

# Local

## Commissioners' letters

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Bennett's letter continues, "I also value your willingness to continue the discussions and allow input on roads as new data is discovered, and the fact that the Wallowa Whitman NF agrees with Baker County that having an accurate base map layer is critical to all future discussions of travel management.

"I also would like to acknowledge the reset in the forest planning effort by yourself and Regional Forester Peña providing Baker County the ability through the coordination and cooperation processes to continue working toward a balanced resolution of the outstanding issues as they impact our communities and the county.

"Looking forward, I would see the discussions focusing on, but not limited to the following: Forest Health; Community Stability; Forest Access/Travel Management; Proposed wilderness/road less areas; Mineral extraction; Timber harvest; Grazing; Recreation.

"As a county we currently are in the process of fine tuning our Natural Resources Plan. This will insure that it provides the clarity necessary to work through the various issues and provides a definite roadmap outlining the challenges and concerns of the various communities within Baker County. We must collectively work to maintain the customs, culture and economic stability of Baker County, while balancing the mandates of the United States Forest Service.

"In closing I am looking forward to the resolution of the issues as documented in the comments submitted by Baker County.

"Please feel free to contact my anytime."

Bennett said in an interview this week that he had drafted his letter himself. He also stated, "I have never, in my entire time here, heard the word collaboration. That was their choice (*The Baker City Herald's*). But, I hope that everyone will just look past that, because it wasn't my choice of words, it wasn't Tim's (Kerns's) choice of words."

The letter, does, however, appear to embrace "cooperation."

In certain circumstances, according to consultant Andy Rieber, cooperation should be considered,

which may have not been articulated well enough in his letter, Bennett said. "I have never changed what I said all along, as far as (forest) access, as far as travel management, as far as mineral extraction. I would encourage everybody to look at my track record."

As far as cooperation is concerned, he said, "It wasn't until Bill (Harvey) retained Andy Rieber that I even considered cooperation."

Then, another letter was presented already fully drafted to the Commissioners by Kerns—a letter that also mentions "cooperation."

When asked if he had assistance penning the letter, Kerns replied, "Hell yes, I had help." He acknowledged that his wife, Jan Kerns, who was appointed March 18 to a new term to the Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC), co-authored the letter, which emphasizes the NRAC's role, and praises the Forest Service.

This letter was then sent from Kerns to Montoya, and co-signed by Bennett, dated March 31, 2015.

Harvey declined to sign this letter, which in its entirety, reads:

"Thank you for acceding to the county request last November to extend the comment period on Sub-part A for 90 days. I understand that the purpose of this comment period is for the public to review the present set of forest service road maps for correctness as to existence of roads on the ground. I also understand that you will continue to accept citizen information on the roads as you move forward.

"I totally understand how difficult all of this has been to convey to the public how all of the 'pieces fit together' in the entire Forest Plan revision process. Travel management has been a hot-button issue in the county since it was first introduced many years ago.

"As you know a group of Baker County residents, with diversified forest-use interests, spent many hours crafting an approach to inventorying the roads with the intent of being fair on reporting which roads were no longer passable, which ones were duplicative in route, and which ones had severe environmental conditions such as erosion. Although not all roads in all watersheds were actu-

ally on-site inventoried, citizens with personal knowledge of the roads in their local or recreational areas helped fill out the inventory sheets and helped to complete markings of the maps.

"A set of watershed-based maps were turned into the Forest Service with recommendations on road status, as well as a data-based inventory spreadsheet with road conditions on most of the roads at the time of the inventory. It is my understanding that information from that set of maps was used to make up some of the information on the present set of maps that the public was asked to review for accuracy.

"There are many concerns that need to be addressed between Baker County and the Wallowa-Whitman Forest such as: Overall forest health and how to achieve more sanitation and thinning projects; How to secure more actual logging extraction projects; Access for grazing, mineral extraction, recreation and public uses; Economic impact of agency decisions on the local and county economy.

"Examples of excellent Wallowa-Whitman forest health management practices can be seen in the fire reforestation on Dooley Mountain, as well as the thinning and forest sanitation on the Sumpter-Whitney highway routes. Both visually demonstrate healthy forest environments.

"It is my goal that we craft a good working relationship where we can utilize both the Cooperating Agency and Coordination processes. The federal forest is an important and integral part of Baker County, and I wish to maintain a strong and positive working relationship as we move forward through the Forest Plan Revision process, completion of the required Travel Management plan, and ultimately more timber being removed from our forest to lessen the impact of inferno-like forest fires

"I also desire that a good working relationship can be crafted between the Wallowa-Whitman Forest staff and the Baker County Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC). They are the working group for developing positions on natural resource issues confronting Baker County.

"We are truly grateful

to have at least 100 USFS FTE (full-time employee) neighbors in our community, and the addition of several hundred USFS retirees. They are all an integral part of the social and economic base of our county.

"Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to continuing to build a strong, trustful and respectful working relationship with you and your staff."

Kerns referenced Harvey's interview published in the March 27, 2015 issue of *The Baker City Herald* as part of the reason he drafted the letter to Montoya.

When asked if this letter and his comments to that paper signaled a rift with Harvey, Kerns said, "I don't think we have a rift. He's just a little bit more aggressive than I am, but I'm concerned that we need to start a dialogue with the Forest Service, or we won't go any place."

He continued, "I'm very confused on how much power we've got over the Forest Service. I understand that the BLM has to coordinate with us, but the Forest Service, they're not under exactly the same rules, and I think that we have to get a lawyer to show us just what its authority is. Nevertheless, we've got to start talking. We've got to start working something out."

Harvey said, "There was no mention in that letter (Kerns's) of collaboration. Neither one of these gentlemen or myself said that word. That was the paper. Their choice of headlines, I guess."

Harvey refused to co-sign Kerns's letter, because, "In it, it also specifies to me, a little too murky, that, factually, we said we would not go along with the Forest Revision Plan, and the letter seemed to me to say, 'Now, we're ready to go along with the Forest Revision Plan.' I couldn't sign that, because I objected to that. So, it wasn't to put these gentlemen (Bennett and Kerns) down. It was just my personal feeling that I could not sign it."

During Wednesday's County Commission work session, Harvey informed the attendees that this topic would more thoroughly be discussed with Montoya and his staff at the upcoming regular Commission session, on Wednesday, April 29 at 9 a.m.

## Fire service task performance exercise April 18

On Saturday April 18th Federal, State and fire agencies from around the county will come together to participate in the 11th Annual Baker County Fire Service Task Performance Exercise, also know within the fire service as the Scavenger Hunt.

Originally created in 2005, the event was developed to bring fire agencies together to practice skills and mitigate realistic incident scenarios. An added bonus was to highlight the need to find new volunteer firefighters for Baker County fire agencies. In 2015, the goals have not changed – departments benefit greatly by coming together to participate in scenario based exercises, and the fire service is always interested in bringing on new personnel. Those interested in joining a local fire department/district, should contact their local agency.

This year's Fire Service Task Performance Exercise will have several structural related task performance stations, and a wildland-urban interface station. The event will begin with Fire agencies being dispatched to a skill station and upon arrival, perform a variety of firefighting tasks. While we develop new scenarios each year, past skill stations have included – radio communications, technical scene size-up, apparatus operation, working with equipment such as ladders, hydrants and fire tools. Each of the Teams will have to successfully complete all scenario based stations.

As in prior years, each Team will be required to work through the emergency situation presented and will be scored on safety, coordination and organization, communications and appropriate completion of the scenario based incident. These realistic scenarios will challenge the crews.

"Each year we create realistic and challenging scenarios – but the overall goal is to allow agencies to evaluate and improve response skills, and ultimately enjoy the day," said Gary Timm, Fire Division Manager of Baker County Emergency Management. "While this exercise could be seen as a fire service preparedness exercise, I'm hoping it will also be viewed as dedicated local firefighter coming together from around the county to enhance their abilities to respond within their own communities."

Chief Mark John, Baker City Fire Department, added, "This interagency exercise allows agencies to come together and review incident stabilization techniques and best practices. It's also an opportunity to reinforce common operational platforms that can lead to the development of standardized practices throughout the county."

Past Winners of the Baker County Fire Service Task Performance Exercise:

- 2005 Keating Rural Fire Protection District
- 2006 Baker City Fire Department
- 2007 Baker Rural Fire Protection District
- 2008 Keating Rural Fire Protection District
- 2009 Baker Rural Fire Protection District
- 2010 Baker Rural Fire Protection District
- 2011 Baker City Fire Department
- 2012 Baker Rural Fire Protection District
- 2013 Baker City Fire Department
- 2014 Eagle Valley Fire Protection District

## Scholarship winners announced

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) announces it has awarded 28 scholarships of \$5,000 each to local students whose parents, or guardians, are members of OTEC.

Baker County Recipients: Annika Andersen, Michelle Birkmaier, Terri Clark, Cody Gyllenberg, Michelle Lehman, Lee McElligott, Kyle Srack, Zachary Tomac  
Lineman Scholarships: Austin Plumbtree, Logan Valentine

Grant County Recipients: Gerald "Jerry" Carter, Rayce Houser, Mikayla Luttrell, Adilene Olivera-Sanchez

Harney County Recipients: Hailey Bodewig, Austin Feist, Jackson Thein, Mattea Zabala

Union County Recipients: Kristen Allstott, Andrew Branen, Debora Brown, Jake Burgess, Alexandra Colton Kindra Moore, Carsyn Roberts, Adriana Stein, Carrie Wallace, Elias Wisdom

"OTEC is proud to help support the higher educational goals of students within our service territory," said Werner Buehler, General Manager for OTEC. "It is always a pleasure to see many of our past scholarship recipients completing their education and it is our hope they will return home to their Eastern Oregon roots to pursue careers, raise their families and contribute to their communities. That is a positive return on investment that the entire region would benefit from.

Applications are open to current high school seniors and college students who are members, or dependents, of OTEC members. "Co-operatives are, by their very nature, community partners," said Buehler, "and with these scholarships OTEC is making a contribution towards the sustainable development and future of our communities. We wish all of the recipients the very best in their future studies."

Applications were sorted by each of the four counties served by OTEC and evaluated by independent scholarship selection committees made up of OTEC members. Each committee then worked through an evaluation process ending with the selection of recipients and alternates for each county. Funding for the scholarship program is derived from interest earned on unclaimed refunds of capital credits. Applications for 2016 scholarships will be made available online and through local guidance counselors starting November 2015.

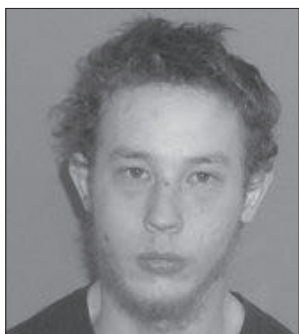
## Ontario assault suspect caught in Baker City

A man wanted by Ontario Police was arrested by Baker City Police last week after they received a tip he was at 2920 Elm Street in Baker City.

19-year-old Justin Lee Englund was wanted in Ontario after on Sunday, March 29 at approximately 2:30 a.m., Police began an assault investigation at a mobile home park.

The suspect was making suicidal comments. He cut his wrists and was threatening harm to himself.

Englund then engaged in a physical altercation with a former domestic partner, a 25-year-old female from Ontario. The female stated Englund hit her in the face and bit her leg during the altercation. Englund was violating a protection order



Submitted Photo.

Justin Lee Englund.

by contacting the female.

A 32 year-old male from Ontario attempted to intervene and told officers that Englund cut him with a knife. This individual sustained a laceration to his abdomen and was taken to the hospital.

Englund fled the scene on a bicycle, which was later found abandoned about a block away.

## Four receive sentences

On March 25, Bryson Buchanan of 1209 Court St., Baker City, Oregon, was sentenced to 22 months with the Oregon Department of Corrections. Buchanan pled guilty to one count of Unlawful Delivery of Methamphetamine. One count of Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine was dismissed as part of the plea agreement.

Buchanan will be on two years' post prison supervision when released. Buchanan sold methamphetamine to an undercover informant on November 30, 2014.

On March 31, Buddy Otnes of 1908 Chestnut Street was also sentenced to 16 months. He pled guilty to one count of Criminal Conspiracy. A separate county of

Criminal Conspiracy was dismissed as part of the plea agreement with the District Attorney's Office. He will be on two years' post prison supervision when released from prison. Otnes was involved in setting up multiple drug sales involving methamphetamine.

Two other Defendants were also sentenced. Both Arthur Gentry and Kristin DeJong of Baker City, Oregon were sentenced to three years' probation and ordered to serve 30 days in the County Jail. Both Defendants were convicted of Unlawful Delivery of Methamphetamine.

All four cases were part of an ongoing drug investigation conducted by the Baker County Narcotics Team in which ten Defendants were indicted.