

2016: A Year in Review / Local

November

Burnt River grad has ties to 'The Perfect Storm'

Halloween weekend marked the 25th anniversary of the "No-Name Storm," a devastating Northeastern combination of three weather systems, which first developed on Monday, October 28, 1991, later to be immortalized along with stories of heroic acts and tragedy in the 1997 Sebastian Junger book, *The Perfect Storm*, and in the 2000 film of the same name featuring George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg.

One of the sailors who risked his life, and played a pivotal role in the dangerous ocean rescues during that storm is Burnt River High School graduate Shane Greenbank, who served aboard the 205-foot U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) Tamaroa (WMEC-166).

Sumpter Museum gets 'Ghost Mine' display on loan

According to Toni Thompson of the Sumpter Valley Museum Association, the display they received on loan last Sunday may very well be the last and only mine blower of its size and type still in operating condition.

Local travels to Standing Rock

Christopher Keefauver of Baker City—better known locally as "Doc"—traveled with his brother Douglas to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation recently. Due to their family roots, the pair were the designated ambassadors of the Tribe of the Whitetop Band of Native Indians, Manchester, KY.

Suspect leads police on high-speed chase

An attempt to serve a warrant on Robert Flores of Baker City ended in a high-speed chase followed by a foot pursuit in the mountains just outside Medical Springs on Tuesday.

Election results

With 8,870 total votes cast so far, Baker County



Submitted Photo

Larry Overman detaches the cables from the dozer, which hauled the blower down from the mine. Carey Clarke of Sumpter helped haul the loaned display piece down on Sunday.

has a 79.62% voter turnout this election. In the race for Baker County Sheriff, incumbent Travis Ash has 5,243 votes and Deputy John Hoopes 3,113 votes, giving the win to Ash. Nonpartisan initiative 1-74 is ahead by 92 votes at present, but with an estimated 150 ballots or more still in the process of arrival or with signatures being verified, 1-74 is too close to call.

Sunridge sale draws closer

A recent court-approved sale of the Best Western Sunridge Inn of Baker City to Nampa-based Deepak Prashar, for \$6.3 million, brings to a close the previously unresolved financial issues associated with the property.

Manager Lisa Wilson said Wednesday that while the court documents show no precise closing date, all of the involved parties believe and hope the sale will conclude by year's end.

ODOT meets with LEOS over variable speed limits

By now, anyone who has travelled I-84 between Baker City and La Grande has noticed the new overhead electronic speed signs that were installed over the summer.

The signs are part of a Variable Speed Limit (VSL) project ODOT embarked on in an effort to reduce traffic crashes,

the first of its kind in the State of Oregon. The signs went live October 1, 2016, in test mode and the mild conditions the area has experienced have yet to trigger the signs to reduce speeds.

VFW holds 5th Youth Shoot

The fifth annual VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Youth Shoot was held at the Veterans Memorial Club in Baker City on Saturday, November 19, 2016, bringing together 46 competitors and \$3,500 in total donations.

Hand, foot, mouth disease hits Pine-Eagle

Pine Eagle Charter School in Halfway sent an email to parents on Monday, November 21, warning that there is currently an outbreak of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease.

School Secretary Angie Chetwood stated on Monday that three of the total 200 student body (Kindergarten through 12th Grade) were officially absent due to the disease.

Reason for dog deaths unknown

Rumors have been flying around Baker City recently regarding a string of dog deaths within the City Limits. However, thus far it has been impossible to determine if the theory that the dogs were poisoned is correct—or in fact unfounded.

December

Bobcat attack puts damper on goat farm

When Courtney and Doug Holton moved their family to Halfway, it was with the intent to find the best environment in which to raise their special needs children. The Special Kid Goat Farm, Courtney's dream, has been an idea in the works—but their plans were severely damaged on the night of Saturday, November 26, with the discovery of bobcat predation.

Unity meeting held on solar array project

Around 20 people attended a community meeting in Unity, on Tuesday, November 29, 2016, 6 p.m., to discuss a proposed 2.75 megawatt solar farm project in the area, with Enerparc, Inc. Project Development Analyst Peter Desmarais, and Associate Director of Project Development Peter Davis.

Expansion ahead for Sumpter Nugget

Justin and Jenny Long of Baker City recently purchased the long-closed

Sumpter Nugget restaurant and are currently remodeling the building to house three suites—a café, recreational marijuana store, and Justin Long's construction business. The Longs also own Long's Water Works in Baker City.

Another suspect flees on foot

During the lunch hour of November 29, the Baker City Police Department received a complaint of an assault in which suspect Jamie Grove allegedly had rammed his bicycle tire into the leg of the reporting party in the area near 5th and Baker Street. The suspect dropped his bike and fled on foot across multiple private properties.

Coordination meeting held

The Baker County Board of Commissioners held another U.S. Forest Service (USFS) agency-to-agency coordination meeting, on Monday, December 5.

Eclipse planning begins

The full solar eclipse coming across North America next August 21 has been described as a celestial event of Biblical proportions by some.

Manslaughter charges brought in infant death

On December 13, 2016 Beth Marie Speelman, (dob 5/22/84) of 1695 Auburn Ave #3 Baker City, Oregon was arraigned on an Indictment in Baker County Circuit Court.

Speelman was indicted by the grand jury for Manslaughter in the Second Degree, Criminally Negligent Homicide and Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine.

Police K9 fundraiser brings in \$28K

"This turned out greater than I ever thought it would," said volunteer Tori Brown.

Community searches two weeks for lost dog

Anitra Castleton met her dog Toby almost five years ago. But this month, she almost lost him until he was found by locals.

St. Alphonsus has new interim president

J. Phil Harrop, PhD, FACHE, has been named to succeed H. Ray Gibbons, FACHE as interim president of Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Baker City starting January 9, 2017. As interim president, Harrop will guide all operations and strategy for the medical center, which provides healthcare services to a wide-reaching community in rural eastern Oregon. Gibbons will retire from his current position as president to transition into a broader role for Saint Alphonsus as nursing home administrator, Oregon state healthcare advocacy director, and Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization representative.

Harrop has been with Saint Alphonsus since 2012, where he has served in the role of executive director of operations for the Nampa facilities. He has also served as interim CEO for Walter Knox Memorial Hospital in Emmett, Idaho, as executive director of John Stoddard Cancer

Center in Des Moines, Iowa, and as director of Indiana University Health Goshen Center for Cancer Care. Harrop serves on the boards of the Nampa Chamber of Commerce, the Idaho Healthcare Executive Forum, and the University District Association of Nampa. He was elected Idaho Regent for the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) in 2015.

"Phil will be an invaluable asset to our medical center in Baker City," said Rodney Reider, CEO of Saint Alphonsus Health System. "His dynamic and innovative approach will continue us down the path of providing high-quality care closer to home for the communities we serve. As an experienced healthcare professional, I am confident in Phil's abilities to serve as a highly effective, mission-driven leader."

Harrop earned a bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and four advanced degrees from The Ohio State University,



Submitted Photo

Philli Harrop, PhD.

including an MBA, Master of Health Administration, MS in public health, and PhD in health services management and policy. Board certified in healthcare management as an ACHE Fellow, Harrop has published numerous articles on a variety of healthcare topics, and has lectured on healthcare and leadership at several universities across the country.

BLM issues decision on treatment of invasive plants

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Vale District has issued the Record of Decision (ROD) on the Integrated Invasive Plant Management Program. This ROD is the culmination of more than five years of environmental analysis and public consultation and will allow for a total of 17 herbicides to be used in the control of invasive species and noxious weeds. Prior to this decision, only four herbicides were allowed to be used: 2,4-D, dicamba, glyphosate, and picloram.

The issue of invasive species and noxious weeds has been a growing problem across the western landscape. Wildfires are growing larger and more frequent. Invasive species dry quickly and burn quickly and can create

an environment where fires can start easily and move quickly across the landscape. This burned landscape then becomes vulnerable to invasion by weeds and invasive species.

This cycle has created a situation where sagebrush landscapes are at an ever-increasing risk. Sage-obligate species like the Greater Sage-grouse are at risk through the loss of their habitat to fire and to invasive species. Currently, invasive species occupy nearly 200,000 acres in 27,500 known locations in the BLM's Vale District alone.

The use of 13 additional herbicides will allow for greater selectivity in treatment, greater effectiveness at lower doses, and fewer adverse effects. The

additional herbicides will also help to mitigate herbicide resistance, address the increasing number of invasive species on the landscape, and improve the effectiveness of non-herbicide treatments like biological controls and prescribed fire.

"We're pleased to bring a new set of tools to bear on an increasingly complex problem on our landscape," said Don Gonzalez, BLM Vale District Manager. "We're confident that this will help enhance the effectiveness of the focused management we're implementing across the landscape."

The Record of Decision and associated documentation can be found on the BLM's ePlanning website at: <http://go.usa.gov/x9CNA>.

Flu cases on the rise

Influenza cases are rising in Oregon, and although the increase is expected this time of year, Oregon Health Authority officials say it shows flu season is off to a strong start.

It's also a good reminder that it's not too late to get a flu shot, said Paul Cieslak, MD, of the OHA Public Health Division.

"The winter months are a time when we find ourselves indoors a lot, gathering with family, friends and colleagues, and it's also a very good time for the flu virus to spread," said Cieslak, medical director in Public Health Division's Acute and Communicable Disease Prevention Section and the Oregon Immunization Program. "People can get a vaccination now and be ready for the festivities."

During the week of Dec. 4-10, Oregon laboratories reported 207 specimens

that were positive for influenza. That's up from 134 positive flu specimens during Nov. 27-Dec. 3, and from 117 positive specimens during Nov. 20-27. Most of the cases have been influenza A, this season's predominant flu type.

Hospitalizations have jumped sharply in recent weeks, too. So far, there have been a total of 66 hospitalizations for influenza-like illnesses—based on monitoring in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties—since flu season began the first week of October. That includes 23 hospitalizations the week of Dec. 4-10, up from 17 during Nov. 27-Dec. 3, and 13 during Nov. 20-26.

There have been no pediatric deaths attributed to the flu this season, officials say. The Public Health Division does not track adult

flu deaths.

"While this is shaping up to be a heavy flu season, this uptick during this time of the year is fairly typical," Cieslak said.

Flu is a virus that causes mild to severe respiratory illness and can lead to hospitalization. The virus kills thousands of people in the U.S. each year. People who are at higher risk of severe illness or death include children, adults older than 65, pregnant women and those with chronic medical conditions or weak immune systems.

So far, flu vaccine manufacturers have shipped more than 1.1 million doses to Oregon during the 2016-2017 flu season. More than a million of these doses have been reported to Oregon's ALERT Immunization Information System as having been administered.