

Search and rescue helps family stuck in snow

Beaverton family becomes stranded trying to reach Hells Canyon Overlook

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Three members of the Baker County Sheriff's Office's search and rescue team brought to safety a Beaverton couple and their son early Monday, April 12, after their car became stuck in the snow on Sunday, April 11, on an unplowed Forest Service road in eastern Baker County.

No one was hurt in the incident, said Ashley McClay, public information officer for the sheriff's office.

The Baker County 911 Dispatch Office received a call about 2:26 a.m. on April 12 from Jason Brunson, 52, McClay said.

Brunson told a dispatcher that his 2016 Ford Fusion sedan was stuck in snow along the Wallowa Mountain Loop Road, also known as Forest Road 39, about 8.9 miles north of Highway 86. Road 39 branches off Highway 86 about 9 miles north-east of Halfway.

Brunson was accompa-



Baker County Sheriff's Office/Contributed Photo

A Beaverton family's car got stuck in snow along Forest Road 39 in eastern Baker County on Sunday, April 11, 2021. Baker County Sheriff's Office search and rescue members, summoned by a cellphone call early on Monday, April 12, rescued Jason Brunson, his wife, Jennifer, and their 7-year-old son, George.

nied by his wife, Jennifer, 49, and their 7-year-old son, George, McClay said.

The three search and rescue team members traveled to the site in two side-by-side all-terrain vehicles, equipped with tires rather than tracks. They arrived at 5:38 a.m., and brought the Brunsons back to the highway.

McClay said Sgt. Eric Colton helped the Brunsons arrange to have their car towed. It apparently

suffered damage when they were trying to free it from the snow, McClay said.

McClay said the Brunson family was trying to reach the Hells Canyon Overlook. The turnoff to that site, which is along a side road, is about 10 miles farther along Road 39 from where the car became stuck.

Brunson said the car got mired in snow between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. on April 11.

Brunson told rescuers that the family tried through the

evening to extricate the car, without success. Around 2 a.m. on April 12 he walked about one-quarter mile to a point where he had cell service to call 911.

McClay said the car had a nearly full tank of gas, and the family apparently was able to run the engine to operate the heater and warm the interior.

There are no weather stations within 15 miles or so of the site.

A station at Salt Creek

Summit, about 16 miles northeast, recorded a low temperature of 20 degrees on April 12.

In early March, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, prompted by multiple search and rescue calls this past winter along Road 39 in both Baker and Wallowa counties, issued a press release reminding drivers that the road is a snowmobile route during winter. The U.S. Forest Service placed barriers along the road to discourage passenger vehicles.

According to the press release, the Forest Service planned to move the barriers farther up the road this spring as the snow recedes.

Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash said Forest Service officials notified him recently that the barriers would be removed. A sign remains warning the road is not maintained during winter, but Ash said he believes the sign is too small to be effective.

He said the Brunsons told search and rescue members that the family didn't see the warning sign.

Road 39, which continues north into Wallowa County, usually doesn't fully open to vehicles until May or early June.

One problem with Road 39 and several other forest

roads that are popular with snowmobilers, Ash said, is that the snow machines compact the snow into a firm but thin surface that can hold the weight of a car.

Until it doesn't. "You can do fine on that compact snow until you break through," Ash said. "Then you're stuck."

He said people who aren't familiar with snowmobile routes don't recognize that a road hasn't been maintained for wheeled vehicles.

Ash said although he's happy the Brunsons are safe, he's concerned that future episodes will not turn out as well.

He believes bigger signs or some other more blatant notice to travelers who aren't familiar with the area is necessary.

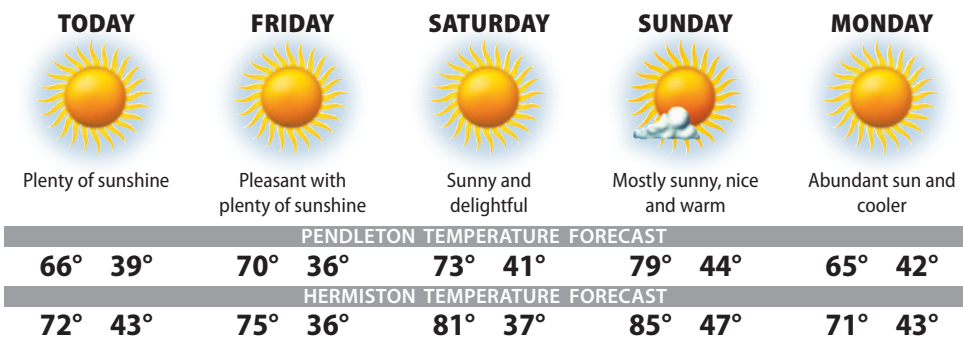
"We have to do something," Ash said.

The sheriff is familiar with rescues on the snow-covered Road 39.

On Thanksgiving Day 2020, Ash helped an 18-year-old Boise man whose car became stuck in snow on the road more than 12 miles beyond where the Brunsons' car was mired.

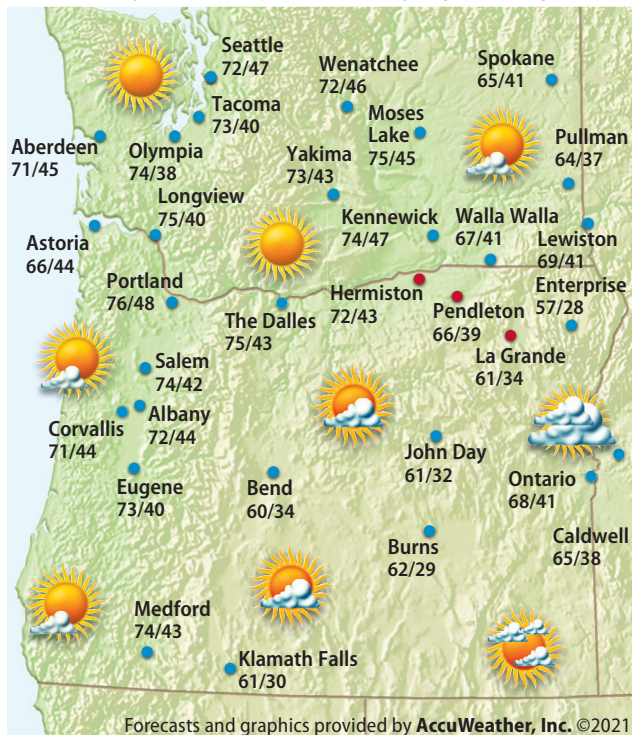
Exactly 20 years earlier, on the same holiday in 2000, Ash rescued three travelers from Germany who became stranded in the same area.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



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	58°	23°
Normals	61°	39°
Records	90° (1904)	19° (1911)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	Trace
Normal month to date	0.59"
Year to date	3.34"
Last year to date	4.98"
Normal year to date	4.55"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	67°	42°
Normals	64°	39°
Records	89° (1936)	24° (2014)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	Trace
Normal month to date	0.35"
Year to date	1.20"
Last year to date	0.48"
Normal year to date	3.46"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Fri.
Boardman	NE 6-12	NE 7-14
Pendleton	NNW 4-8	NE 6-12

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	6:09 a.m.
Sunset tonight	7:42 p.m.
Moonrise today	8:00 a.m.
Moonset today	11:37 p.m.

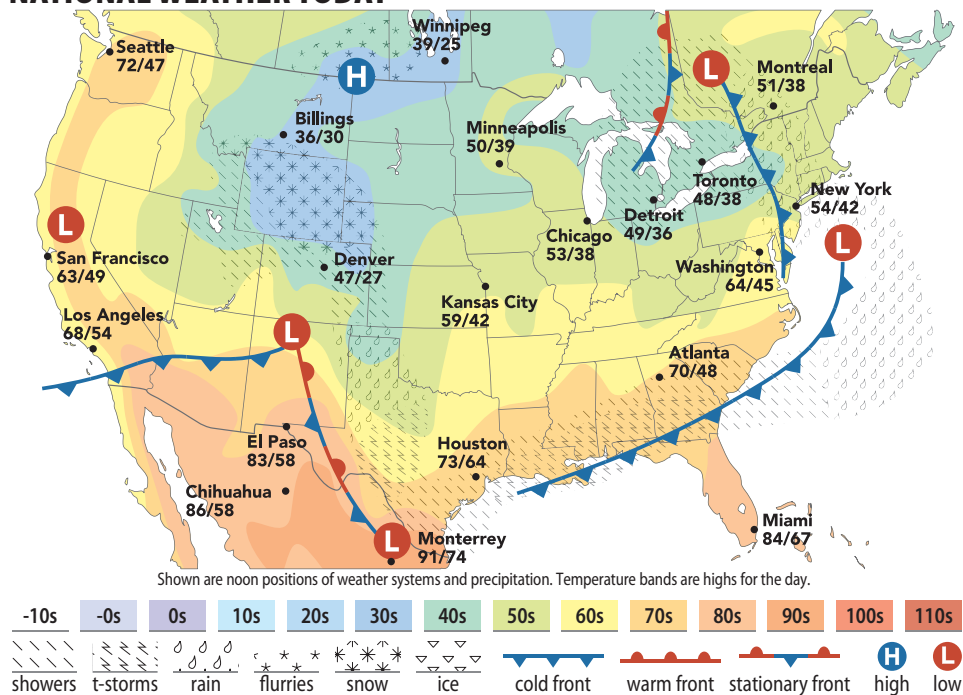
First Full Last New
Apr 19 Apr 26 May 3 May 11

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 96° in Zapata, Texas Low 9° in Yellowstone N.P., Wyo.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Renewed funding for rural education

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — Innovative teacher preparation programs at Eastern Oregon University got a boost from two state grants that will expand collaboration and responsive teaching practices in rural Oregon.

The Educator Advancement Panel and Oregon Department of Education awarded grants to two EOU programs: one that's already successful, and one that's brand new.

The Oregon Teacher Pathway (OTP) program received \$350,000 to enhance its work. OTP began in 2014, and has allowed more than 250 high school students to explore a career in teaching while being mentored by EOU students. High schoolers who matriculate from the program to EOU can earn tuition reductions and serve as mentors themselves. Over a dozen graduates of the program are already teaching

in regional classrooms.

OTP Director and education professor Tawnya Lubbes said the new funds will improve opportunities for professional development and increase stipends for high school teachers who introduce teens to a career in education. The grant will also support data analysis and collection to evaluate the program, connect first- and second-year teachers with grants, and provide multicultural libraries for their classrooms.

New to the mix, the Teach Rural Oregon (TRO) and the Eastern Oregon Teaching Academy (EOTA), were awarded \$200,000 in partnership with the Wallowa Educational Service District. Education professor Dave Dallas founded TRO and EOTA in order to open the door for community college students, paraprofessionals, and other individuals to become teachers in rural areas of the state, as well as provide

professional development opportunities for teachers in underserved rural schools.

Grant funding will provide an opportunity for community college students from Gresham to visit rural Eastern Oregon for three weeks in May to observe classrooms and converse with and learn from rural colleagues. A student board, crisis intervention for teachers, access to EOU faculty and stipends for guest speakers are also part of the vision for EOTA. Ultimately, the program aims to recruit more teachers to the rural areas of Oregon, Dallas said.

"We're two of 27 grant recipients in the state of Oregon, so EOU received over a half-million dollars of that pot of funding. It's significant that our programs are being recognized and allowed that opportunity," Lubbes said.

The OTP program also qualified to apply for an additional \$100,000 grant through the Meyer Foundation.

IN BRIEF

College Place City Council approves Bird electric scooters

COLLEGE PLACE, Wash. — College Place, Washington, will soon see commuters on scooters riding through town, providing a new travel option for city residents.

The city joins Pendleton and Hermiston, and more than 100 other cities in allowing the app-based Bird electric scooters into its city limits.

The Walla Walla City Council was briefed on the same scooters on Monday, April 12, at its virtual work session and will consider allowing them into city limits as well, which would allow the residents of both College Place and Walla Walla to use the scooters to get to and from both cities.

In College Place, the Youth Advisory Commission, Park, Arbor and Recreation Board, and Economic Development, Tourism and Events Commission recommended that the council approve the resolution. The city council had many of its questions answered at its previous work session.

The College Place City Council unanimously passed the resolution authorizing a Memorandum of Understanding with Bird Rides Inc. to operate in the city of College Place on Tuesday, April 13, at its virtual meeting with council members Melodie Selby and Heather

Schermann absent.

Adult wolf hit, killed by car in Eastern Oregon

RICHLAND — An adult wolf from the Cornucopia pack in eastern Baker County was hit and killed by a car on Highway 86 near Richland last week.

Several motorists reported the dead wolf, starting around 6:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 8, according to Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife office in Baker City.

The wolf was hit near Milepost 36, about 5 miles west of Richland.

Ratliff said he doesn't know who hit the wolf. No one has reported doing so.

The dead wolf, a male weighing 95 pounds, was born in the spring of 2019 along with two other pups, Ratliff said. That litter elevated the group of wolves to pack status.

Although the wolf did not have a tracking collar, Ratliff said a GPS signal from a collar fitted to a female wolf in the Cornucopia Pack, also part of the pack's spring 2019 litter, showed that wolf, early on April 8, was near the point on the highway where the male wolf was killed.

—EO Media Group and Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

EAST OREGONIAN
— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —
211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

In the App Store:
EO **EO**
E-EDITION

East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.
Copyright © 2021, EO Media Group

Circulation Dept.
For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 800-781-3214

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
EZPay	\$10.75/month	50 percent
52 weeks	\$135	42 percent
26 weeks	\$71	39 percent
13 weeks	\$37	36 percent

Single copy price:
\$1.50 Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

ADVERTISING

Regional Sales Director (Eastside) EO Media Group:

- Karrine Brogoitti
541-963-3161 • kbrogoitti@eomediagroup.com

Multimedia Consultants:

- Kelly Schwirse
541-564-4531 • kschwirse@eastoregonian.com
- Audra Workman
541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

Business Office

- Dayle Stinson
541-966-0824 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com

Classified & Legal Advertising
1-800-962-2819 or 541-278-2678
classifieds@eastoregonian.com or legals@eastoregonian.com

NEWS

- To submit news tips and press releases: call 541-966-0818 or email news@eastoregonian.com
- To submit community events, calendar items and Your EO News: email community@eastoregonian.com or call Renee Struthers at 541-966-0818.
- To submit engagements, weddings and anniversaries: email rstruthers@eastoregonian.com or visit eastoregonian.com/community/announcements
- To submit sports or outdoors information or tips: 541-966-0838 • sports@eastoregonian.com

COMMERCIAL PRINTING
Commercial Print Manager: Holly Rouska
541-617-7839 • hrouska@eomediagroup.com