

Editorial

The Not-so "Pleasant" Stretch of I-84

The horrifying multi-vehicle crash which occurred east of Baker City early Saturday morning ended just about as well as a horrifying multi-vehicle crash can....there were no fatalities and emergency responders, our local hospital, medical providers, tow truck drivers, ODOT, and those directly involved in the accident, dealt with the situation about as well as could possibly be expected. We've heard stories of close calls and seen photos (many of which have garnered national attention) which are nothing short of miraculous. No doubt there are heroic stories we may never hear.

Bad winter roads are not new to most of us who make eastern Oregon our home. Let's face it, any one of us could easily have been a part of a similar accident as we get about our daily lives. A lot of us travel regularly to Boise and Ontario and the majority of Ash Grove employees make that daily trek going one direction or the other on I-84.

I've often lived in the country or at least a fair distance from where I've worked and have commuted at different times on a daily (or at least a very regular) basis to Baker City, La Grande and even to and from Wallowa County. However, the couple of years we lived on Plano Road near Durkee, the daily winter commute to work in Baker City entailed some of the most harrowing driving I've ever encountered.

In my opinion, people underestimate the treachery of that section of I-84 from Pleasant Valley to Burnt

River Canyon because it's relatively straight and the climb in elevation is gradual. I understand the need to drive cautiously and that it's a driver's responsibility to purchase appropriate tires and ultimately, to decide whether or not to travel at all. I also believe that ODOT maintenance crews are out in force and that conditions can change in an instant.

With that said, is there anything else which can possibly be done to help avoid another terrible accident? The next one might not have such a relatively "happy ending."

Could additional signage or sensors be put in place alerting drivers to the potential of black ice? Thermometers which tell the outside temperature are helpful but are not present in many older vehicles.

Since there are chemical reactions associated with applying de-icer in certain conditions which can actually make matters worse, should we follow the lead of states who use salt? I understand that the use of salt damages the paint on a vehicle and accelerates corrosion and rust. But so does being smashed between two jack-knifed semis. We've seen photographic evidence of that.

Obviously, winter driving can be treacherous and conditions change from moment to moment. But can we make sure we're doing everything possible to help keep drivers safe when conditions are ripe for black ice?

-GDP

Letters

Give Harvey our Enthusiastic Support

To the Editor:

Good morning. It is a good morning for Baker County. Now is the beginning of a new day! After 12 years of the status-quo we can now anticipate some economic progress and freedom in Baker County. That is our goal.

Our County is rich in resources, natural and human, but poor in opportunity. One of our greatest problems has been that the federal agencies, which we have hired to manage and protect the natural resources on our PUBLIC LANDS, now appear to believe they own those lands and resources. Their management technique is largely that of precluding our access and use. As a result each year large areas of forest burn for lack of constructive use and on-the-ground management. Then salvage lumber from the remaining dead trees is precluded, all wasted resources and money. Would intelligent forest management permit this?

Mineral resources are also held hostage by the federal agencies. The agencies have delayed the mining of some claims for very long periods asserting the time is required to make sure that no environmental restraints are violated. Some mining applications have been delayed for years instead of a few months as envisioned by the laws that govern the process. A vigorous, and safe, mining industry would add very greatly to the local economy. Then why can't it be?

Local controls are robbing our prosperity also. The process required for permission to build a new house is tedious and expensive. Each step of the way requires study or inspection each of which has a time delay and dollar fee attached. The cost of approved access in some cases precludes building. Both the extra time and money required by excessive local control discourages construction of, particularly rural, new homes.

The above is but a tiny tip of a gigantic iceberg that has brought our economic and social progress to a grinding halt. We now have a leader, Bill Harvey, who understands basic economics and our rights under the Oregon and U.S. Constitutions. Let us all give Commissioner Harvey our enthusiastic support and enjoy the benefits of the new day.

Jasper Coombes
Haines

Friends Helping Friends Fight Fire and Getting More Organized

To the Editor:

The first annual organizational meeting of the Lookout-Glasgow RPA will be held Jan. 26, 2015, at 7 p.m. at the Keating Fire Hall.

This district encompasses the area from the Oregon Trail Interpretative Center to Richland, Ore., all land not part of another fire district that drains to the Powder River. All land owners and lease owners within this area are invited to attend the meeting.

The meeting will review the assessments proposed by the board and the bylaws, as well as plans for the coming fire season, including potential for pre-fire preparations and creation of fuel breaks.

This association is a group of people who have informally fought range fires in this area to reduce fire damage to the rangelands owned by themselves and their friends and neighbors. It is always better to fight and stop a fire on your neighbor's property than wait until it gets to your property. This group has always communicated primarily by smoke signals. When a column of smoke is seen, it is time to load up the cat and whatever other equipment is available and head for the fire.

The association which was approved by the Oregon Board of Forestry in July of 2014, and has already assisted is putting out several fires before they got large. The association has acquired two off road trucks with 1000 gallon tanks and a D-7 cat, that have been declared surplus by other agencies. Additional equipment has been applied for. Radios and basic firefighting equipment are also in the works.

The goal is to have the people who already live and work in this area better trained and better equipped so fires can be stopped quickly before they get large and expensive.

Dick Fleming
Secretary-Treasurer of the Lookout-Glasgow Rangeland Protection Association

Beakfast Bird Numbers

Many Bird Species Set Records During Christmas Bird Count

On Dec. 20, 34 Union County birders braved the elements and participated in the 39th annual Christmas Bird Count. Many species set new records. Here is a peek at some of their findings:

American robins: 721 (previous record set in 2000 at 237)

Black-billed magpie: 626 (previous record set in 2013 at 452)

Great-horned owl: 21 (previous record set in 2013 at 17)

Red-tailed hawk: 221 (previous record set 2005 at 172)

Marsh-wren: 28 (previous record set in 2005 at 18)

Pine-siskin: 128 (previous record set in 2002 at 91)

Red-crossbill: 60 (previous record set in 2005 at 24)

Eurasian collared dove: 196 (previous record set in 2012 at 126)

Other sightings included Canadian geese, a Peregrine falcon, Lincoln sparrows, Varied thrush, Saw-whet owls, Virginia Rails and a Pileated Woodpecker. Our thanks to these volunteer birders who participate in one of the longest running citizen-based research projects in the world.

See the
Record-Courier
website:
therconline.com

Guest Opinion

by Representative Cliff Bentz (R), District 60
(Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur and part of Lake County)

Yes, Private Land Will be Affected by Sage Grouse Listing

I appreciate efforts to protect Eastern Oregon from the economic damage that a listing of the Sage Grouse under the Endangered Species Act would cause. I realize that readers might be distracted by the use of the word "tax" and overlook what will happen to ranchers, hunters, miners and small communities should the Sage Grouse be listed. In brief, there will be fewer cattle, less hunting, road closures, restricted off road travel, no new roads, no new mines, fewer fences, almost never a power transmission line on public land, no wind or solar power facilities, no power lines to new wells, a three percent "cap" on land disturbed and to be disturbed, and literally years and years of bureaucratic paper shuffling before anything slightly out of the ordinary can happen on public OR PRIVATE land where a sage grouse is or might be. Yes, I said "PRIVATE LAND."

In other words, a listing essentially freezes 97 percent of Eastern Oregon in time and nothing can or will change in how you use 97 percent of your land unless the environmental community is at your table. And on the infrequent occasion that change is allowed, it will be minuscule and driven by studies. Expensive studies. If you want to see our future, take a look at Southern Oregon after the Spotted Owl. Given this, it's no surprise that Oregon cattlemen want me to help them gain support for and perhaps pass a five year salt tax, (amounting to something around 50-60 cents per cow per year) for use in restoring grouse habitat and to provide a real argument against the need to list the bird. The Cattlemen are visiting communities across Eastern Oregon explaining the concept, and further pointing out that we have no choice but to use every tool in the political tool box, including taxes, to try to stop the listing. If they are successful, this community will have dodged another ESA bullet for a very small cost indeed.

"America's Got Talent" Holding Auditions in Boise Feb. 7

Entering into its milestone Season 10, auditions for NBC's hit summer series "America's Got Talent" includes a stop in Boise, Idaho on Feb 10.

Registration for open call cities is currently OPEN, with online auditions continuing through March 2015. For more information on audition cities and venues, the audition process and tips, or to submit an online video audition for season 10, please visit <http://www.AGTAuditions.com/>.

The website will be updated on an ongoing basis as additional information becomes available.

With celebrity judges Howie Mandel, Mel B, Heidi Klum and Howard Stern, along with host Nick Cannon, America's Got Talent remained the #1 summer show in total viewers for a ninth

year in a row. For the first time in the show's history, America chose a magician as their favorite act, season 9 winner Mat Franco who recently headlined the "America's Got Talent Live" stage show in Las Vegas.

Baker County Museum Manager Position Available

Baker County is accepting applications for a part-time Museum Manager through Jan. 30, 2015. For more information contact the State Employment Department or visit our website at www.baker-county.org. All applicants will be pre-screened. EEO

Contact the
Record-Courier
541.856.3615

Huntington News

Huntington Hosts Mayor's Council Meeting

By Emily Braswell

January is notorious everywhere for heralding news shortages. In the midst of muddling through the month required to recuperate after the Christmas adrenaline rush, the Huntington Schools organized a Spaghetti Feed fund raiser, attracting people city wide to the feast.

Also, last week, the City of Huntington was host to the quarterly Mayor's Council meeting. Mayors from all the cities within Baker County are invited to attend this meeting to listen to city updates and get important information on key projects from groups, such as Base Camp Baker and Idaho Power. Being the first meeting after the selection of several new mayors for many of the cities, there were a lot of introductions. Baker County Commission Chair Bill Harvey and Economic Development Director, Greg Smith were also in attendance of that meeting.

The boys and girls High School basketball teams have reached mid-season. The varsity boys team have won two of the five total league games played so far. They will play again in Crane Friday evening, Jan. 23 at 7:30 p.m., and again on Saturday at 2:30 p.m. in Jordan Valley.

The girls varsity team has had one win over Burnt River, making league game record 1-4. They will travel with the boys team this weekend to Crane and Jordan Valley. Friday's game will begin at 5 p.m. and Saturday's game is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m.



Pounce is an unusual name and I am not sure how I acquired it, but it fits me. I'm a young male Border Collie mix looking for a forever home. I am so full of energy and I'm looking for an active family that will take me on walks, hikes, camping and perhaps teach me how to swim. As agile as I am, I know that I will make a great

competitor in agility trials, flight ball or diving. No small children and definitely no cats in my new home. I would like to have a fenced yard to keep me safe and secure yet provide me room to run, play and exercise with family members. I have been an indoor/outdoor dog, but tied up so please invite me into the house and allow me to be a part of the family. I am neutered, micro-chipped and vaccinations will be current prior to my adoption. Call Carmen at 541-519-4530 or Best Friends of Baker for more info.

Call Best Friends of Baker, Inc.
541-519-7387

Adopt a Friend!

