



## From Union County to D.C.?

■ Elgin resident Jeff Smith announces run for U.S. Congress

By Dick Mason  
The Observer

ELGIN — Jeff Smith, an Elgin computer programmer running for Congress, believes his campaign is moving in the right direction. “The response I am receiving is very good. I am very encouraged,” Smith said Sunday.

Smith is running for the Republican nomination for the 2nd Congressional District, which covers Eastern, Central and a portion of Southern Oregon. The candidate, who has lived in Elgin almost all his life, is a graduate of Elgin High School and has a degree in manufacturing, engineering and technology from the Oregon Institute of Technology.

Smith, who grew up on a cattle ranch outside Elgin, said in Congress he would be a strong advocate for the natural resource industries, including timber and agriculture.

Oregon’s timber industry is a particular concern. Smith said timber companies decades ago could harvest about 4 billion board feet of wood from the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla national forests, but today the limit is 50-60 million board feet annually on these same lands. This has led to mill closures in Union and Wallowa counties and throughout the state. He said in the 1980s Union and Wallowa counties had 10 mills but today three remain, all in Union County.

He attributed much of the decline in timber harvests and the mill closures to the listing of the northern spotted owl in 1990 as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The listing meant cutting back on timber harvest on federal land to protect

See **Smith** / Page 5A



Smith

### Union County

# SNOW, COLDER TEMPS MOVING IN



Staff photo by Phil Wright

Clouds move in Sunday over the mountains surrounding La Grande. The National Weather Service office in Pendleton issued a winter weather statement Sunday that covers the Blue Mountains, Wallowa Mountains and the Cascades.

By Phil Wright, The Observer

*LA GRANDE — Snowfall early this week in Eastern Oregon’s mountain ranges could total 4-12 inches.*

The National Weather Service office in Pendleton issued a “special weather statement” Sunday afternoon reporting “multiple rounds of snow” will blanket the Blue and Wallowa mountains in Eastern Oregon as well as the Cascade Mountains to the west. Meteorologist Rob Brooks said a wave-like system is moving across the area and will deliver a mix of rain and snow.

The Weather Service warned the winter weather will affect driving along Highway 204 and Interstate 84 in the Blues. Those traveling through Washington, however, could face greater difficulty. The Weather Service estimated the Cascades in Washington could receive 8-18 inches of snow.

The snow level Sunday was in the 1,500-2,500 foot range, but that’s rising Monday night to around 3,500-5,000. While the snow level rises, Brooks said be ready for temperatures to turn down.

“We are going to get colder,” he said.

High temperatures will decrease from the lower 40s to around the mid 30s heading into Thursday, and nighttime lows will drop from around 39 Monday night to 26 Thursday. Looking into next week, Brooks said, temperatures should be below normal while precipitation will be a tick above. The area since October has been overall warmer and drier than usual.

October’s average temperature in 2019 was about 29 degrees, he said, which was below normal, and November’s average of about 26 also was slightly below normal. But December’s temperature averaged almost 27 and was warmer than usual. That trend has continued into

the early part of January, which is averaging about 30.5 degrees.

“The first five days of January have just been under 10 degrees warmer than the average,” he said.

Precipitation for the water year starting in October has been below normal, Brooks said, and a long way from any record snowfall.

La Grande’s climate data goes back to 1965, according to Brooks, and the books show December snow can get deep, with 19.5 inches in 1997 and 29.5 inches in that first year of tracking data. That remains the record for the month.

He said 13 inches of snow fell in the first five days of January 1975. But the local climate data also has gaps.

The National Weather Service relies on locals to provide crucial information about what is happening in a given place. The Weather Service’s station near the Bi-Mart in La Grande has gone through its share of volunteers over recent years, he said, so some information is spotty.

He also said the Weather Service in Pendleton provides online tools with the most recent weather data available. Go to [www.weather.gov/pdt/](http://www.weather.gov/pdt/) and click on the “Forecast Weather Tables” icon on the lower right side of the page. From there, type in a location in the search box and that will bring up a ream of data you can fine-tune with intervals down to an hour for the span of one to seven days.

Brooks said he finds that a useful tool when planning an outing with his family.

## Officials reflect on 2019 goals

■ Leaders look back on the just completed year

By Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The Observer in January 2019 spoke with local government officials about their goals for the coming year. We re-visited with some of those officials during the first week of 2020 to find out if they met their goals.

### Imbler

Imbler Mayor Mike McLean at the start of 2019 wanted the city to consolidate its animal control ordinances. Because the city was separated into two areas, each with their own ordinances, consistency about the rules was lacking and causing confusion.

One area, the Westenskow addition, which was annexed at least four decades ago, had an ordinance limiting the number of livestock, while the rest of the city had no limit. To achieve the goal of establishing a single ordinance, the city had a vote of the people to first dissolve the two individual rules. But the city has yet to establish one zoning ordinance so the animal control law can cover all of Imbler.

McLean said the reason the goal wasn’t completely met is because things can take a bit longer to do in Imbler. He said because the city council doesn’t meet as often it will take more time to get things passed, but he is committed to getting things done.

“We have to get it done. We don’t move real fast,” McLean said. “We try to get everything done one step at a time, without rushing anything through.”

### La Grande

La Grande Mayor Steve Clements in 2019 said he hoped the city would conduct a study to establish the town’s biggest needs for housing.

City Manager Robert  
See **Goals** / Page 5A

# Union County welcomes first baby of 2020

■ Wyatt Haycock born Jan. 2 to Jaime Thiess and Cody Haycock

By Sabrina Thompson  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande welcomed its newest resident Thursday at 2:54 a.m.

Wyatt Haycock, born to Jaime Thiess and Cody Haycock, was the first baby born at Grande Ronde

Hospital’s birthing center in 2020. Parents Jaime and Cody are happy to have their baby boy finally in their arms.

“He was supposed to be born the 27th,” Jaime said while holding her new baby at the hospital. “They had to induce me, which was insane and terrifying but worth it.”

Jaime was admitted to the hospital Dec. 31 to be induced. After nearly 18 hours of labor, doctors

See **Baby** / Page 5A



Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson

Jaime Thiess spends some quality time Saturday with her newborn son, Wyatt Haycock, while his dad, Cody Haycock, naps beside them at Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande. Wyatt was the hospital’s first baby of the new decade, coming into the world early Jan. 2.

### INDEX

Classified .....4B Home .....1B Opinion.....4A  
Comics.....7B Horoscope.....5B Sports .....6A  
Crossword.....5B Lottery.....2A Sudoku .....7B  
Dear Abby .....8B Obituaries.....3A Weather .....8B

### WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

**Tonight**  
37° LOW  
A snow shower

**Tuesday**  
41/34  
P.M. snow showers

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### HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Call The Observer newsroom at 541-963-3161 or send an email to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com). More contact info on Page 4A.

WEDNESDAY CHAINING UP SCHOOL BUSES

Online at [lagrandeobserver.com](http://lagrandeobserver.com)



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