

# 2015: A Year in Retrospect

## August

August 28

**Workshop held on protecting western way of life.** Fred Kelly Grant and his panel of expert grassroots advocates came to Baker City August 20-22, teaching the best method of protecting local interests against ever-increasing federal agency regulations.

**Chopper lands hard.** Last Wednesday, August 19, at about 7:15 p.m. pacific time, a Sikorsky S-61A helicopter working on the El Dorado fire eight miles southeast of Unity, carrying pilot Gary Wiltrout, 67, of Boise, and co-pilot Scott Talada, 65, of Baker City, experienced a hard landing due to engine failure.

**Hay donations.** Rancher Mike Williams is helping collect hay for livestock owners in John Day, after the Canyon Creek wildfire decimated grazing lands and burned feed.

**Police find books in tree.** Victorian-era books and photos were discovered during a police call.

## September

September 4

**Commissioner meets with Governor.** Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett attended a meeting in Portland on Thursday afternoon, August 27th, to discuss with Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Governor Kate Brown and others, the topics of the Greater Sage-Grouse and the effects wildfires have had on eastern Oregon.

**Sumpter City Council held a brief Emergency Meeting.** August 28th. The meeting was called to add and remove signers to all accounts, elect a new Head of Council, and review Letters of Intent from those interested in serving on Council.

**McKim resigns from School Board.** McKim vacates his position on the board with about two years remaining on his term to accept a job with the Veteran's Health Administration in Roseburg, Ore.

**Cutting the fire breaks.** For Jerry McKinney and Paula Sawyer of McKinney Trucking, driving and operating a dozer to cut fire lines becomes a way of life for three months of the year.

September 11

**'Monumental' land grab.** The Owyhee Canyonlands in central and southern Malheur County in Oregon are the next proposed designation, covering 2.5 million acres, in the sights of the Obama Administration.

**More double sewer/water issues.** Wednesday afternoon, City Councilor Richard Langrell accompanied Glen VandenBos, who leased property from the Bootsman on Windmill Road, to a brief closed-door meeting with City Manager Mike Kee.

**\$402K suit against City, Baker Loves Bikes, settled.** A year-long litigation process between Joyce Elaine McDannel of Pinal, Arizona vs. the City of Baker City and the nonprofit organization, Baker Loves Bikes, came to an end on August 19th.

**Dooley Mountain damage.** A tour through the Dooley Mountain area proves a sobering and awe-inspiring experience as the once beautiful green landscape has been replaced with 100,000 acres of blackness and total forest fire devastation.

September 18

**Transfer of public lands draws officials to Baker City.** Utah State Representative Ken Ivory visited Baker County for the second September in a row last weekend with a three-day stay in the area this time.

**9/11 vigil held in front of armory.** Early in the evening of Friday, September 11, a group of local residents gathered on the sidewalk in front of the Baker County Armory on Campbell Street.

**Dry Gulch Fire.** An explosive single-vehicle rollover was the cause of the Dry Gulch Fire, which started on Saturday.

**Wingville Cemetery gets marker.** Local community members and others from across the state came together on what could be described as a climatically perfect Patriots Day

September 25

**Cell towers are hot issue.** The Baker City Planning Commission reviewed the application from Verizon to install two, 100-foot cell towers within Baker City limits.

**Sage-grouse.** Interior Secretary Sally Jewell came with welcome news: the Greater Sage-Grouse will not be placed on the federal endangered species list.

**Huntington pot ban.** Citizens of Huntington have begun a "Ban the Ban" protest in response to last Tuesday night's Huntington City Council decision to ban marijuana dispensaries, following in the footsteps of Baker City and Baker County.

## October

October 2

**Wildfire documentary filmed.** This Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Jon Scott Hart of Sound Image Productions, filmed footage and interviewed Baker County residents who are still dealing with the aftermath of the 103,000-acre Cornet/Windy Ridge Fire

**County passes NRAC plan.** Baker County Board of Commissioners met to vote on approval of the County's Natural Resources Plan, sent to them for the second time by the Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC). Commissioners looked out on a packed room as the meeting began with disagreement.

**Fuji TV films at Geiser Grand.** The Geiser Grand will serve as the feature location for Fuji's newest "golden hour" or prime time series, which translates most accurately as "Mysteries of the World."

## October

October 9

**Transparency topic of ORP tour.** "Power does not check itself," said Anne Marie Gurney, Chair of the Oregon Republican Party's (ORP's) Government Transparency Committee. Gurney brought the party's Transparency and Listening Tour to Baker City Tuesday night.

**Training officials meet at Police Department.** The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) sent some of its leadership team across the state, visiting with members of local law enforcement agencies on its 2015 Listening Tour.

**Chandler Herefords inducted in Hall of Fame.** In its 126th year of operations, the family will travel to Missouri to collect the award.

October 16

**East Face Project.** The East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains Project is a collaborative effort by the United States Forest Service (USFS), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), the Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCS), and private land owners.

**Dogs attack, kill alpaca.** Around 5:45 p.m. last Sunday is when Lise Madson of Sparta was alerted to a disturbance outside her home by the bark of her standard poodle.

**Bus driver shortage.** Baker School District 5J Transportation Supervisor Wayne Paxton and Dispatcher/Bus Driver Nathan Osborn both have formed a singular opinion about the number of available extra bus drivers: There aren't any.

**Baker City Council.** Mike Kee will retire in six months, and Sandy Lewis was appointed to the open Council seat.

October 23

**Parents protest.** The room was full at the 5J District Building on Tuesday evening for the regular meeting as parents gathered to protest the new math curriculum.



Photo courtesy of the BCPD.

**Kerns won't run.** Tim Kerns announced that he will not seek another term as County Commissioner.

**Man cited in dog attack.** On October 18 at about 9 p.m., Brian Marshall of Sparta was issued a citation for having a dog as a public nuisance. The citation came as a result of the lethal attack on neighbor Lise Madson's alpaca last week

**Officer Coleton Smith and Capa hit it off right away in Florida this week.**

**New K9 arrives.** Officer Coleton Smith spent two weeks with the BCPD's new drug dog, Capa, completing training. The pair would arrive in Baker City on Halloween.

October 30

**Former Baker City man sentenced to 35 years.** Benjamin Nelson, age 27 and formerly of 1201 Reservoir Road in Baker City, was sentenced this week to 35 years in prison, and must register as a sex offender, according to Multnomah County officials.

**Baker County affects state political platform.** A local delegation of elected precinct committee people (PCPs) from Baker County traveled to Bend at the end of last week to attend the Oregon Republican Party's biannual platform convention.

**Dredge celebrates another season.** Saturday, October 31st will be the last day this year to visit the dredge in Sumpter. The Sumpter Valley Dredge State Heritage area closes for the season on November 1st.

## November

November 6

**600 turn out to discuss Owyhee Monument.** A town hall meeting on the proposed Owyhee Canyonlands National Monument, chaired by Representative Cliff Bentz of Ontario, was held October 29 in the Adrian High School gymnasium. The controversial monument would involve up to 2.5 million acres in Malheur County.

**City, police face federal civil rights lawsuit.** "The allegations of retaliatory treatment are completely false," said Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner this week. Last Thursday morning, journalist Brian Addison, formerly of Baker City, filed suit against the City of Baker City, Lohner, and up to 10 as-of-yet unnamed "Doe" officers from that department.

**Cougar kills sheep up Goodrich Creek.** Six sheep were killed Sunday night, or possibly during the wee hours of Monday morning, in what the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is attributing to a cougar attack.

**A bear in there!** Baker City had an unusual trick-or-treater this year: a young black bear came to town to see what treats the town had to offer. Ken Spence of 11th Street thought his dogs were making an unusual fuss on Sunday morning. "They were acting weird," Spence said, "and at first I thought I saw another dog in the yard." He went outside to check, and realized the intruder was a young black bear.



Sunny Werner/The Baker County Press

The yearling bear turned to look at photographers in an 11th street yard Sunday, as ODFW staff prepared to tranquilize and transport the animal.