of which had an average annual temperature of 47.7 degrees.

But even though a cool stretch late in August demoted the month's average temperature down to sixth-hottest on record, it was that three-day stretch, Aug. 8-10, that most of us likely will remember.

Especially the latter two days. On Aug. 9 the thermometer at the airport recorded the astounding figure of 108 degrees. That broke, by 2 degrees, the record for the hottest temperature ever at the airport, a mark which had defied every previous heatwave since Aug. 4, 1961.

But that newly minted record lasted about as long as the solidity of a bar of chocolate would have on the airport runway tarmac on those torrid days.

On Aug. 10 the temperature crested at 109, meaning the previous day, having vanquished a record that persisted for 57 years, itself could manage to hold on for only a day.

The current record had better staying power, to be sure, as it remains at the top of the list. But whether it can retain its title for more than a half a century might be unlikely, based on a recent report about how climate change has affected Oregon, and how it might affect the state in the future.

The fourth Oregon Climate Assessment Report, which aggregates a series of peer-reviewed scientific studies from the past two years, projects, among other things, that Oregon's average temperature could rise by 4 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100.

Such a warming trend would pose a host of potential problems for the state, the authors concluded, prominent among them more severe and longer wildfire seasons,

shrinking snowpacks and the resulting loss of water for farms and ranches, and rising sea levels.

“Simply put, the state's biggest fire years occur when summers are unusually warm and dry,” said Philip Mote, an Oregon State University professor and former director of Oregon Climate Change Research Institute and a co-author of the report. “Since warm and dry summers are occurring more frequently, we can expect the fire danger to increase as well. At the same time, our hydrology is changing — starting with shrinking snowpack, which in many basins poses a dual threat of increasing flood risk in the winter and resulting in lower soil moisture and stream flows in the summer.”

The authors note that the possible effects of a warming climate aren't exclusively negative.

They also project that the growing season could extend as much as two additional months in the Willamette Valley, and about a month elsewhere, including Eastern Oregon.

Some of the potential ramifications could have mixed effects.

For instance, the climate report projects “extreme precipitation events” — much heavier than normal rainfall — will increase by about 20 percent in Eastern Oregon. That could help offset the reduction in winter snowpack, but it also could contribute to landslides.

In one sense Baker City lags behind Oregon as a whole in terms of record temperatures.

The warmest year statewide was 2015, when the average temperature, based on records from about 40 sites, was 50.4 degrees, breaking the previous record of 49.9 degrees set in 1934.

In Baker City 2015 ranks as the ninth-warmest year, with an average high of 47.1 degrees.

As for long-term temperature trends, the first 25 years of record-keeping at the Baker City Airport were cooler than the following two quarter-centuries.

The average temperature for the first 25-year period (1944-68) was 44.93 degrees.

The middle period — 1969-93 — was the warmest of the trio, with an average temperature of 45.80.

The past 25 years, 1994-2018, was slightly cooler — by a little more than one-tenth of a degree — with an average temperature of 45.64 degrees.

Of the 10 warmest years at the airport, two happened during the first quarter-century of record-keeping at the airport — 1958, which ranks eighth, and 1967, the ninth-warmest.

The eight other years in the top 10 are equally divided between the most recent 25-year period (starting in 1994) and the middle quarter-century.

By contrast, the 10 coldest years are more heavily weighted to the first two 25-year periods, with four of the 10 years in each period.

Just two of the 10 coldest years have happened in the previous quarter-century — 2008, which is the fourth-coldest, and 2013, which is the 10th-coldest.

## LGCC

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could be revised — or possibly even dissolved, due to the number of projects that fall through and problems with how the money is dispersed among them.

The URA also discussed streamlining the La Grande Business and Technology Park's application process to possibly gain more interest from businesses. The URA offers a monetary incentive to businesses who move there but the application process is extensive and often dissuades people from applying, according to URA Manager Robert Strope during the previous work session.

The URA discussed dividing the monetary incentives into separate groups that are offered to businesses who apply based on the following intended areas of investment: blighted buildings, the technology park or the traded sector.

The URA will meet for a work session Monday night to further discuss the Call for Projects program. No official decisions will be made during this meeting.

Also during Wednesday's city council



Spence

meeting, La Grande Parks and Recreation Director Stu Spence said damage done to the baseball fields at Pioneer Park earlier this winter is extensive.

“The fields will be playable but the damage is insane,” Spence told the council.

In December, La Grande resident Elizabeth Ford, 36, was cited with second-degree criminal mischief for damaging the athletic fields in Pioneer Park on two separate occasions.

The first incident occurred on Dec. 25, 2018, but Lt. Gary Bell of the La Grande Police Department said officers had no leads as to who caused the damage. On Dec. 30, just after midnight, a few officers saw Ford spinning donuts in a 1999 Chevrolet Suburban on the fields. During this second incident, the officers determined she was also responsible for the damage caused on the 25th.

La Grande resident Dustin Webb-Davies, 26, who was riding in the passenger seat of Ford's Suburban during the incidents, was also charged with two counts of criminal mischief and interfering with a peace officer.

The two individuals drove through six of the fields, causing major damage. Spence said crews have already started to repair the fields, but they will not be back to normal by the time baseball season begins.



Observer file photo

Participants in Walk for Warmth have raised more than \$103,000 since 2009 to help those in need to pay their heating bills.

## WALK

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loop, making stops at care centers in La Grande where they sing Christmas carols.

Bill Grigsby, an Eastern Oregon University sociology professor, who assists Walk for Warmth, said the contributions the Grande Ronde Road Runners make to Walk for Warmth each year are quite meaningful.

“They are a valuable fixture every year,” he said.

Another fixture is Ellen Krieger of Summerville who sews a quilt that is raffled off each year at Walk for Warmth. Krieger has been doing this for about seven years.

“She is a star (of Walk for Warmth),” Grigsby said.

The quilt Krieger made for this year's Walk for Warmth will be given away at a noon drawing. Raffle tickets are \$5, and only 200 will be sold. Tickets can be purchased at the Union County Senior Center Saturday morning.

The list of individuals who have also played an important role in advancing Walk for Warmth over the past decade includes Sherry Mendoza of Union and Rosemary Powers, a former EOU sociology professor who now lives outside the area. Mendoza and Powers helped found the fundraiser, and Grigsby

describes them as “superstars” of the local Walk for Warmth tradition.

Grigsby said funds raised by the event continue to make a major difference for many families.

“Over the years, the Walk for Warmth has helped hundreds of families simply trying to maintain a livable temperature in their homes,” he said.

He added that donations to Walk for Warmth can have a lasting effect on the lives of people who are at a critical crossroad.

“The stories of people helped over the years are compelling, but most follow a pattern: People who have fallen on hard times, had a bad break, and simply need a helping hand to turn things around. When that happens, difficult choices have to be made about which bills to pay, which family members will eat, who is in most need of a doctor's visit or prescription medication,” Grigsby said. “Donations to Walk for Warmth don't solve all of

these problems, but they do help people in dire need.”

Saturday's Walk for Warmth activities will again be based at the Union County Senior Center, 1504 N. Albany St., La Grande. Registration for the 10K begins at 10 a.m., with the race at 10:30. Runners for the 5K register at 10:30 a.m., followed by the race at 11. Walkers check in beginning at 10:30 a.m. for either a 1-, 2- or 3-mile walk. There is also an 11 a.m. group walk and the option of an indoor walk. A complimentary lunch for participants will be served from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., accompanied by a silent auction and live music.

## SB 501

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Observer: “However, it is fruitless to speculate on a response until one of these bills does indeed pass into law. Many bills in their final form bear little resemblance to their introduced form.”

If SB 501 or another bill passes that violates the Second Amendment, Eckstein said the Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance passed in November could come into play in Union County.

The Observer reported at the time of the election that some legal experts think the SAPO is unenforceable. Jim Westwood, senior counsel

at Stael Rives law firm in Portland, told The Observer in November that the SAPO can't undermine state law.

“I think the state has preempted this,” Westwood said. “I'm not sure the county sheriff or anybody else in a county would have the authority under Oregon law to declare anything contrary to Oregon law.”

But Eckstein vehemently disagrees.

“I believe our SAPO is constitutional and enforceable,” Eckstein said. “I believe that the SAPO would come into direct effect with a law like this. Because if 501 is unconstitutional then that triggers SAPO. So that problem presents

itself squarely.”

Wisdom, who was the chief petitioner of the SAPO in Union County, said he feels less worried about gun control bills in the Legislature because of the SAPO.

“I feel that SB (501) is going to be challenged because it's unconstitutional in the first place,” Wisdom said.

If a law the sheriff's office believes is unconstitutional does pass, Rasmussen said he won't enforce it.

“I as sheriff and all other law enforcement officers have sworn an oath to uphold the Constitution,” Rasmussen said. “We therefore have an obligation both legal and moral not to enforce any law deemed unconstitutional.”

## VETS

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“It's a lot easier for anybody to meet one of their community partners in a relaxed environment and get to know them instead of trying to make six or seven individual appointments,” he said. “(Veterans) can meet them all in an hour and then have a day of skiing.”

Whipple went on to express his gratefulness for Anthony Lakes Moun-

tain Resort, as it is completely funding the event, and for Peter Johnson, the resort's general manager.

“Peter Johnson has embraced this program from the start,” Whipple said. “He has such a fantastic staff that everybody has a smile on their face from the time they walk in to the time they leave.”

Johnson, in return, said the event is so successful because of the countless hours of work Whipple puts into the event, and he hopes to see the “big-

gest turnout yet” of veterans and their families this Monday.

“Anthony Lakes cannot express enough gratitude to all veterans as well as currently serving military personnel for all they have done for us and our country,” Johnson said. “Being able to provide a venue for veteran services all in one room as well as a free day of skiing, rentals, lessons and lunch to them and their families is the least we can do to show our appreciation.”



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