

Business & Ag

Severe weather hits the panhandle

BY CARMELITA HOLLAND
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According to the U.S. National Weather Service, last Friday's 2.03" inches of rain at the Baker Airport made the day the second wettest in local recorded history.

Two neighboring ranches in the Keating Valley, one owned by Mark and Julie Winton and the other by Fred and Beth Phillips, sustained damaged to culverts, fields, fences and roads as that excess water resulted in a flashflood down Ritter Creek.

Then, as if to add insult to injury three days later, an unusually fierce lightning storm hit Eagle Valley about two o'clock the afternoon Monday, July 13, accompanied by a rain resembling a waterfall that lasted over half an hour, leaving a few residents in New Bridge on Summit Creek alarmed since severe flash flooding in Keating Valley.

The sky over New Bridge was peppered with a large number of impressive lightning streaks, accompanied by continuous



Wendee Morrissey / The Baker County Press

A flashflood over the weekend took out this culvert at the ranch owned by Mark and Julie Winton along Hwy. 86.

ear-splitting crackling, and very loud booms, fading away in long roars, always broken by a new blast.

Several large, bright streaks appeared near enough to hit two houses, one on each side of Second Street. One huge, wide streak zigzagged toward the earth appearing to hit the ground inside the town site in the vicinity of the county road up Eagle Creek.

A later search revealed no damages.

Richland fared no better than New Bridge.

The thick, heavy rain beat down on businesses and people outside scurried for cover.

Larry Fletcher, who works at Black Distributing's gas pumps said, "I'm sure glad no one came for gas during that storm. I could not have given them any."

The station has outside pumps and removing gas caps would have permitted water to enter gasoline tanks.

Steve Hamstreet was just coming to work at Richland Feed and Seed.

"I saw a bolt of lightning, and it looked like it hit the top of the Feed Mill. There was lightning flashing everywhere," he said.

The rain continued as the sound of the storm faded, and no lightning-caused fires were found in Eagle Valley.

Meanwhile, in Baker Valley and south throughout the Bridgeport/Hereford area, a hail storm swept through the area, pounding gardens with ice chunks reported at 1/4" on average, with a few as large as 1/2".

New livestock agent starts soon

BY TODD ARRIOLA
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The Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service recently hired Leticia Aurelia Varelas, a University of Wyoming graduate student, as the new Livestock Agent for Baker and Union counties. Varelas fills a position left vacant for over a year.

Varelas said, "I grew up on a ranch in southeast New Mexico with my parents and brother, where we raised cattle and sheep. I've always had an interest in continuing to work in the agriculture industry, but I wasn't exactly sure where I fit. Through different internships, I finally figured out that working in an Extension position was the best balance of my career skills and interests. I really enjoy working with people and learning about innovative management practices that agricultural producers use every day, but I also like seeing what research can tell us about how systems respond to different practices. I knew to get to that position, I needed to continue with my education.

"I am currently working on my PhD in Rangeland Ecology with a minor in Agricultural Economics at the University of Wyoming. Prior to that, I studied Agricultural Business/Agricultural Economics and minored in Range Science at New Mexico State University. I chose these two disciplines over Animal Science because I've learned that western livestock production is as much about managing our natural resources as it is about raising livestock.

"When I read the job announcement for the Livestock Agent in Baker and Union counties, I was immediately interested in the position. I am currently engaged to Robert Henderson. After visiting the area, meeting a few of the local livestock producers, Oregon State Extension personnel and other community members, we knew

we made the right decision to move to Baker City. We are both from small towns, and we enjoy having the opportunity to spend time working and playing outside, whether that involves hunting, camping, or working cattle. We have received a warm welcome from both community members and future co-workers with Oregon State. I'm thrilled about starting my career in Baker and Union counties and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead."

Carole Smith, Extension Service Regional Administrator, said, "We are very excited to attract a young, talented individual like Leticia to our area. She is very personable and eager to begin her new position."

Bob Parker, Extension Service County Leader/Forestry Agent, said, "We've been without a Livestock agent since April or May of last year."

Varelas will be replacing Cory Parsons, who relocated to Montana to pursue work in a similar position.

Smith, Parker and Varelas attended a Baker County Commission session on July 1st, where Varelas was introduced to those present.

Parker said he expected the process to fill the position to take even longer, even beginning at a later date, because this branch of the Extension Service usually receives lower hiring priorities, statewide from OSU. "We got bumped up by about a year, which makes us very happy," he said, explaining that the search began for a new candidate last November.

Parker and others voiced a persuasive case to OSU, and he said, "Baker is an agriculture-based community, and the Livestock Agent position is a huge piece of what the Extension Service does here." Parker said that being without one for such a long period was not a good way to serve the community.

About three years ago, Parker said, there was a



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

L-R: Leticia Aurelia Varelas, Bob Parker, and Carole Smith.

restructuring of the Extension Service, and Parsons also took on the role of Regional Administrator of the Southeast Region (Malheur, Harney and Grant counties), resulting in his working in that position 70% of the time, and 30% as a Livestock Agent. ".3 (30%) of a job, for an ag-based community? Let's get real. That's not a good fit, and that's not a good way to serve Baker County."

A nationwide search conducted by the Extension Service generated over 20 applicants for the position, and by April of this year, Parker and his colleagues made a tough decision between two well-qualified ones, including Varelas. The interview and selection committee included Parker, Smith, Wallowa County Extension Service Livestock and Natural Resources Agent John Williams, local rancher and Oregon Cattlemen's Association (OCA) Water Resources Chair Curt Martin, and local farmer and Baker County Economic Development Committee (EDC) Chair Craig Ward.

Parker said the interview and selection committee purposely included people from the local community not necessarily directly associated with the Extension Service, because there has always been local input when hiring in the past. "Sometimes, OSU can be too overly focused on the academic side. People in the community want somebody they can relate to, they can understand, to solve problems, and provide information," he

said. He noted sometimes during previous selection processes, the community's voice was the most persuasive. "There have been times when OSU has said, 'Oh, we like this person,' and the community said, 'No, we like this person,'" and the latter was hired. "Overall, Leticia has the best fit. We're real excited to have her here, and I think she's not only going to be a good educator, I think she has the capacity to be a real leader," Parker said.

Parker added, "She was born and raised in a ranching environment in New Mexico, and her passion is to help producers do what they do. That's where her heart is at, so, she decided she wanted to do Extension-type work, the best opportunity to have that impact."

Varelas impressed Parker and his colleagues during her interviews, he said, with her knowledge regarding issues such as Greater Sage Grouse habitat and grazing on Federal lands, and other regulatory, environmental, and political issues. "She'll have a real opportunity to play a role in that, and I think those are areas where she'll really shine. She has the knowledge and the science, and she has a way to bring that to bare on these issues. She'll be a huge asset for us."

While Varelas is technically scheduled to begin work on August 15th, which is a Saturday, she'll actually begin work for the Extension Service on Monday, August 17th.

— WEEKLY HAY REPORT —

Friday, July 10, 2015 — Eastern Oregon

Prices trended generally steady compared to the same quality last week. Trade activity increased drastically this week, however many producers were still busy in the field with the new crop. The slightly cooler weather this week compared to last week has been attributed to increased activity.

Tons	Price Range	Wtd Avg
Alfalfa — Large Square		
Supreme 280	200.00-200.00	200.00
Alfalfa/Orchard Mix — Small Square		
Good 80	175.00-175.00	175.00
Timothy Grass — Large Square		
Good 1,000	180.00-180.00	180.00
Grass — Mid Square		
Good 200	175.00-175.00	175.00

USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

— CATTLE MARKET REPORT —

Wednesday, July 8, 2015

Vale, Oregon

Cattle sold through the auction: 322

Steer Calves

300-400#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A
400-500#	Bulk 243.00 - 272.00	Top 298.00
500-600#	Bulk 238.00 - 260.00	Top 267.50

Heifer Calves

300-400#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A
400-500#	Bulk 236.00 - 247.00	Top 253.00
500-600#	Bulk 216.00 - 234.00	Top 236.00

Yearling Steers

600-700#	Bulk 223.00 - 234.00	Top 240.50
700-800#	Bulk 197.00 - 219.00	Top 227.50
800-900#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A
900-1,000#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A

Yearling Heifers

600-700#	Bulk 188.00 - 206.00	Top 208.00
700-800#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A
800-900#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A
900-1,000#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A

Thin Shelly Cows	79.00 - 89.00
Butcher Cows	97.00 - 109.00
Butcher Bulls	114.00 - 134.00
Stock Cows Yng.	1500.00 - 2050.00
Younger Hfrts.	119.00 - 137.00
Young Pairs - N/A	
ProducersLivestock.com	
541-473-3136	

— LOG PRICE REPORT —

Price per 1,000 board feet: Northeast Oregon

Doug Fir	is \$415.00/mbf
White fir	is \$365.00/mbf
Ponderosa Pine	is brought sold on diameter splits
6 to 11 inch dib	\$300 to \$310/MBF
12 to 17 inch dib	\$350 to \$375/MBF
18 to 23 inch dib	\$400 to \$430/MBF
24 inch plus dib	\$450 to \$500/MBF

DIB is diameter inside bark at small end of log.
MBF is thousand board feet lumber, net scale.
People interested in selling logs should call and get specific quotes from saw mills.

Courtesy of Arvid Andersen,
Andersen Forestry Consulting

— PRECIOUS METALS REPORT —

Price per ounce, USD

Gold: \$1154.20

Silver: \$15.31

Platinum: \$1,029.85

Palladium: \$659.05

Bloomberg.com

— AG COMMODITIES —

Corn:	\$427.50/bu/USD
Wheat:	\$566.75/bu/USD
Soybeans:	\$1021.25/bu/USD
Oats:	\$268.00 bu/USD
Rough Rice:	\$11.07/cwt/USD
Canola:	\$525.10 CAD/mwt
Live Cattle:	\$147.15/lb./USD
Feeder Cattle:	\$214.30/lb./USD
Lean Hogs:	\$64.93/lb./USD
Bloomberg.com	