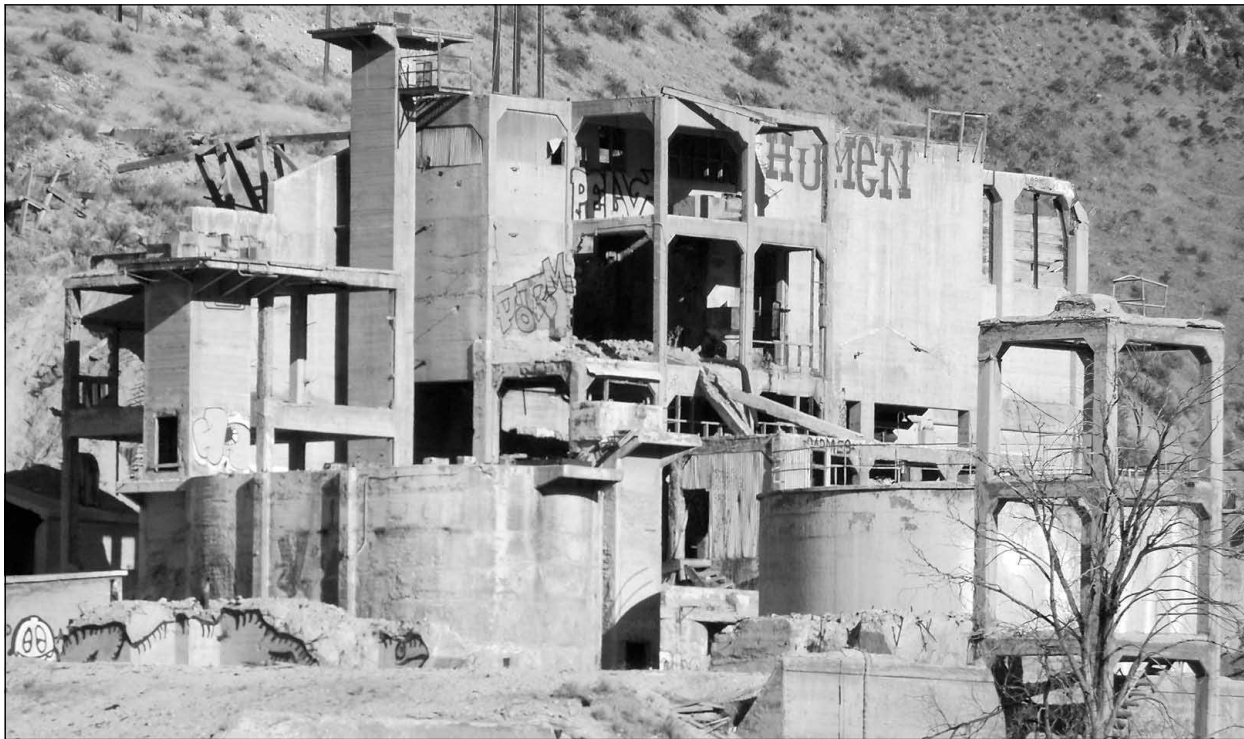


FEBRUARY

■ Highest Temperature: 61, on the 8th • Lowest Temperature: -4, on the 27th • Total Precipitation: .32 (avg.: .62)

County Considers Option To Demolish, Clean Up Abandoned Lime Plant



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald file photo

A section of the abandoned lime plant near Huntington, photographed in September 2016.

Clean Up Proposal

By Joshua Dillen
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FEBRUARY 16 — Baker County Board of Commissioners Chairman Bill Harvey has been working with Ash Grove Cement on a plan to demolish and clean up the county-owned abandoned lime plant along Interstate 84 near Huntington.

“We have the opportunity to remove the lime plant down to grade level,”

Harvey said during a commissioners’ work session Wednesday. “Ash Grove Cement has stepped up and is contributing a lot of money.”

Harvey said Ash Grove, which owns and operates a cement plant near Durkee, would commit about \$315,000 to the project, on the condition that the county employ Ash Grove’s contractor to do the work.

The project is estimated to cost

about \$620,000, compared with past estimates of more than \$1.4 million.

Harvey told commissioners Mark Bennett and Bruce Nichols that the county would have to spend \$225,000, and the county road department would do some of the work as well.

He said there are time constraints in getting the project done as Ash Grove’s contractor is only available for a short time after April 1.

Unseasonably Warm Weather Spurs Symbols Of Spring

Winter Wonders

FEBRUARY 9 — Visitors to Geiser-Pollman Park saw a strange sight Wednesday.

Lawnmowers.

On the seventh of February.

On a date when the snowplow is the tool more likely to be employed

in Baker City, Jason Wilson, who works for Grassmasters, the city’s maintenance contractor, was weaving a mower among the park’s trees.

The grass didn’t actually need a trim, to be sure. Wilson was instead gathering leaves and other debris.

Still and all, Wilson — who was working in short sleeves — is but one sign of how unusually mild this winter has been.

The balmy weather has prompted flowers to appear, as well as some invasive weeds.

What A Difference: Comparing This Winter With Last

AVG. HIGH	'16/'17	'17/'18	DAILY HIGHTEMPATURES	
DECEMBER	24.5	34.8	Since Dec. 1, 2017, the high has been	with record highs on Feb. 3, 4 and
JANUARY	22.7	42.9*	above average on 52 of 70 days,	8. For that period last winter it was
			including every day since Jan. 1,	warmer than average on 7 of the 70
				days, and there were no records.

*tied 1953 for warmest on record

Class size bill could hurt schools, 5J official says

By Chris Collins
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FEBRUARY 12 — Baker Schools Superintendent Mark Witty says a bill before the short session of the Oregon Legislature that would require school districts to discuss class size when making budget decisions could cause a hardship for schools rather than improve them.

Making class size a mandatory bargaining issue, as the bill proposes, would cost money that is not available to schools, Witty says.

“You can’t make that decision in isolation of the K-12 budget,” Witty said.

County allocates \$13,000 to control coyotes, ravens

By Joshua Dillen
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FEBRUARY 28 — Baker County commissioners partially restored funding last week for coyote and raven control that was axed last year to balance the county’s budget.

Last year the county cut about \$27,000 for the U.S. Department

of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services, the agency that handles predator control.

But last week the commissioners approved a contract with Wildlife Services for up to \$13,138.95 for coyote and raven control in Baker County through the end of the fiscal year — June 30. Typically the county

has paid the federal agency about \$25,000 annually.

Commissioner Mark Bennett pointed out that the federal agency might not use the entire \$13,138.

“One of the things that’s important to remember is that this is a reimbursement,” he said. “If we don’t need it, we don’t pay it.”

School work price tag: From \$56 to \$65 million

By Chris Collins
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FEBRUARY 16 — A year-long study of how the Baker School District might improve the safety and efficiency of its properties and provide a more appropriate learning environment for the community’s children carries a price tag of up to \$65 million.

That message was brought to the Baker School Board Thursday night by Kim Mosier and Pat Heriza, two members of the district’s Long Range Facilities Planning Committee.

A full house of parents, committee members and District staff gathered in the Council chambers at City Hall to hear the presentation of the committee’s findings.

Baker gets 18+ years

By Chris Collins
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FEBRUARY 28 — A 40-year-old Halfway man will spend the next 18 years and nine months in prison for sexually abusing his daughter.

Judge Greg Baxter sentenced Joshua Dean Baker on Monday in Baker County Circuit Court to three consecutive 75-month prison terms. A 12-person jury found Baker guilty of three counts of first-degree sexual abuse on Feb. 22 after a seven-day trial.

Each count carries a 75-month mandatory minimum sentence with no opportunity to earn good time for early release, Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirdcliff said. Baker will be placed on post-prison supervision for 45 months upon release with sex offender treatment and sex offender registration required.

City buys golf carts

By Joshua Dillen
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FEBRUARY 14 — The Baker City Council voted Tuesday to buy 15 new golf carts for Quail Ridge Golf Course and to require the golf course manager to repay the city, with interest, for the nearly \$71,000 purchase.

The city received three bids for the 15 gas-powered golf carts. Pacific NW Yamaha in North Plains, west of Portland, was the low bidder at \$70,890.

The city budgeted \$71,000 for the purchase.

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