

## RECREATION REPORT

### Grant pays to repair road to North Powder Pond

A \$4,250 grant from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Restoration and Enhancement program will pay to repair the road leading to the North Powder Pond this month.

Vehicle access won't be open to the Pond, about a mile southwest of North Powder just west of Highway 30, during repairs, which are scheduled to continue through March 30.

Due to irrigation water that collects along the access road, a fairly deep depression has developed in the road that fills with water making access difficult in the spring to all but high-clearance vehicles.

The grant money will allow ODFW crews to repair the depression by rebuilding the road prism with various sizes of rock material.

Anglers wishing to get out and do some early spring fishing should visit other ponds in the area including Highway 203 Pond, just east of Interstate 84 at Exit 298, six miles north of Baker City, and Haines Pond, along Highway 30 just north of Haines.

Aside from weather-related delays, the road work should be completed in time for the stocking of rainbow trout in the North Powder Pond by mid-April.

### Repair work starts on Forest Service Road 47 in Tucannon Watershed

PENDLETON — Contractors have begun work on Forest Service Road 47 in the Tucannon watershed, which will continue over the next several weeks following the widespread damage caused by flooding on Feb. 6, the Umatilla National Forest announced.

The planned work includes debris slide removal, temporary repair of damaged pavement, and restoration of drainage features. The main objective of this work is to provide safe administrative access for land management agencies to continue to develop repair plans. However, once the work is completed, Forest staff will determine if it is safe to allow public access on specific sections of the road. The Forest will notify the public of the evaluation results upon completion.

### Hunter education classes canceled

All hunter education classes/field days, skills workshops, volunteer trainings, Family Fishing events and other volunteer-led activities are canceled until at least April 13, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has announced. All state-owned hatcheries are closed to the public. Trout stocking will continue for now.

## Getting outdoors during the coronavirus crisis

# Sure cures for cabin fever

By Mavis Hartz  
For the Observer

The coronavirus, or COVID-19, is the constant topic of conversation for the last few weeks and will continue to be for an unknown time.

Like many, I am left with a feeling of being all dressed up with nowhere to go as the country tries to devise a plan to slow and treat the predicted onslaught of infirmed individuals. The most recent round of directives call for social distancing and the halt of all social and sporting events. Public places like pubs, libraries and schools are closed.

As our everyday lives are shifted to reflect these changes it is important to remember that taking care of your mental and physical health, as well as the people around you, should reign supreme.

To that end, social distancing is not the same as quarantine or isolation. It means trying to limit the number of humans, outside of those you are living with, to swap germs with. Social engagements and the everyday rat race has been slowed to a crawl. This means more time for home projects, hobbies, game nights and life sports to rule. Fortunately, the number of life sport adventures available in Eastern Oregon that leave at least a six-foot buffer between individuals is indefinite.

The local and distant ski hills have closed for the health of all but the snow is still there. This is the perfect year to explore a little backcountry Nordic or Randonnée in the Elkhorn, Wallowa or Blue Mountains. Those wishing for a groomed surface should like the Facebooks of the Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort and the Blue Mountain Nordic Club as both have expressed the plan to



Photo courtesy of Mavis Hartz

Mavis Hartz gets in some miles on her mountain bike in the Blue Mountains in a previous year.



Photo by Mavis Hartz

Trails in the Mount Emily Recreation Area near La Grande.

continue posting updates and grooming Nordic trails as long as weather and well-

ness permit. If more adventure is called for, I personally

think Eastern Oregon is overdue for an Olympic duathlon team that sweeps the world of Nordic skiing and target practicing.

Mount Emily Recreation Area, PATRA, and Sno Road of Union County, Pendleton and Echo respectively all have trails that are ready for mountain biking, running and hiking. If you are looking to explore new trails, I suggest the free downloadable app Trailforks. For those wishing to battle it out in cyberspace, the app Strava has local routes with king of the mountain times to be beaten.

The weather is still temperamental with spring and the trails always change with moisture. Remember, if the trail sticks to your shoes, tires or hooves, take a different route or come back another day to preserve the trail for later rides.

Gravel and road biking are also calling. Look to places like Ride with GPS, also a downloadable app, for suggested rides and

classic routes. This time of year, the gravel surfaces have been polished by the wind, rain and snow to a smooth, glassy perfection that will be lost later in the year as dust and washboard emerge as the water content abates.

This year of the coronavirus may be the reboot road riding has been waiting for. With the number of commuters and errand runners significantly down, it might be the perfect time to ride that busier road that is beautiful but a bit scary due to traffic.

However you choose to make lemonade out of lemons, stay safe and strive to be the healthiest possible version of yourself. Eat right, sleep eight hours a night and get out in the fresh air and work your body.

With any luck this pandemic will result in an explosion of art, technology, scientific theories, close families, tidy homes, honed bodies and the occasional treasured baby.

## Choose from town and country paths in Baker County

By Jayson Jacoby  
Baker City Herald

I don't consider myself a heavy breather, but until recently I didn't think it necessary to try to suppress all evidence that I'm exhaling.

Which is not particularly easy to pull off, at least when you're alive.

And harder still when you're exercising at a moderate level.

Such is life in the era of coronavirus, when thoughtful people, at least when they're out in public, have to consider such issues as droplet spread that they were heretofore able to comfortably ignore.

I have walked sections of Baker City's Leo Adler Memorial Parkway many dozens of times but it hadn't occurred to me before this week that in most places you can see what's ahead for at least a few hundred feet.

More to the point you can see who's ahead, should you be sharing that section of the paved path with another pedestrian or cyclist. This is enough space to allow even less than nimble walkers — me, for instance — ample time to prepare for the social distancing do-si-do that I suspect will rapidly become a social custom as common as a man doffing his fedora to a lady once was.

The Adler Parkway, which follows the Powder River for about 2 miles

through Baker City, needed no other attributes to earn my endorsement, but in these troubled times I have decided to accept with gratitude even the smallest of favors.

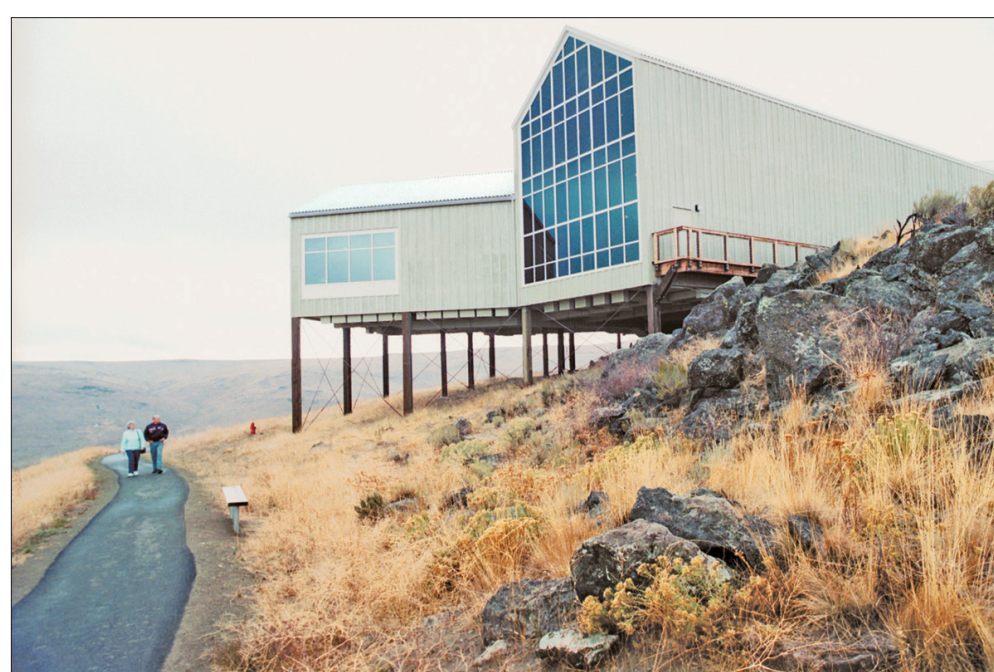
Nor is the Parkway the only convenient option for people who, even as they try to help limit the spread of the virus, feel compelled to get out in the clean spring air and make a few miles.

Two public sites within a 10-minute drive of Baker City are well-suited for hiking this time of year.

The Bureau of Land Management oversees both the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, just north of Highway 86 about 5 miles east of Baker City, and the Virtue Flat Off-Highway Vehicle Area south of Highway 86 and a couple miles east of the Interpretive Center.

The Interpretive Center sits atop Flagstaff Hill, above the route of the Oregon Trail. Below the Center the BLM maintains about 4 miles of trails — about 1 mile paved and the rest gravel and dirt.

Although the Center itself is closed, hikers can access the trails by parking at a pullout on the north side of Highway 86 near Milepost 7. There is an "Oregon History" sign here, and a trail leads north to the Oregon Trail ruts, then northwest to connect with the Interpretive Center



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald file photo

About 4 miles of trails, some paved, wind along Flagstaff Hill below the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center near Baker City.

trails. The parking area is just west of a "Keep Oregon Green: Prevent Wildfires" sign beside the highway.

The main paved trail descends from the Center to the Oregon Trail itself. A short spur leads to Panorama Point's view of the Baker Valley and the snow-decked Elkhorn Mountains dominating the western skyline.

Hikers can follow two short (0.4 of a mile) loops, one of which parallels the Oregon Trail, and return to the Center either on the paved trail or the unpaved, rocky and aptly named Ascent Trail.

The terrain at Virtue Flat, despite its name, is similar to Flagstaff Hill. So is the flora — sagebrush and grass, with only a handful of isolated juniper trees.

But the hiking is quite different.

As you probably deduced from the name — Off-Highway Vehicle Area — there's not so much as a square foot of asphalt at Virtue Flat.

But although the 5,000-acre area is popular among ATV riders, the trails are also open to hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders.

The routes, most of

which are marked by signs, range from relatively smooth two-track that most SUVs can negotiate, to paths that basically follow the boulder-choked bed of an ephemeral stream.

A small section of Virtue Flat — 250 acres — is closed to public entry until June 30 to protect natural resources. Maps, which are available at the main parking area along Ruckles Creek Road (the turnout is adjacent to the entrance road to the Interpretive Center) and at <https://www.blm.gov/visit/virtue-flat-ohv-area>, show the closure area.