

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Tuesday, April 6, the 96th day of 2021. There are 269 days left in the year.

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHT IN HISTORY:

On April 6, 1909, American explorers Robert E. Peary and Matthew A. Henson and four Inuits became the first men to reach the North Pole.

ON THIS DATE:

In 1886, the Canadian city of Vancouver, British Columbia, was incorporated.

In 1896, the first modern Olympic games formally opened in Athens, Greece.

In 1945, during World War II, the Japanese warship Yamato and nine other vessels sailed on a suicide mission to attack the U.S. fleet off Okinawa; the fleet was intercepted the next day.

In 1968, 41 people were killed by two consecutive natural gas explosions at a sporting goods store in downtown Richmond, Indiana.

In 1974, Swedish pop group ABBA won the Eurovision Song Contest held in Brighton, England, with a performance of the song "Waterloo."

In 1985, William J. Schroeder became the first artificial heart recipient to be discharged from the hospital as he moved into an apartment in Louisville, Kentucky.

In 2008, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama spoke of voters in Pennsylvania's Rust Belt communities who "cling to guns or religion" because of bitterness about their economic lot; Democratic rival Hillary Rodham Clinton seized on the comment, calling it "elitist."

Baker County's vaccination count overstated

Problem with state reporting system inflated Baker County's vaccination numbers by about 50%

By **JAYSON JACOBY**
Baker City Herald

SALEM — The Oregon Health Authority estimated its website recently exaggerated by about 50% the number of Baker County residents who have been partially or fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The agency on Wednesday, March 31, temporarily blocked the section of the website listing county vaccination statistics due to the Baker County error.

Earlier this week, the website showed that more than 10,400 Baker County residents — about 62% of the county's population — had been partially or fully vaccinated.

That was by far the highest rate among Oregon's 36 counties.

The Baker City Herald on March 23 sent an email to OHA noting the website showed that more Baker County residents in certain age groups, including 80 and older and 75 to 79, had been vaccinated than there are residents in the county in those age ranges based on a state-supplied spreadsheet.

Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett told



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

More than 450 people received vaccinations for COVID-19 on Friday, Feb. 26, 2021, in the Baker High School gym.

the Herald last week that he believed the OHA website overstated the number of county residents who have been fully or partially vaccinated.

In a March 31 email to the Baker City Herald, Rudy Owens, a public affairs specialist for OHA, wrote the agency is investigating the error.

"We estimate that roughly 50% of individuals indicated as residing in Baker County were incorrect on the county data tab dashboard feature" on the OHA website, Owens wrote. "We presume Baker County had such a significant impact because it is the first county, alphabetically,

in the list of Oregon counties."

Owens wrote that OHA expects to have more detailed numbers next week.

Owens wrote that one possible source of the mistakes is a March 15 outage in the computer system, supplied by a state vendor, that tabulates vaccination statistics. The system is called Alert IIS.

"We are also actively working with our ALERT IIS vendor on solutions to avoid this error in the future," Owens wrote in his email to the Herald.

March 15 is about when Baker County's vaccination numbers began to rise

rapidly, particularly the number of Pfizer vaccine doses administered.

By March 24, the OHA website showed that more than 4,200 doses of the Pfizer vaccine had been given in Baker County, compared with 325 in neighboring Union County, which has about 10,000 more residents.

Yet, Baker County's vaccine providers, including the Baker County Health Department, Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City, and pharmacies at the Safeway, Albertsons and Bi-Mart stores, told the Herald that they either don't use the Pfizer vaccine at all, or administer

it in small numbers.

A notice posted March 31 on the OHA COVID-19 website stated: "Vaccination data by county of residence is currently unavailable. An error in county designation for some individuals was identified on March 30, 2021 and the Oregon Immunization Program Alert IIS team is working on a solution to correct the error in county assignment."

The error doesn't affect statewide totals, which are available on the website.

Bennett said despite the counting error, he is pleased with the county's progress in vaccinating residents.

The health department administered 717 doses on March 12, most at a clinic at Baker High School, and about 560 more during a March 26 clinic, most of those being second doses.

The health department's next major clinic, also focusing on administering second doses to people who had their first dose on March 12, is set for Friday, April 9, at BHS.

To get on a waiting list for a vaccine, go to www.bakercountycovid19.com or call 541-523-0015.

Oregon State Police still seeking leads for missing Idaho woman

The Observer

MEACHAM — Oregon State Police are reminding people in the area of the Interstate 84 work zone near Meacham to keep an eye out for anything that could lead to finding a woman who has been missing almost three months.

Deborah "Deb" Hendrichs of Ada County, Idaho, has been missing since Jan. 11. OSP Lt. Daniel D. Conner with the La Grande Area Command in a bulletin reported an Oregon Department of Transportation worker was the last person to report seeing Hendrichs, whose 2012 black Toyota Rav 4 ran out of fuel on east-bound Interstate 84 near mile point 238.5 near Meacham.

"Members of the Oregon State Police responded to the scene within 20 minutes to find the vehicle unoccupied," according to state police.

Hendrichs is 56, stands 5 feet, 6 inches tall and weighs 145 pounds. Multiple



Oregon State Police/Contributed Photo

Search efforts continue to try to find Deborah "Deb" Hendrichs of Ada County, Idaho, who has been missing since Jan. 11, 2021, after her car ran out of gas near Meacham.

search efforts have not led to finding Hendrichs. Conner urged anyone who sees anything suspicious in the area to contact the Oregon State Police La Grande Area Command at 541-963-7175 and refer to case No. SP21-014895.

Police to crack down on distracted driving

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Local law enforcement will run extra patrols later this week to catch distracted drivers.

April is Distracted Driver Awareness Month, and on Friday, April 9, local law enforcement will conduct a saturation patrol to increase awareness and deter distracted driving, according to press release from the La Grande Police Department.

This will be the first of three events in La Grande and Union County in 2021 to educate distracted drivers and enforce distracted-driving laws, the release stated.

The effort is a partnership involving the Oregon

Department of Transportation, La Grande Police Department, Union County Sheriff's Office and the Oregon State Police.

On Friday in La Grande, officers, deputies and troopers will be stopping and ticketing those they catch texting or using their devices illegally while driving. The press release stated police are not trying to rack up citations but rather trying to save lives.

According to ODOT, distract drivers in Oregon between 2014-18 caused 13,603 crashes resulting in 20,992 injuries and 137 fatalities.

Distractions such as texting, talking on a cell-

phone, using a navigation system or eating can endanger you, your passengers and others on the road. Approximately eight people die each day as a result of distracted driving, according to La Grande police, and in 2019 nearly 1 in 10 fatal crashes in the United States were reported as distraction-affected.

Texting is perhaps the most common cause of distracted driving. According to the Transportation Safety section of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, at 55 mph, sending or reading a text "is like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed."

McNary Dam using bird deterrent system

East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Officials with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District have resumed use of bird-deterrent lasers, and will be testing a long-range acoustic device to prevent birds from preying on endangered juvenile salmon passing through McNary Dam.

In a change from last year, the two lasers will be used simultaneously. Previously, only one of the two lasers owned by the dam were operational at any given time. One laser will be positioned on the navigational lock wing wall on the downstream side and will provide coverage of the fish outfall pipe and surrounding waters and facilities,

including the dam itself.

The other laser will be positioned directly on the outfall pipe and cover the water directly below it.

The lasers, which will run from dawn to dusk daily, went into operation on Thursday, April 1, and will be in operation until approximately November. The lasers emit a bright green light that creates a large dot. Birds interpret the dot as a solid object, which they avoid as a potential threat. The lasers are programmed to move in random patterns within a predetermined area and have a range of approximately 950 feet to 1 mile, depending on the weather.

The long-range acoustic device is scheduled to begin usage in late August. A small device, it can

broadcast preprogrammed audio tracks over a large area. When activated, the tracks act as an audio deterrent for birds. Similar devices have garnered success at airports across the United States.

McNary's long-range acoustic device is programmed with two audio tracks. The first is a computer-generated male voice that announces it is a long-range acoustic device and performs a countdown. The second closely matches the noise emitted by a standard car alarm. When active, it will be audible throughout the McNary Dam and Lake Wallua area.

The long-range acoustic device will run intermittently throughout the day through October.

La Grande's March warmer, drier than normal

LA GRANDE — La Grande's temperatures in March were slightly warmer than normal, according to preliminary data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service Office in Pendleton.

The average temperature was 41.4 degrees, which was 0.6 degrees above normal, the Weather Service reported in its monthly climate report. High temperatures averaged 53.8 degrees, 2.6 degrees above normal. The highest was 70 degrees on March 28. Low temperatures averaged 29.0 degrees, which was 1.4 degrees below normal. The lowest was 21 degrees on March 10. There were 17 days with the low temperature below 32 degrees.

Precipitation totaled 1.15 inches during March, which was 0.31 inches below normal. La Grande received measurable precipitation (at least .01 inch) on 11 day, according to the report, with the heaviest, 0.41 inches on March 23. Precipitation this year has reached 4.68 inches, 0.45 inches above normal. Since October, the water-year precipitation at La Grande has been 9.26 inches, which is 0.05 inches above normal. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.58 inches.

The outlook for April from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for near to below normal temperatures and near normal precipitation. Normal highs for La Grande rise from 55 degrees at the start of April to 62 degrees at the end of April, and normal lows rise from 33 degrees to 38 degrees.

State seeks applications for trail projects

SALEM — Organizations, land managers and local governments looking to build, expand or improve public trails have until June 15 to seek grants through the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's Recreational Trails Program.

The federally funded reimbursement grant program provides matching grants to construct, expand or improve public trails for motorized and non-motorized use. The program is accepting grant applications for the 2021 grant cycle. Applicants must submit a letter of intent via oprdrgrants.org by April 30, and applications are due June 15. An optional webinar is set April 15, 9:30-11:30 a.m. to provide information on the program

and how to navigate the application process. Register at the Recreational Trails Program web page.

Approximately \$1.6 million in grant funds are available for land or easement acquisitions, safety and education, trail assessment for accessibility or maintenance construction, heavy restoration, trailhead facilities and water trails.

The grant program is open to local governments, park districts, state and federal agencies, tribal governments, other public land managers and nonprofits.

Information about the program, including the grant manual, application instructions and program schedule, is on the Recreational Trails Program web page: www.oregon.gov/oprd/GRA/pages/GRA-rtp.aspx.

Interstate 84 construction project underway

MEACHAM — Construction is slowing slow traffic on Interstate 84 between Meacham and Spring Creek for the next two years.

The Oregon Department of Transportation on Monday, April 5, began a new paving project between milepost 238 and 248. During construction, vehicles will be rerouted to one side of the interstate at a time, with a single lane in each direction. The speed limit will be reduced to 50 mph, and Oregon State Police will increase its patrol presence.

According to an email from ODOT, reconstruction of milepost 238 to 241.5 will take place in 2021 and the rest will be completed in 2022.

ODOT is starting the work with closing the left lanes in each direction to construct the "crossovers" for traffic to move onto the new travel route.

The state road department also reported the project will replace the asphalt that has become rutted from severe winter weather and chain use, creating hazardous conditions where ice collects in the ruts and cracks. Crews also will complete some other upgrades to guard rails, median barriers and bridges.

No signs of foul play in Long Creek fire

LONG CREEK — A woman's death in a house fire near Long Creek that was being investigated as arson has not turned up any evidence of foul play so far, according to Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley.

In August, the body of Susan Carter, 72, was discovered inside her mobile home on Carter Lane near Long Creek after it became engulfed in flames, then-Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer said in a press release.

The sheriff's office received a report of the burning home at about 5 a.m. on Aug. 3, and both the Long Creek fire department and ambulance were dispatched to the scene. The sheriff's office and Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office also responded.

During a subsequent investigation, authorities learned Carter had gone to the Pendleton area the previous week and returned home on Saturday.

Members of the state fire marshal's office and an arson investigator with the Oregon State Police began an investigation into the fire's cause when Carter was located in the burned home.

McKinley said the investigation is ongoing.

Wallowa supports replacement of pipeline

WALLOWA — A letter of support to repair and replace a pipeline to an irrigation ditch was approved by the Wallowa City Council at its meeting Tuesday, March 16.

The request of the letter was made by Elwayne Henderson who wants to obtain a grant to have the work done on a new pipeline for the Chamberlin and Westside irrigation ditches, Mayor Gary Hulse said.

"It does affect the city," Hulse said. "We've had complaints of water in basements. There also is flooding in the spring."

Hulse said the ditch near Green Hill had been there since the 1960s and originally was a steel pipe, which now has developed leaks.

Hulse wasn't sure who the grant request was to be made to, but said it was a group that has done similar work in Joseph and Enterprise. The council voted to endorse the grant request with a letter.

In another matter at the meeting, the council agreed to transfer \$2,660 from the Senior Center Contingency Fund to the Equipment Fund for a new kitchen range. The mayor said the range will cost more than \$10,000, of which 50% must be paid down prior to ordering it. The Senior Center Equipment Fund has enough to reach the 50% with that which the city is contributing.

— EO Media Group