

TODAY

On Dec. 30, 1922, Vladimir Lenin proclaimed the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which lasted nearly seven decades before dissolving in December 1991.

In 1813, British troops burned Buffalo, New York, during the War of 1812.

In 1853, the United States and Mexico signed a treaty under which the U.S. agreed to buy some 45,000 square miles of land from Mexico for \$10 million in a deal known as the Gadsden Purchase.

In 1860, 10 days after South Carolina seceded from the Union, the state militia seized the United States Arsenal in Charleston.

In 1903, about 600 people died when fire broke out at the recently opened Iroquois Theater in Chicago.

In 1954, Olympic gold medal runner Malvin G. Whitfield became the first Black recipient of the James E. Sullivan Award for amateur athletes.

In 1972, the United States halted its heavy bombing of North Vietnam.

In 1994, a gunman walked into a pair of suburban Boston abortion clinics and opened fire, killing two employees. (John C. Salvi III was later convicted of murder; he died in prison, an apparent suicide.)

In 1999, former Beatle George Harrison fought off a knife-wielding intruder who'd broken into his mansion west of London and stabbed him in the chest. (The attacker was later acquitted of attempted murder by reason of insanity.)

In 2004, a fire broke out during a rock concert at a nightclub in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 194 people. Bandleader and clarinetist Artie Shaw died in Thousand Oaks, California, at age 94.

In 2006, a state funeral service was held in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda for former President Gerald R. Ford.

In 2009, seven CIA employees and a Jordanian intelligence officer were killed by a suicide bomber at a U.S. base in Khost (hohst), Afghanistan.

In 2015, Bill Cosby was charged with drugging and sexually assaulting a woman at his suburban Philadelphia home in 2004; it was the first criminal case brought against the comedian out of the torrent of allegations that destroyed his good-guy image as "America's Dad." (Cosby's first trial ended in a mistrial after jurors deadlocked; he was convicted on three charges at his retrial in April 2018 and was sentenced to three to 10 years in prison, but the Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturned the conviction in June 2021 and Cosby went free.)

Ten years ago: North Korea warned the world there would be no softening of its position toward South Korea's government following Kim Jong Il's death as Pyongyang strengthened his son and heir's authority with a new title: "Great Leader."

Five years ago: Two luxury retreats in New York and Maryland where Russian diplomats had gone for decades to play tennis, sail and swim were shut down by the Obama administration in retaliation for Moscow's cyber-meddling in the presidential election.

One year ago: Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri said he would raise objections when Congress met to affirm President-elect Joe Biden's victory, forcing House and Senate votes. President Donald Trump asked the Supreme Court to overturn his election loss in Wisconsin; it was his second unsuccessful appeal in as many days to the high court over the result in the battleground state.

LOTTERY

Monday, Dec. 27, 2021

Powerball
36-38-45-62-64
Powerball: 19
Power Play: 2
Jackpot: \$416 million
Megabucks
3-6-10-28-35-36
Estimated jackpot: \$7.5 million
Lucky Lines
3-8-9-16-18-24-25-32
Estimated jackpot: \$59,000
Win for Life
15-19-32-64
Pick 4
1 p.m.: 1-5-3-7
4 p.m.: 7-7-9-5
7 p.m.: 8-5-8-5
10 p.m.: 1-8-0-4

Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021

Mega Millions
3-5-8-31-38
Mega Ball: 4
Megaplier: 3
Estimated jackpot: \$201 million
Lucky Lines
1-8-11-15-18-23-25-30
Estimated jackpot: \$60,000
Pick 4
1 p.m.: 1-3-6-8
4 p.m.: 1-5-2-7
7 p.m.: 8-9-0-3
10 p.m.: 0-7-4-0

University wipeout



Isaac Morgan wipes out on the hill behind Badgley Hall at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande on Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021.

Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Snow, cold temps on tap through holiday

Overnight lows will reach single digits over the weekend

By ALEX WITTWER

EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Thermometer mercury has made quite a journey this year, from heat waves breaking records in June to a cold front bringing a rare snowstorm to Seattle and Portland and chilly temperatures that might break records on New Year's Eve.

"What is bringing this in is a low-pressure troughing pattern — a series of lows that are originating as continental air masses rather than marine air masses, so we're getting colder air that is more arctic in nature," said Colby Goatley, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Pendleton.

Goatley said the pat-



Tyler Sanborn shovels snow in front of his Washington Avenue home and his 1952 Chrysler Imperial on Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021, in La Grande.

Alex Wittwer/The Observer

tern is more typical, and doesn't bear the characteristics of a polar vortex. Still, the temperatures will drop significantly overnight.

Nighttime lows for La Grande through New Year's Day will dip into the single digits, with the lowest temperature predicted to be as low as 4 degrees on Friday, Dec. 31, according to the weather service. The previous record for La Grande was set in 1968 with a nighttime low of

minus 3. Daytime highs will hover in the 20s and remain below freezing for the rest of the week.

A high probability of snow through Dec. 31 could accumulate up to 4 inches by Dec. 30, tapering off by New Year's Day as weather improves.

"If you're going to be out during those cold temperatures, just make sure you're plenty bundled up," Goatley said. "You can get frostbite pretty fast." The cold weather

will handily beat out last year's temperatures that kept steady above 18 degrees for December. This is partly due to the La Nina weather pattern returning, bringing more precipitation to the Pacific Northwest.

Goatley cautioned that wind chills could bring the temperatures down even further to the negative teens, though the chance of wind gusts are low. With the cold weather, precautions should be taken by drivers traveling back after the holidays, as well as by owners of livestock or animals who may get caught in the biting cold.

"Make sure any animals have adequate shelter or brought indoors, and pipes are covered to prevent bursting," he said.

Installing pipe sleeves or simply running water through the night — even just a trickle — can also prevent pipes from bursting, according to the American Red Cross.

County commissioners OK PILT for solar farm

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — An agreement on payment in lieu of taxes for a community solar project and a new cover sheet for contract and grant applications were approved Wednesday, Dec. 15, by the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners.

Ryan Sheehy, of Fleet Development, asked the commissioners for the tax agreement to help him plan for the future of his project. A year ago, the Chieftain reported that the commissioners approved a lease on 2.5 acres of land just outside of Enterprise for a long-planned solar farm by Sheehy's firm. The project will be built on county land on Homan Lane near Fish Hatchery Lane considered unusable for any other practical purpose, the commissioners agreed. The site is that of the county's old asphalt plant. The power generated from the 360-kilowatt solar farm would provide energy to local customers through the Pacific Power

and Light power grid.

Sheehy said the power already is planned to be subscribed to local businesses and apartment complexes that have no other viable access to solar power.

"We're actually in construction with (it) right now. It's been a long time coming — three years working on it — and it's pretty remarkable to see it actually growing on the ground there," Sheehy said. "One of the things that I needed to settle earlier to get financing for the project was what is the cost to operate it and one of the questions within that subset is what the taxes are."

He said his request has been ongoing.

"Earlier in the year, I reached out to the county and was working on getting a good-faith estimate on that," he said.

But, he said, he's been having difficulty getting the answers he needs.

An assurance from the commissioners will be helpful getting financing for the project.

"For me, I need to know what the taxes

are," Sheehy said. "That's because solar is difficult to finance."

He emphasized that there are a wide variety of costs associated with it.

"Over 20 years, the solar production will decline and the costs will go up. I have to look at what will it look like in year 21 and will we have enough to cover insurance and taxes and all those things," he said.

In the Aug. 9, 2020, Chieftain, Sheehy said he expected the project to be good for at least the 20 years of his contract with PP&L and could likely extend on to 30 or more years.

In the Dec. 23, 2020, Chieftain, Commissioner Susan Roberts stated that the lease with the county could be renewable after the 20 years.

Sheehy said the project is paying an above-market lease rate for the county land. He said the project should generate more than \$5,000 in annual revenue for the county. To the maximum extent possible, all construction and equipment have been locally sourced.

Sheehy has his preference for taxation methods.

"One of the great things that the state has done for solar is to provide an alternative method to the tax. It was just upgraded and re-passed during the last legislative session," he said. "The bottom line is they came out with the same methodology in that they'll tax at a dollar amount per megawatt size. So it's \$7,000 per megawatt. If you do the math, it works out to \$2,520 a year for our 360-kw project. What I'm asking you all is that at this point, as we're closing in on commercial operations and with getting Community Bank to lend to us, I would like to move forward with this methodology of taxes because it's set and I know what it's going to be in 20 years. I think this is the simplest way to get some value out of this."

Commissioner John Hillock, who owns Enterprise Electric, abstained on the motion, with the other commissioners voting to approve it.

NEWS BRIEF

Truck crash leads to series of wrecks

BAKER CITY — A semi-trailer lost control on an icy curve on Interstate 84 near Rye Valley, southeast of Baker City, Sunday morning, Dec. 26, leading to a chain reaction in which several other vehicles were damaged.

There were no serious injuries, although several drivers and passengers suffered minor injuries, according to an Oregon State Police report.

The incident started just before 10 a.m. when truck driver Teresa S. Hubbard, 59, of Knoxville, Tennessee, was westbound near Milepost 342, about 38 miles southeast of Baker City, and slid on the slick pavement and careened off a steep embankment.

The trailer was partially blocking one westbound lane, and several other vehicles crashed when they reached the site, according to a report from OSP Sgt. David Aydelotte.

Shortly after the chain reaction

of crashes, a Lexus SUV crashed into an Oregon Department of Transportation snowplow that was helping with the incident.

Several vehicles, including the semitrailer, had to be towed.

The truck crash caused significant damage to the concrete barrier in the center of the freeway and destroyed a section of guardrail, according to Aydelotte's report.

The semi also spilled approximately 150 gallons of diesel.

— EO Media Group

Snowmobile riders found after losing their way

Panhandle Snowmobile Club helps sheriff find lost snowmobilers near Fish Lake

By JAYSON JACOBY

Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — A group of Baker County snowmobile riders rapidly shifted from recreationists to rescuers the day after Christmas when riders from Washington got lost during a blizzard in the Wallowa Mountains north of Halfway.

The locals, members of the Panhandle Snowmobile Club in eastern Baker County, found the five snowmobilers, none of whom was injured, and escorted them back to a parking area about four hours after the rescue operation started.

The episode showed the value both of the GPS-equipped emergency transmitter the Washington snowmobilers carried, and of having a local cadre of riders who are familiar with the terrain and willing to help others, Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash said on Monday, Dec. 27.

"They made a pretty seamless transition from enjoying their day to a rescue mission," Ash said of the Panhandle Snowmobile Club members.

The incident started about 5:28 p.m. Dec. 26 when Ash received a phone call from Brandon Christensen, a Washington man who is friends with the five snowmobilers. Christensen told the sheriff that his friends, who had limited cell service, had called to tell him they were lost in the Fish Lake area, about 14 miles north of Halfway.

Christensen said he is also an experienced snowmobiler who has participated in search and rescue missions, involving snowmobiles, with the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office. Christensen said he was riding his snowmobile in the Tollgate area, north of Elgin, on Dec. 26 and had just returned to his cabin when he got a phone call from Mike Kelly, a friend from Burbank, Washington, near the Tri-Cities.

Kelly said he and four other riders, all of them friends with Christensen, were riding in the Fish Lake area north of Halfway and that they were lost in a storm that brought fog, snow and gusty winds that eradicated their tracks. The riders couldn't find their way back to the trailhead in the dark.

"I immediately started making phone calls," Christensen said.

One of those was to the Wallowa Avalanche Center in Joseph, where a staff member gave Christensen a phone number for Ash.

Kelly used his cellphone to send Christensen a digital map ostensibly showing their location. But the map showed them to be in the Catherine Creek area, more than 15 miles to the west. At about 5:43 p.m., the Baker County Sheriff's Office received an SOS alert from a Garmin satellite device. The message stated that several snowmobilers, one of whom had a medical condition, were lost. The message pinpointed the group's location near Fish Lake.

Ash said it was clear that this was the same group Christensen had called him about.

Christensen said another member of the group, John Mecham, of Kennewick, brought the Garmin InReach satellite device. Ash said he told Christensen, who had intermittent cellphone contact with Kelly, to tell the group to stay where they were since the GPS message had established their location.

Christensen said his friends had ridden in the area several times but were unable to get their bearings in the storm. They did have materials to start a fire, as well as some food.

Ash said that after confirming the group's location he called Duane Miles, of the Panhandle Snowmobile Club, who immediately started assembling riders while Ash was en route from Baker City to Halfway.

The club members reached the five Washington men about 9:10 p.m. They were cold and tired but otherwise OK. They rode back about 9 miles to the Clear Creek Sno-Park on the road to Fish Lake.

The group, in addition to Kelly and Mecham, consisted of John Rasmussen, of Kennewick, and Alan Townsend and Steve Paget, both of Burbank.