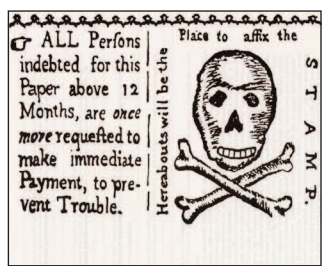


DAILY PLANNER

TODAY

Today is Friday, March 22, the 81st day of 2019. There are 284 days left in the year.



TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT

On March 22, 1765, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act to raise money from the American colonies, which fiercely resisted the tax. (The Stamp Act was repealed a year later.)

ON THIS DATE

In 1882, President Chester Alan Arthur signed a measure outlawing polygamy.

In 1894, hockey's first Stanley Cup championship game was played; home team Montreal defeated Ottawa, 3-1.

In 1933, during Prohibition, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure to make wine and beer containing up to 3.2 percent alcohol legal.

In 1941, the Grand Coulee hydroelectric dam in Washington state officially went into operation.

In 1963, The Beatles' debut album, "Please Please Me," was released in the United Kingdom by Parlophone.

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced that Gen. William C. Westmoreland, the commander of American forces in Vietnam, would leave that post to become the U.S. Army's new Chief of Staff. Students at the University of Nanterre in suburban Paris occupied the school's administration building in a prelude to massive protests in France that began the following May. The first Red Lobster restaurant opened in Lakeland, Florida.

In 1978, Karl Wallenda, the 73-year-old patriarch of "The Flying Wallendas" high-wire act, fell to his death while attempting to walk a cable strung between two hotel towers in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

In 1988, both houses of Congress overrode President Ronald Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act.

In 1991, high school instructor Pamela Smart, accused of recruiting her teenage lover and his friends to kill her husband, Gregory, was convicted in Exeter, New Hampshire, of murder-conspiracy and being an accomplice to murder and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

LOTTERY

Megabucks: \$9.7 million
5-6-11-44-46-48

Mega Millions: \$50 million
10-42-53-67-68-15-x3

Powerball: \$625 million
10-14-50-53-63-PB 21-x2

Win for Life: March 20
30-31-33-60

Pick 4:

- 1 p.m.: 0-2-9-5
- 4 p.m.: 5-9-9-5
- 7 p.m.: 3-7-2-4
- 10 p.m.: 2-4-0-6
- Pick 4:** March 20
- 1 p.m.: 2-3-1-7
- 4 p.m.: 4-6-0-5
- 7 p.m.: 5-9-1-4
- 10 p.m.: 4-4-3-6

ROAD REPORT

Numbers to call:
• Inside Oregon: 800-977-6368.
• Outside Oregon: 503-588-2941.

NEWSPAPER LATE?

Every effort is made to deliver your Observer in a timely manner. Occasionally conditions exist that make delivery more difficult.

If you are not on a motor route, delivery should be before 5:30 p.m. If you do not receive your paper please call 541-963-3161.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Better to be alone than with a bad companion."
— Spanish expression

Baker County commissioner part of new wildfire council

By Jayson Jacoby
WesCom News Service

Mark Bennett is pleased to serve on Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's new Wildfire Response Council. Although after the group's first meeting Monday, he feels a bit like a student who just aced calculus and then enrolls in remedial algebra.

Bennett, a Baker County commissioner and cattle rancher in the southern part of the county, said the effects of big blazes that prompted Brown to create the council by executive order in January are depressingly familiar to him and to other residents in Central and Eastern Oregon.

Valleys clogged with lung-irritating smoke.

Green forests transformed into swathes of black bark and ashy soil.

Rural residents forced to evacuate as flames threatened their homes and, potentially, their lives.

In just the past five years, wildfires have scarred more than 150,000 acres in Baker County. The 2015 fire season was the worst, statistically, with the Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire spreading across 104,000 acres south of Baker City. The lightning-sparked blaze was the biggest in county history.

But since then, major fires have burned much closer to Oregon's population centers west of the Cascades.

The Eagle Creek Fire, started in the Columbia Gorge by a teenager playing with fireworks in September 2017, burned about 49,000 acres and closed Interstate 84 for more than a week.

The fire also fouled Portland's air with ash and smoke.

The 2018 fire season was the most expensive in Oregon history, with firefighting costs exceeding \$533 million, according to the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center.

That surpassed the \$447 million tab for the 2017 season.

"All of a sudden people are realizing that this is all of our responsibilities," Bennett said Wednesday. "It's not just some areas in the state. There are a lot of westside folks who have not historically experienced the challenges we've had on the east side."

Brown has charged the council, which has 19 regular members and 20 ex-officio members (who represent other organizations such as the Oregon Legislature, including Rep. Lynn Findley, the Vale Republican whose district includes Baker County, the BLM and the Oregon Department of Forestry), with making recommendations about improving Oregon's wildfire management.

That will include firefighting as well as reducing the risk of blazes.

"Fire threatens communities, smoke compromises our health, and our local economy suffers," Brown said when announcing that she was creating the Wild-

fire Council. "We need to make sure we are doing everything we can, and that we are building support for the sustainable funding needed to change this pattern. I'm so pleased to bring many experts together to tackle this important issue that deeply affects Oregonians and our lands."

Bennett said the governor's goal of having the council report its findings by September is ambitious but plausible.

Bennett, who is the only county commissioner from east of the Cascades on the council, said he is especially interested in promoting more aggressive management of public land to curb the fire threat.

Public land makes up about 51 percent of Baker County's 2 million acres.

After the council's first meeting, Bennett said he's optimistic that members realize the scope of the problem, with vast areas of forests across the state, but especially east of the Cascades, being "phenomenally overstocked" with trees.

Experts say these dense forests are more susceptible to insects and disease.

Drought exacerbates the problem, Bennett said.

As a general rule, trees that emerge from a fire with their crowns unburned have a good chance to survive.

But Bennett, who frequently drives through the heart of the Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire while traveling from his ranch near Unity to Baker City for county meetings and other business, said he has noticed that many trees with intact crowns have died since the fire burned through in August 2015.

He attributes this to drought.

Bennett acknowledges the Wildfire Council has no authority to dictate how federal agencies manage the public land where wildfires, especially east of the Cascades, are most common. But he hopes the council's report will at least encourage those agencies to strive to accelerate the pace of forest management, which Bennett describes as "glacial."

He cites as an example the Rail Fire, which burned 42,000 acres, mostly in Baker County, in 2016.

The Forest Service had been planning to thin overcrowded, bark beetle-infested forests in that area. But the fire started before the work crews arrived.

"It's a tragedy that all that beautiful ground was burned," Bennett said.

Although the past few

years have shown residents across Oregon that smoke, evacuations and blocked highways are no longer problems confined to the sparsely populated lands east of the Cascades, Bennett believes another threat — to drinking water supplies — has also helped to spur interest in taking action at the state level.

During the Council's initial meeting Monday, members discussed the vulnerabilities to fire of two major water supplies — Portland's Bull Run, the source of water for almost 1 million people, and Ashland's watershed.

This, too, qualifies as old news for Baker County. Baker City officials have been worried for decades about the possibility of a major fire in the city's 10,000-acre watershed in the Elkhorn Mountains. Such a blaze could force the city to find a temporary replacement source, and to build a multimillion-dollar filtration plant.

Whether or not the Wildfire Council's work yields tangible, and timely, benefits in Oregon, Bennett said he's gratified that officials across the state recognize the validity of the concerns that people in Central and Eastern Oregon have been expressing for many years.

"We have this phenomenal risk, and we've been educating the main population base in this state that this is important," Bennett said. "I believe there's momentum here, an opportunity to push this forward, to move from complacency to action." ■

Haines public works director issues claims against mayor

By Casey Crowley
WesCom News Service

The public works director for Haines claims in a letter sent to city councilors that the mayor ordered him to send falsified sewer system records to a state agency and to drive vehicles he wasn't licensed to operate.

Brandon Fry, who is the city's only public works employee, has worked for Haines since January 2017.

Fry contends that Mayor Jim Brown, who was re-elected in November 2018 as the only candidate on the ballot, told him to send sewer discharge statistics to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality that didn't represent actual recordings of the daily discharge volumes.

Fry said Brown told him to do that rather than work overtime on weekends and holidays to take the daily readings.

In a letter he sent to the Haines City Council on March 7, Fry also contends that when he was hired, city officials knew he didn't have a commercial driver's license, which is required to drive the city's dump truck and road grader.

He claims Brown told him to drive the vehicles even though he lacks the license.

Brown declined to comment on Fry's letter.

Fry had planned to discuss his allegations during the City Council's March 12 meeting, and several people attended the meeting

for the same reasons.

But Brown announced at the start of the meeting that Fry's allegations would not be discussed during the open meeting, but would instead be addressed during a later executive session, which is closed to the public.

City councils can't make any decisions during executive sessions.

On Aug. 30, 2017, the DEQ sent a letter to Brown to notify him that Haines had failed to record sewer flow data on some weekends and holidays.

Fry said Brown later told him to submit monthly reports to DEQ that included readings from weekends and other days on which Fry didn't actually take measurements.

"I was instructed by the mayor to 'fudge the numbers' and make our monthly (reports) appear as if these readings have occurred," Fry wrote in his letter to city councilors. "It has come to my attention this practice is illegal with the state of Oregon and morally wrong in the interest of saving the City money."

Fry wrote after he brought his concerns to Brown, with whom he said he previously had a "great" relationship "including good open communication," that relationship "has grown hostile and my words or opinions are not being heard. I have grown fearful of termination because of these illegal or ethically wrong practices..." ■

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