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INSIDE



HERMISTON CAR CLUB HEATS UP WITH COOL RIDES — IN GO!

What to keep in mind as fire season begins

Officials say common sense goes a long way in preventing blazes

By JACK PARRY
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The Oregon Department of Forestry announced that fire season began Friday, July 1, in the Northeast

Oregon District as the vegetation is drying after a rainy last few months.

The Willowcreek Fire spanning over 42,000 acres northeast of Vale began before the season officially started.

Matt Howard, the district forester for the Northeast Oregon district, remembers the extremely hot and dry conditions during fire season last year, and doesn't believe the period will be as long

this year.

"Last summer we were in a severe drought, it quit raining in March," Howard said. "With the rainfall we've received in April and May and the first half of June, it's really moistened up our fuels."

This amount of precipitation wasn't just unexpected for the spring, it was record breaking, helping to provide firmer snowcaps on the mountains to melt down.

"For May, and the first half of June, it was the wettest six weeks for Northeast Oregon," Howard said.

However, the Willowcreek Fire is burning. Even though the fire is technically out of the Wallowa County District and has been over 75% contained, according to U.S. Bureau of Land Management Vale District, fire safety is always relevant as fire season begins throughout the state.

During the season, debris pile burning and barrel burning can only be done by permit, which is a fairly simple process. Call the local Oregon Department of Forestry office and request a permit. A fire warden will come out and virtually inspect the burn site, and if the site is up to standard, issue a permit.

The use of exploding bullets is

See, Fire/Page A7

Group seeks fairness in schools

Drive for Oregon school choice, open enrollment initiative petitions starting

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A drive is being launched to get a pair of initiative petitions on Oregon's November 2024 election ballot designed to make it easier for parents to send their children to any public or private school in the state.

The effort is being organized with help from Education Freedom for Oregon, a Tualatin-based group working to boost school choice and fairness in education within Oregon.

One initiative petition would call for an Open Enrollment constitutional amendment and another would call for a School Choice constitutional amendment.

Open enrollment

The Open Enrollment amendment would put a ballot measure before voters which, if passed, will give parents the right to send their children to any public school in Oregon. The proposed ballot measure would amend the Oregon Constitution so that a child could attend any public school in

See, Initiatives/Page A7



LIGHTING

UP

Photos by ISABELLA CROWLEY
The Observer

UNION — The Fourth of July was celebrated with a bang during Thunder at the Peak — a fireworks show held at Buffalo Peak Golf Course in Union.

The celebration was well attended by residents and people from surrounding areas. Some families laid out blankets and folding chairs in the field, while others popped their car trunks and watched from the parking lot. Lucky locals gathered for the fireworks in their backyards.

Thunder at the Peak is organized by the city of Union Chamber of Commerce. This was the second year the fireworks were held at Buffalo Peak. Before moving the show to the golf course in 2021, the fireworks were held in the vicinity of Union High School's sports complex.

THE SKY

Baker City bear released in Wallowas

Black bear wanders into neighborhood, ends up in a tree

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Baker City's most famous black bear — or at least the most photographed — is likely roaming somewhere in the southern Wallowa Mountains.

Which is better bear habitat than

a birch tree between two apartment buildings.

The bear, which ran through part of Quail Ridge Golf Course on Sunday, July 3, then crossed Foothill Drive and climbed a tree, ended up tranquilized and in a cage later that morning.

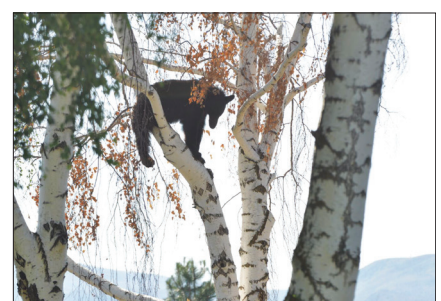
Brian Ratliff, district wildlife

biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Baker City office, fired the tranquilizer dart that gave the yearling male bear a temporary nap.

The sleeping bear got stuck, however, in the tree about 25 feet above the ground.

He estimated the bear weighed

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Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

A yearling male black bear rests in a birch tree on the east side of Foothill Drive in Baker City on Sunday morning, July 3, 2022.



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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
56 LOW
Mainly clear



Friday
81/54
Sunshine and nice

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