

## DAILY PLANNER

### TODAY

Today is Saturday, Dec. 5, the 340th day of 2020. There are 26 days left in the year.

### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On Dec. 5, 2013, Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid leader who became South Africa's first Black president, died at age 95.

### ON THIS DATE:

In 1791, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died in Vienna, Austria, at age 35.

In 1792, George Washington was re-elected president; John Adams was re-elected vice president.

In 1848, President James K. Polk triggered the Gold Rush of '49 by confirming that gold had been discovered in California.

In 1933, national Prohibition came to an end as Utah became the 36th state to ratify the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, repealing the 18th Amendment.

In 1952, the Great Smog of London descended on the British capital; the unusually thick fog, which contained toxic pollutants, lasted five days and was blamed for thousands of deaths.

In 1977, Egypt broke diplomatic relations with Syria, Libya, Algeria, Iraq and South Yemen in the wake of criticism that followed President Anwar Sadat's peace overtures to Israel.

In 2002, Strom Thurmond, the oldest and longest-serving senator in history, celebrated his 100th birthday on Capitol Hill.

In 2008, the Labor Department reported that an alarming half-million jobs had vanished in Nov. 2008 as unemployment hit a 15-year high of 6.7%.

In 2018, former President George H.W. Bush was mourned at a memorial service at Washington National Cathedral attended by President Donald Trump and former Presidents Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter along with their spouses; former president George W. Bush was among the speakers, eulogizing his dad as "the brightest of a thousand points of light."

### LOTTERY

**Megabucks:** \$5.2 million  
5-28-29-32-42-45

**Mega Millions:** \$214 million  
7-33-53-61-65 — 14x2

**Powerball:** \$202 million  
28-31-40-41-46 — PB-4 x2

**Win for Life:** Dec. 2  
6-12-58-662

**Pick 4:** Dec. 3

• **1 p.m.:** 9-7-8-2; • **4 p.m.:** 4-7-6-5;

• **7 p.m.:** 5-7-6-6 • **10 p.m.:** 1-3-2-0

**Pick 4:** Dec. 2

• **1 p.m.:** 4-6-7-5 • **4 p.m.:** 1-5-6-4;

• **7 p.m.:** 1-7-3-6; • **10 p.m.:** 0-9-7-2

### DELIVERY ISSUES?

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# Northeastern Oregon's mountains show 100% snowpack

## Region should expect near normal precipitation, temperatures this month

By Katy Nesbitt

For the East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Early season storms have Northeast Oregon snow enthusiasts anticipating a snowy winter, and the extended forecast shouldn't disappoint.

Most of Oregon's mountains were well above 100% of average snowpack by mid-November, a drastic difference from many winters in the past decade when some ranges didn't reach 100% the entire year or at least until well into the spring.

"The snowpack in Eastern Oregon, as well as the rest of the state, looks pretty good right now," said Rob Brooks, a National Weather Service forecaster in Pendleton. "What we anticipate is a normal amount of precipitation for Pendleton."

The Emigrant Springs Snotel, an automated snow and precipitation measuring station near Emigrant Springs State Park south of Pendleton, had as of Dec. 3 measured 6.7 inches of

precipitation since the start of the water year Oct. 1, slightly below the average of 7.3 inches for that period.

The High Ridge Snotel, near Tollgate east of Pendleton, has recorded 12.2 inches of precipitation since Oct. 1, compared to the average of 10.8 inches. The water equivalent in the snowpack as of Dec. 3, was 4.9 inches, slightly above the average of 4.7 inches.

With vast differences in elevation across the region, Brooks said snowfall and weather patterns can also vary considerably. He said La Nina weather patterns from the Pacific that bring a lot of moisture, as is predicted for this winter, have an impact in Eastern Oregon, but most inland Northwest weather depends on the timing and speed of the systems and air temperature.

"Our weather patterns occur on micro scales," he said. "We have small areas where an inversion sets up — the basin can be 28 degrees with fog, while it can be sunny and 60



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Snow covers Highway 204 near Summit Road on Sunday, Nov. 29, 2020. Early season storms have Northeast Oregon's snowpack above 100%.

degrees in Meacham."

Precipitation for Pendleton and the basin averages 1.55 inches in December, 1.51 inches in January and 1.17 inches in February.

Winter temperatures and precipitation can vary.

"Last year, we packed up pretty good and then had floods caused by rain on top of the snowpack," Brooks said.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website, Northeast Oregon should expect normal to slightly below normal precipitation with near normal to slightly above normal temperatures for the rest of December.

When discussing what's "normal" winter weather, Brooks pulled

up some interesting data. It's not unusual to have a 70-degree day in Pendleton in late January or early February. Despite the welcome reprieve from winter's grip, sometimes these false spring days cause disaster. In 1996, a year of much flooding in Eastern Oregon, Brooks said it was minus 12 on Feb. 3 and 75 degrees on Feb. 8.

## Grant pays for firebreaks at MERA

By Dick Mason

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Union County will soon be much less vulnerable to a devastating wildfire thanks to almost \$200,000 in grants from the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The grants will help fund the creation of two major firebreaks in the Mount Emily Recreation Area. Work on the firebreaks, which may start late this month, should be completed by the end of 2021, said Union County Parks Coordinator Sean Chambers.

"They will put us in a much better position to defend ourselves from wildfires," said Paul Anderes, chair of the Union County Board of Commissioners.

Two firebreaks will be established, one along Forest Service Road 3120 and the other along MERA's 201 Mainline Trail. Both firebreaks, which will cover a combined total of 6 miles, will

run north-south.

The firebreaks will be created through a tree thinning process. Once completed, all trees in the firebreaks will be at least 25 feet apart. This will make it much less likely for a fire to spread from tree to tree, Anderes said.

"Open spaces will be created, which will make it much easier for us to defend fires," he said.

The commissioner explained if a wildfire is ignited, the breaks will provide firefighters a position to set up resources to stop the blaze. If a wildfire starts on the face of Mount Emily, firefighters will be able to position themselves at a break to stop it from racing into the Grande Ronde Valley.

"It will be a great stand for stopping fires," he said. "It will give them a tremendous advantage."

Forest debris such as fallen branches will be removed in the firebreaks.

"This will reduce the continuity of fuel," Anderes said.

The county board on Wednesday awarded one of the contracts for the work to Gary Wright Contracting Inc. of Union. The county board now is in the process of selecting a second contractor for the firebreak project.

Starting the work on creating the firebreaks in the winter will be ideal because the sites where a portion of the breaks will be are on rocky terrain, which can be hard on some equipment, such as blades.

The snow and ice that likely cover the rocks will buffer equipment from those rocks, Chambers said.

Chambers added the heavy equipment also would do less damage to frozen ground.

Anderes credited Chambers, Union County Emergency Manager J.B. Brock and Mike Burton of the Natural Resources Conservation Service with playing major roles in helping the county obtain the grants for the creation of the firebreaks.



La Grande Rural Fire Protection District/ Contributed Photo

Local firefighters on Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020, fight a blaze as it burns through a home on Foothill Road, La Grande.

## Blaze destroys home

The Observer

LA GRANDE — No people were hurt in a house fire late Wednesday morning, Dec. 2, on Foothill Road near the Interstate 84 interchange, La Grande.

But the fire destroyed the house and claimed the lives of three dogs, said Craig Kretschmer, chief of the La Grande Rural Fire Department.

The district and La Grande Fire Department a little after 11 a.m. Wednesday responded to the scene on a report of a fire threatening structures.

The house fire started when strong winds blew flames from a slash burn to several smaller shed-like structures and then to the one-story house, Kretschmer said. The slash burn was about 40 yards

from the house.

Nobody was in the house when the fire started.

The fire protection district on its Facebook page reported the fire spread to the nearby structures due to high and sustained winds, which "resulted in rapid fire spread, hampering the structural fire suppression efforts."

The North Powder Rural Fire Protection District, Imbler Rural Fire Department and Union Fire Department provided mutual aid, and the Union County Sheriff's Office and Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative assisted at the scene.

The La Grande Rural Fire Protection District also expressed its sympathy to the homeowners for their loss.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### DEQ extends air quality advisory for much of Eastern Oregon

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has extended an air quality advisory for much of Eastern Oregon.

The state agency on Monday, Dec. 1, issued an advisory due to stagnant air trapping smoke and other air pollutants near the ground where people breathe. That advisory was in effect until Saturday for most of Oregon.

The DEQ on Thursday extended the advisory through Tuesday for parts of the state east of the Cascades. It applies to the following counties: Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jefferson, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Wasco and Wheeler. The advisory also applies to northern Deschutes County and the Prineville area in Crook County.

### DEQ fines Pendleton business \$7,200 for violations in La Grande

LA GRANDE — An Pendleton business faces a state fine of \$7,200 for environmental violations in La Grande.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality recently reported issuing civil penalties in October against six businesses, including Sheldon

Petroleum Services, 811 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, for failing to submit a work plan for failing to take corrective actions after it decommissioned a heating oil tank in La Grande.

Sheldon Petroleum Services in May 2019 decommissioned an underground storage tank at 1602 Walnut St., La Grande. Tests of groundwater at the site revealed oil was leaking from the tank.

Sheldon Petroleum was also fined \$16,800 in August for similar violations in Hood River and The Dalles.

The company in July of that year reported it removed the tank and contaminated soil, but according to the DEQ's "Notice of Civil Penalty Assessment and Order" of Oct. 27, 2020, those reports did not include receipts for the removal and disposal of the tank, piping or the soil.

The environment department rejected the reports and in August 2019 asked Sheldon Petroleum to submit a plan for additional work at the property. The company, however, told the state it was done working at the site.

The DEQ in the notice detailed how it calculated the \$7,200 fine, which included the magnitude of the violation and the finding that Sheldon Petroleum Services "failed to take reasonable care to avoid a foreseeable risk of conduct constituting a violation."

Lauren Wirtis, spokes-

person for DEQ, explained Sheldon Petroleum has not appealed or paid the fine. The company had 20 calendar days from Oct. 29, when it received the notice, to request a hearing, which would be the first step in the appeals process.

### Union County Warming Station off to smooth start

LA GRANDE — The Union County Warming Station is attracting more guests after briefly experiencing a slow start.

The warming station, which opened Nov. 15 at its new home in Suite B at 2008 Third St. had just one guest its first night, but since then the number of people coming in has increased.

Its high counts included 13 the evening of Wednesday, Dec. 2, five shy of its capacity of 18, said Audrey Smith, chair of the Union County Warming Station Board.

An average of about four people are coming a night to sleep and receive a hot meal or just receive a meal.

La Grande Police Chief Gary Bell said the opening has gone smoothly from his perspective. He said his department on Thursday afternoon responded to a total of three calls at the warming station, none for major issues. The calls were for complaints of harassment, trespassing and for someone staying outside the warming station too long

before it opened.

The warming station's hours are 6 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. each day of the week. Volunteers there work three-to-four hour shifts.

"We always have at least two volunteers on duty," Smith said.

The warming station's new home is its third in four winter seasons in La Grande. The station was first at the Zion Lutheran Church in 2017-18 and in a Willow Street building in 2018-19. The warming station did not operate in 2019-20 because of issues related to the move to its Third Street location.

The station's new building has more space than its previous locations. The building has seven rooms plus a lobby. The rooms have a capacity of two people each under state social distancing standards. The capacity can be higher if all of those in a room are with the same family. The lobby's capacity is four guests.

Smith said most overnight guests go right to sleep after eating a meal at the warming station.

"They are quite tired when they come in," Smith said.

They also get a place to sleep soundly.

"From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. it is usually quiet," Smith said.

Each room has an air filter and plastic dividers to protect guests from COVID-19.

— The Observer

## GRR starts adopt a senior for Christmas program

By Dick Mason

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Grande Ronde Retirement Residence is extending an invitation to everyone who wants to reach out to seniors this Christmas season.

The assisted living facility is encouraging people to participate in its new "Adopt a Resident for Christmas" program.

Through the program, anyone who wants to adopt a resident can call the retirement center. They will be asked if they want to reach out to a male or female resident. They will receive the resident's room number and their first name plus a wish list for the person.

"We wanted to do something special because this has been such a hard year," said Denise Wheeler, a life enrichment assistant at Grande Ronde Retirement. "We want them to have a joyous experience."

The program started

Wednesday, Dec. 2, and already many of the 90 residents at Grande Ronde Retirement have someone signed up to send them gifts and cards.

"The response has been incredible," Wheeler said.

Wheeler said the first residents who are being matched are those who do not have family or friends in this area.

Participants will be able to mail their gifts and cards or bring them to Grande Ronde Retirement Residence, 1809 Gekeler Lane, La Grande. The center is not allowing the public to enter its building due to COVID-19 restrictions, but people can ring its doorbell and someone will come pick up the gifts.

Anyone interested in the program should call Grande Ronde Retirement Residence at 541-963-4700 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. seven days a week. Individuals have until Dec. 21 to sign up for the program.