

Baker County Sheriff's Office/Contributed Photo

Searchers on the dock just below Hells Canyon Dam on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, look for Alberto Sillonis, a missing fisherman from Weiser, Idaho.

# Police believe Idaho angler drowned in Snake River

Baker City Herald

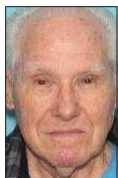
BAKER CITY — Police believe an 85-year-old Idaho fisherman drowned in the Snake River on Monday, Jan. 17, after falling from a dock just below Hells Canyon Dam.

The Baker County Sheriff's Office received a report about 6 p.m. that day that Alberto Sillonis of Weiser was overdue in returning home from a fishing trip to Hells Canyon.

He had left his home that morning and planned to return home in the evening.

Baker County deputies, along with deputies from the Washington County Sheriff's Office in Idaho, began searching the route to Hells Canyon as

well as checking hotels in nearby towns, according to a press release from the Baker County Sheriff's Office.



Sillonis

At about 9:07 p.m., deputies found Sillonis' 2008 Nissan Frontier pickup truck in the parking lot at the Hells Canyon Visitors Center.

Deputies searched the immediate vicinity and found two fishing poles, with the line from one still in the water, on the center dock below the visitors center.

Sheriff Travis Ash and the Baker County Search and Rescue team deployed at about 6 a.m. on Jan. 18 to search for Sillonis.

Searchers covered the area near the docks and along the river's shore.

Idaho Power Com-

pany employees used a remote-operated vehicle with an underwater camera and sonar to search the river.

Searchers found a felt, short-brimmed hat on rocks about 60 feet from the docks, and Sillonis' family confirmed that it belonged to him. No other signs of Sillonis were found.

Sillonis is a white man who stands 5-foot-8 and weighs about 160 pounds. He has white hair.

If anyone has information about Sillonis, they can call Ash at 541-523-6415.

The Baker County Sheriff's Office thanked the Baker County Search and Rescue volunteers as well as Idaho Power and their employees for their assistance during the search.

# DUII

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of the vehicle could be impaired," Hays said. "The field sobriety tests are used for the suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs or a combination of both."

## State police support

Hays noted local law enforcement puts an emphasis on DUII enforcement and preventing its occurrence, but increased calls to other matters can limit how proactive officers and deputies can be. Oregon State Police have taken an increased role in patrolling Adams Avenue and Island Avenue to assist local law enforcement.

"We are very active in showing a police presence around the bars on

Friday and Saturday night in a prevention effort to encourage others to not drink and drive," Hays said.

With OSP's assistance, law enforcement can maintain a visible presence and investigate suspected impaired drivers when local officers are responding to other situations.

## Measure 110 impact

Since Measure 110 went into effect in February 2021, opinions have varied on whether local communities are seeing a positive or negative impact of the decriminalization of controlled substances.

On the roads, controlled substance-related DUIIs have increased locally, but it's not certain that Measure 110 is contributing to the trend.

Pointing to direct

causes can be difficult, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic impacting mental health, which plays a role in crime trends and in drug and alcohol abuse.

The full scope of the newly enacted measure will take time to fully evaluate. With the new landscape regarding drug use and law enforcement's approach to controlled substances in Oregon, it remains to be seen if DUII trends will see an impact.

"As the numbers reveal, we are not really seeing any trend changes in impaired driving during the pandemic versus pre-pandemic," Hays said. "We are seeing more drug impaired driving post Measure 110 though, so it will be interesting to see how this pattern trends after a longer study period."



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Scott Newman, the new executive director of the Union County Chamber of Commerce, speaks with Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage at the chamber's office in La Grande on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022.

# NEWMAN

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to expanding business opportunities, while working with the city and the county."

Newman is succeeding Suzannah Moore-Hemann, who served as the chamber's executive director for three years. She left the chamber at the end of December to take a position as assistant director of stewardship and scholarship awards at Eastern Oregon University.

Moore-Hemann thinks Newman will do an outstanding job as the next executive director of the Union County Chamber of Commerce.

"I'm super excited. He has a great perspective, and his business background will help him connect with people," she said.

Moore-Hemann said Newman will bring a fresh perspective to the position.

"This will help drive the chamber to the next level of success," she said. Newman, who is from

Stoughton, Wisconsin, will wear two professional hats in Union County. He has also been hired by EOU to work as a public address announcer at Mountaineer sports events.

Newman served as the public address announcer at sporting events for six years at Stoughton High School before moving to La Grande. He said he has a passion for doing PA work.

"It is fun to get the crowd involved," he said. "When you have fun, the crowd has fun."

# Lawsuit against Good Shepherd seeks more than \$4.6 million

Suit stems from April 2021 gallbladder surgery

By ERICK PETERSON

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A medical malpractice lawsuit against Good Shepherd Healthcare System and a doctor seeks more than \$4.6 million.

Kimberly A. Helms, of Ione, is bringing the lawsuit, which claims negligence on the part of Dr. Andrew John Haputa as well as "vicarious liability" by Good Shepherd. Attorney Kelly L. Andersen, of Medford, filed the complaint Jan. 10 in Umatilla County Circuit Court.

According to the document, Helms received gallbladder surgery from Haputa on April 3, 2021, and during the surgery Haputa cut her common bile duct and her right hepatic artery.

"Not realizing his mistakes, he then compounded his errors by using surgical clips to clamp the common bile duct and the hepatic artery," the complaint states.

The lawsuit also accuses Haputa of several acts of negligence, including performing a surgery beyond his abilities, not obtaining a "critical view" during the surgery of key organs, not



Good Shepherd Medical Center/Contributed Photo, File

A medical malpractice lawsuit seeks more than \$4.6 million from Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, and Dr. Andrew John Haputa.

taking photographs during surgery to help identify and locate the key organs and "failing to discontinue the surgery rather than cutting what he could not see."

Helms in the complaint claims she has suffered an extended hospitalization and corrective surgery because of injuries resulting from the surgery, in addition to pain that limits her "normal and usual activities."

She seeks the \$4.6 million to cover the loss of physical abilities, medical bills, impairment of past and future earning capacity.

The lawsuit further claims Good Shepherd is negligent in retaining Haputa. It states that six months after being hired, police arrested the doctor at Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, for

driving under the influence of intoxicants, as well as for third-degree assault, reckless endangering and reckless driving. He pleaded guilty to the DUII charge and the state dismissed the other charges. He was sentenced to jail and the suspension of his driver's license.

"Haputa's arrest at Good Shepherd and his resulting criminal conviction were warnings to Good Shepherd that Haputa posed a danger to Good Shepherd patients. Good Shepherd was negligent in retaining Haputa after those events," the document states.

The lawsuit added the Oregon Medical Board on Oct. 7, 2020, publicly reprimanded Haputa.

Good Shepherd has not yet responded to a request for comment.

# DISTANCE

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close contacts.

"It was becoming an organizational nightmare," he said.

School districts have the option of operating a test-to-stay program, where students who are exposed to someone with COVID-19 can stay in school if they test negative and have no symptoms of the disease and then test negative again five to seven days later.

Dixon said the test-to-stay program was not an option for the North Powder School District because it does not have enough COVID test

kits under the current circumstances.

The good news for the school district is that plans are in place for students to be back on campus Jan. 24. Dixon said by that time North Powder will have been away from each other in school for 10 days, more than the state's required quarantine time after a close contact or a positive test. The span was lengthened by the fact there was no school on Jan. 17 due to the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

"Thank God (Jan. 17) was a holiday," he said.

No online instruction was given Jan. 18 to allow teachers time to prepare to provide Comprehensive Distance Learning. Dixon

said teachers are experienced with CDL and the system is in place after providing online instruction for a portion of the 2020-21 school year.

"It is easy for teachers to start CDL again if they have a day to prepare," he said.

The superintendent said he thinks shutting down in-person instruction this week will pay dividends over the long term because it will allow the school district to be in a better position to control the COVID-19 outbreak when in-person instruction begins again on Jan. 24.

"It is the best solution and will keep students out of school for the shortest time possible," Dixon said.

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