

# Drought stays at bay in 2019

**By Jayson Jacoby**  
Baker City Herald

Marcy Osborn could hardly have had a better year to make her debut as Baker County watermaster.

No drought to deal with. Which is pretty significant for a person whose duty is spelled out right in the job title.

“It was a pretty easy year,” said Osborn, 41, who was born and raised in Baker City and graduated from Baker High School in 1996.

“It made it nice for me as a transition into this position.”

Although the job title is new, its responsibilities are quite familiar for Osborn.

She’s worked for the Oregon Water Resources Department for 13 years, including the past nine as an assistant watermaster in Baker County.

“Most people that I work with already knew me, so I didn’t have that meet-and-greet part to worry about,” Osborn said.



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald

The supply of irrigation water was generally abundant in Baker County and the rest of Northeastern Oregon this summer.

She took over for Rick Lusk, who retired, around mid-June.

Osborn said she was gratified that she received letters of recom-

mendation from several irrigators who endorsed her application for the promotion to watermaster.

“It was helpful to know I had

that support,” she said.

Although the distribution of irrigation water in Oregon is governed by the relatively straightforward le-

gal doctrine of prior appropriation, its application can be troublesome.

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Alfalfa and other crops generally had sufficient irrigation water this summer.



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Cliff Curtis distills fragrant oil from the lavender plants on his Baker Valley farm



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Farming technology has changed dramatically over the past century, but one constant in the Grande Ronde Valley is the Wilfred Hamann Farm



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Patrick Thiel of Wallowa County talks about the challenges of organic farming