



# The Baker County Press

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## Walden's HB 5815 could help free the Hammonds

• BILL IN JUDICIARY COMMITTEE, IN FIRST STAGE OF PROCESS

BY KERRY McQUISTEN  
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On July 14, U.S. Representative Greg Walden's House Bill 5815: Resource Management Practices Protection Act of 2016 was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

The bill specifically bars prosecution under section 844(f)(1) of title 18, United States Code, in certain cases.

Prosecution under related legal reasons is the reason Harney County ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond are currently serving out a five-year prison sentence for arson.

Walden said on Tuesday, "We know what an important land and forest management tool proper

use of fire is in the West. That why it's especially important to make clear that if you're following the rules and using fire as a tool, and by accident it escapes your property, you won't get a mandatory minimum five-year prison sentence.

"I've worked with local and national farm and forest groups, and gotten support of the Chairman of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee, in drafting this

legislation. Other western members of Congress are joining as cosponsors and we hope to move forward in a positive direction soon. Our farmers, ranchers and foresters need the clarity, certainty and protection this legislation provides."

Passage of the bill has the potential to translate into freedom after time served for the Hammonds.

SEE HB 5815 PAGE 5



Submitted Photo.

Hammond family member are embraced by supporters at the doorstep of their home during a rally last January in Burns.

## Monster Red of 'Gold Rush' hits the road



Submitted Photo.

The last part of the enormous wash plant known simply as Monster Red leaves Clark's Creek and Baker County, on its way to new adventures with the Hoffman crew.

• RECLAMATION BEGINS ON FORMER FILM SITE

BY KERRY McQUISTEN  
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Last week, the enormous wash plant, Monster Red, was dismantled and hauled off the now-former film site for the Discovery Channel's "Gold Rush" up Clark's Creek in southern Baker County.

The vibratory gold wash plant was purchased by the show's mining crew led by Todd Hoffman for use in the last season. Weighing in at 50 tons, the Discovery Channel says the machine is able to process 300 yards of dirt an hour—Wikipedia claims 180. Either way, the plant was one of the largest in the Klondike at the time.

The plant was built to the specs of another of the show's stars, Dave Turin, who was on site last week to help dismantle and haul away the beast on a flatbed.

Two weeks ago, processing the mountain of dirt, affectionately dubbed "Mt. Vesuvius" by neighbors, came to an end.

Heavy equipment operators have already begun to flatten the hill of dirt, and begin the reclamation process of the mining site as required under Oregon state law.



Submitted Photo.

The reclamation process has begun on the former site of production for 'Gold Rush' with this mountain of dirt soon to be flattened.

## Marijuana MIP arrests on the rise

BY KERRY McQUISTEN  
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Arrests for Minors in Possession (MIP)—specifically in possession of marijuana—are on the rise this year, said Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner Tuesday.

"The tax benefits of legalized marijuana sales seem to be the focus, especially at the state level, but nobody wants to talk about the cost to our communities now that marijuana is more readily available. From increases in costs to our health care system; to an increase in DUII marijuana cases throughout the state; to a local jump in citations for Minor in Possession of Marijuana," Lohner said.

Lohner said marijuana-related MIP arrests this year have already doubled the number of arrests typically seen in Baker City during previous years.

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## Woodrats cause damage across County



Submitted Photo.

Jim Longwell holds his latest catch at his home up Pine Creek ten miles northwest of Baker City.

BY KERRY McQUISTEN  
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Despite no reports this year to the local Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) office, citizens from every corner of Baker County are talking about widespread—and expensive—damage caused by a usually little-talked-about rodent: the woodrat.

Bridgeport-area miner Jim Juhola said that he has trapped at least 20 of the pests this summer, a number that will surely grow through the fall.

A couple miles up the road at the Devils Canyon Ranch, rat-killing dog Dagny has chomped 20 as well.

SEE WOODRATS PAGE 8

**Friday** Sunny and mild, highs in the mid 80s. Mostly clear and cool at night with lows in the upper 40s.

**Saturday** Sunny and warmer, highs in the upper 80s. Mostly clear and cool at night with lows in the upper 40s.

**Sunday** Sunny with continued warm, highs in the upper 80s. Clear and cool at night with lows in the upper 40s.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.



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Official weather provider for The Baker County Press.

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