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'Gold Rush' to film in Baker County



Photo courtesy of The Water Hole.

Last September, some of the Gold Rush cast stopped by The Water Hole in Unity during one of their treks across Baker County to the Wirth family's mining claims. L-R: Andy Spinks, Freddy Dodge, Jack Hoffman, Tim Hoskins, Kimala Parret Hoskins (The Water Hole), unknown patrons in back row, Todd Hoffman.

• POPULAR DISCOVERY CHANNEL SHOW COMING TO BAKER COUNTY

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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After a year of rumors and speculation, it's official—the Discovery Channel's mega-hit "Gold Rush" has finally "panned out" for Baker County.

The show's star, Todd Hoffman, said in an interview Tuesday evening, "This is the answer to a prayer for us, coming back to Oregon."

After last Friday's episode, which highlighted a successful test run of the soil—and one rattlesnake relocation—on a claim owned by the Wirth family in "eastern Oregon," the word was out. And local excitement immediately began to ignite.

Future episodes will walk viewers through the decision to formally select that claim as the focus for the next "Gold Rush" season.

How it happened.

Hoffman chalks the opportunity to film in Baker County up to an act of divine intervention.

"So, Jim Thurber, who you know has been a long time with the show—" Hoffman began. "Jim was hunting out there (on Three Valley's land) and Phillip Wirth just happened to drive by. He said it felt to him like God told him to turn the truck around go back to Jim."

"I just had this strong feeling I needed to go back," Wirth said.

So that's exactly what Wirth did, and eventually his business card passed from Thurber to Hoffman, and communications began. (Not-so-secret meetings were later seen happening at the Truck Corral in Baker City.) Hoffman says he thinks



Photo courtesy of The Depot Inn

L-R: Members of the 'Gold Rush' cast Jim Thurber, Jack Hoffman, Kathy Reedy (The Depot Inn), and Todd Hoffman stayed in Sumpter in January 2015, prior to serious negotiations.



Photo Courtesy of Suzan Ellis Jones

This bench near Bridgeport is the area for which a conditional use permit has been submitted, tentatively asking for housing for up to 30 people.

it took a little over a year to get the deal in place, the details of which are highly confidential. In fact, most of the cast and crew are limited by a contractual nondisclosure clause to preserve proprietary production information.

Over that year, Hoffman passed through Baker City, Unity, Hereford, and Bridgeport a time or two—even meeting with Baker County Commissioner

Mark Bennett with a camera crew down Burnt River Canyon at one point.

Bennett said, "I think that the project is an outstanding opportunity to highlight mining operations in Baker County and the whole of eastern Oregon. The activities should draw an increased level of interest in tourism to the county."

"My camera crew is British," Hoffman joked.

"Just be good to them and keep the beer flowing, and they're happy."

A native Oregonian, Hoffman also spoke to his eastern Oregon ties.

"I grew up in and out of Sumpter," he said. "I used to ride dirt bikes with Kevin Logsdon. The first time I ever panned gold was in Sumpter. I played as a kid on the Doodlebug!"

SEE GOLD RUSH PAGE 10

Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally hot topic at City Council

• ORGANIZERS FEAR SOME IN COMMUNITY ARE AGAINST EVENT, BMCC GIVES INFORMATION, MARIJUANA DISCUSSED BRIEFLY

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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A large crowd gathered in Council chambers as Tuesday evening's meeting commenced, including several who waited in anticipation of joining in on the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally discussion, which had been well-publicized prior to the meeting via Facebook and other outlets.

But first, Mayor Mosier called the meeting to order. Councilwoman Lewis led the Pledge of Allegiance and asked for a moment of silence and for each person to ask for guidance for the evening. City Recorder Luke Yeaton called roll with each councilor present.

Mosier turned her attention to the consent agenda, consisting of the minutes from the regular Council meeting from February 9, 2016. Councilor Downing moved that they approve with a second by Councilor Lewis, the vote following was unanimous.

Mosier then called for citizen participation for anything that was not on the agenda. Rodney Shaw came forward and spoke with concerns about fencing ordinances pertaining to the medical marijuana community.

"We are approaching growing season," he explained. "One of the new laws states our plants have to be out of public view."

In an effort to be proactive, foreseeing future issues that may become of concern. He noted he had a strong six-foot cedar fence but still had had issues with youth climbing his fencing to get to his marijuana last year and was aware others did not have the same type of secure fencing.

He suggested council look into an ordinance that may possibly protect growers as well as youth from issues concerning the growing of legal marijuana that council had made clear they did not feel should be highly visible in town. Councilor Lewis suggested Shaw find some such ordinances and bring back to them to look at. He agreed. Council then moved forward with the agenda.

Mosier read and signed a proclamation declaring February 7-13, 2016 FBLA-PBL Week.

The Council was asked to appoint Eric Owen to the Airport Board and Anthony Constantine to the Tree Board.

SEE CITY COUNCIL PAGE 8

Gubernatorial candidate comes to Baker City

• BUD PIERCE HOLDS FUNDRAISER AT QUAIL RIDGE GOLF COURSE

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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Last week at the Quail Ridge Golf Course Clubhouse, a dozen or so Baker County citizens, including Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett and physicians Charles Hoffman, Neal Jacobson and Nancy Hutnak, gathered to meet and listen to William C. "Bud" Pierce.

Pierce is an unassuming man, friendly yet somewhat reserved. Pierce is running for Governor in Oregon on the Republican ticket. He has been an Oncology/Hematology doctor for some 20 years helping patients with cancer and blood disorders. He comes from a tight-knit family, his father a school janitor worked hard to provide for them. Unfortunately, Pierce lost his father at age 14.

Pierce spent time working at a nearby Air Force base commissary as a bag boy working only for tips before beginning on a path at UCLA pursuing his MD and PhD.

SEE BUD PIERCE PAGE 5

Friday Mostly sunny and warm, highs in the lower 50s. Low near 35. Chance of precipitation is 30%.

Saturday Mostly cloudy with showers likely. High near 50. Chance of precipitation is 60%. Low near 30.

Sunday Mostly cloudy with a risk of showers. Highs in the lower 50s. Chance of precipitation is 20%. Lows near 30.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.



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