

BLM mulls change to Southeast Oregon management approach



Capital Press/Mateusz Perkowski, File

The federal Bureau of Land Management is updating its plan for managing much of southeastern Oregon.

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

BAKER CITY — The U.S. Bureau of Land Management could change how it manages a swath of Southeastern Oregon.

agreement also requires that the amendment process look at the livestock grazing program and off-highway vehicle use.

Jeremy Austin of the Oregon Natural Desert Association, which has offices in Bend and Portland, said the group is concerned with the alternative BLM prefers in the current draft amendment “because it disregards the past 17 years of hard work by the local BLM district and many interested groups.”

In a June 18 newsletter, he said the BLM-preferred alternative “doesn’t protect the valuable wilderness-caliber lands in this region. It ignores decades of local stakeholder input and leaves wild places vulnerable to development.”

BLM says the draft EIS analyzes five alternatives, one of which is to take no action and continue management under the 2002 plan — as amended by a 2015 record of decision for protecting sage grouse habitat — and continue to protect wilderness characteristics in the 76 land units identified as having them.

The agency said the alternative it now prefers does not propose protections for lands

with wilderness characteristics. BLM would keep current land-use planning allocations and grazing policies while continuing to provide for a sustainable forage yield. Vehicle restrictions to protect grouse habitat would remain.

“That alternative more closely reflects the (Trump) administration’s stance on multiple-use management, so everybody can get what they need out of some federal lands,” BLM Vale District Manager Don Gonzalez said.

The most restrictive alternative prioritizes protecting all areas with wilderness characteristics, further limits vehicle use and adds grazing rules.

With respect to lands with wilderness characteristics, “this is how BLM is managing it now, until it gets through this planning process and makes a final determination if we continue to manage any of the 76 units to protect those characteristics,”

Gonzalez said.

Another alternative prioritizes protecting 27 of the wilderness-characterized units, limits off-highway vehicle use in them and leaves grazing management unchanged. Another prioritizes protecting 33 wilderness units while adding grazing and vehicle rules.

All three wilderness-protecting approaches would incorporate a 250-foot setback from boundary roads for future management.

Gonzalez said the final decision could incorporate parts of each management alternative. Once BLM finalizes a management plan that protects wilderness characteristics, it cannot take steps that would diminish them long term.

The area includes sagebrush steppe, grazing leases and part of the federally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers corridor for the Owyhee River.

Baker City group aims to establish quiet zone

By **JAYSON JACOBY**
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — A group of Baker City residents has created an online petition gauging local interest in trying to establish a “quiet zone” in which freight trains wouldn’t sound their horns at crossings within the city except when the train operator sees a vehicle on the tracks or other dangerous situation.

Cities can apply for a quiet zone designation, although they must also pay to install concrete medians or other enhanced measures on streets at railroad crossings to prevent drivers from trying to drive around a crossing gate arm.

According to a press release from the Baker City group, its effort was inspired in part by La Grande.

In April the Federal Railroad Administration granted La Grande’s request for a quiet zone, culminating a campaign that began in that city about 20 years ago, according to a story in *The Observer* newspaper.

Federal rules require train engineers to sound the horn for 15 to 20 seconds before the train enters a

crossing, and not more than one-quarter mile before the crossing. Because there are five crossings in Baker City, locomotives, which can travel at 50 mph through town, sometimes sound their horns with little interval as they pass through Baker City.

On average about 24 trains roll through the city per day.

“I support a quiet zone, because it would improve railroad safety and reduce the horn blasts that keep us up at night,” said Anna Fargo, a member of the informal Baker City group that set up the online survey.

The idea of establishing a quiet zone in Baker City is not a new one.

In May 2002 the city, at the behest of City Councilor Chuck Phegley, put on the ballot a measure asking voters whether they were interested in the city potentially pursuing a quiet zone designation.

A large majority — 82% — voted no on that nonbinding measure.

The report estimated the cost to qualify for a quiet zone at a minimum of \$100,000, based on the city installing concrete medians at two of the five public crossings.

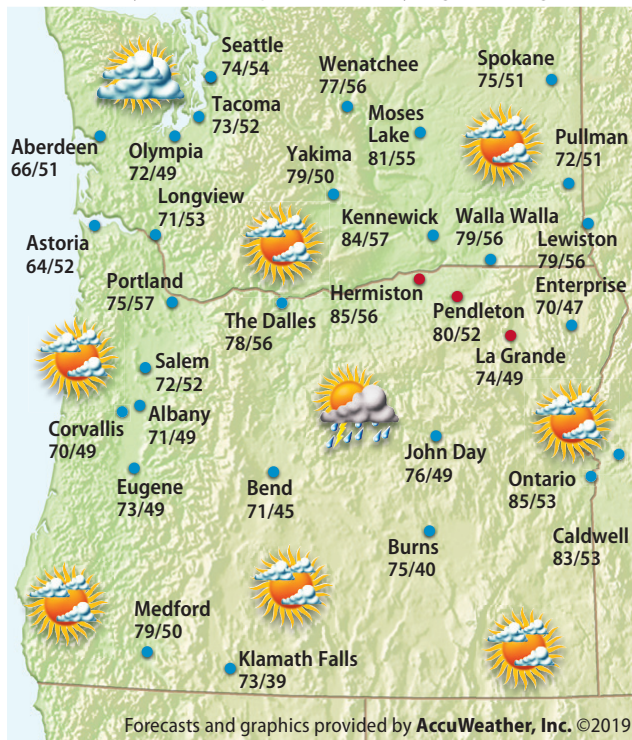
Forecast for Pendleton Area

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TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Nice with some sun	Clouds and sun with a shower	Periods of clouds and sunshine	Pleasant with clouds and sun	Partly sunny and comfortable
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
80° 52°	74° 51°	70° 49°	70° 46°	79° 53°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
85° 56°	80° 55°	76° 54°	78° 50°	84° 57°

OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today’s weather. Temperatures are today’s highs and tonight’s lows.



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	74°	47°
Normals	82°	54°
Records	102° (1992)	30° (1904)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.09"
Normal month to date 0.98"
Year to date 9.37"
Last year to date 6.49"
Normal year to date 7.49"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	78°	54°
Normals	82°	55°
Records	107° (1992)	41° (1934)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date Trace
Normal month to date 0.51"
Year to date 4.42"
Last year to date 5.10"
Normal year to date 5.62"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Wed.
Boardman	WSW 6-12	SSW 4-8
Pendleton	W 6-12	NW 6-12

SUN AND MOON

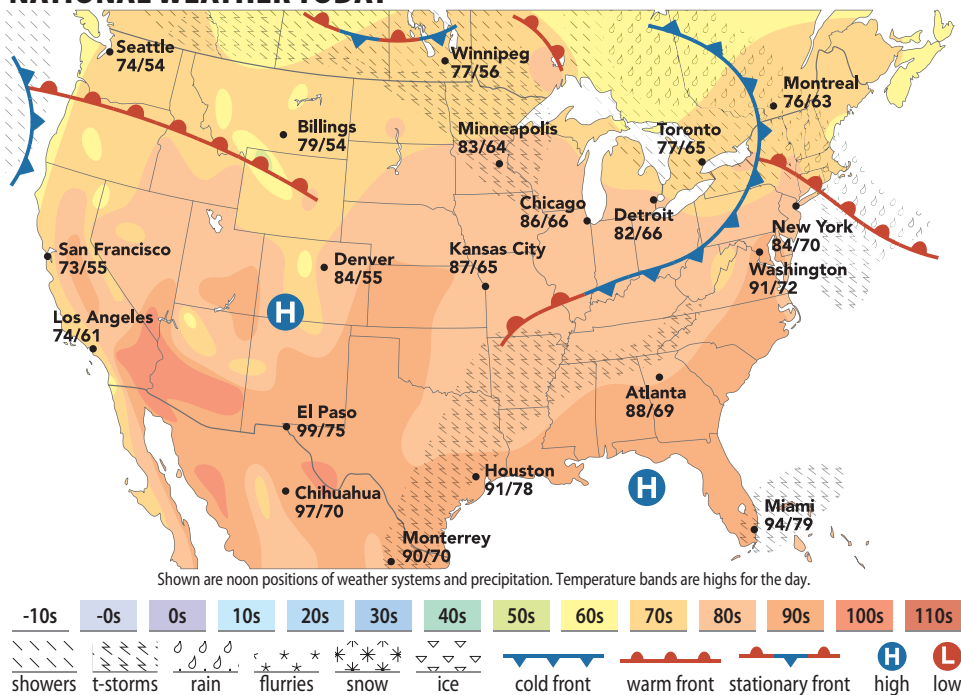
Sunrise today	5:07 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:49 p.m.
Moonrise today	1:16 a.m.
Moonset today	1:15 p.m.

Last	New	First	Full
June 25	July 2	July 9	July 16

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday’s National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 108° in Thermal, Calif. Low 24° in Angel Fire, N.M.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



BRIEFLY

U.S. releases environmental analysis of plan to stop fires

BOISE, Idaho (AP)— Federal officials have released a draft environmental analysis for a proposal intended to stop rangeland wildfires in a huge swath of the West that hosts cattle ranching and recreation and is home to imperiled sage grouse.

The analysis released Friday looks at the impact of altering or removing vegetation on strips of land up to 165 yards wide and up to 11,000 miles long in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada and Utah.

The draft released by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management follows the agency’s 2017 announcement that it planned the review.

Fuel breaks can cost from \$12,000 to \$44,000 a mile.

BLM spokesman Ken Frederick says there’s no cost estimate yet because it’s not yet clear what types of fuel breaks field managers might choose.

Critics say the work fragments habitat and harms wildlife.

Public comments on the analysis are being taken until early August.

Couple sentenced to life in Newport man’s slaying

ASTORIA (AP) — Two people have been sentenced to life in prison for the murder of a 71-year-old Newport man in 2016.

The *Astorian* reports Christian Wilkins and Adeena Copell were sentenced Friday in the death of Howard Vinge.

Vinge was beaten to death inside his RV in September 2016 and his body was dumped down an embankment east of Astoria. Prosecutors say Copell and Wilkins lived with Vinge shortly before his death.

Prosecutors say the couple then drove Vinge’s car to Arizona, where they were arrested.

Wilkins pleaded guilty in May to murder, abuse of a corpse and two counts of unauthorized use of a vehicle. Copell was convicted of the same charges in May after a trial in Clatsop County Circuit Court.

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