

Community

LOCAL BRIEFING

What's new at the Baker County Library

Baker County Library Director Perry Stokes recently received a request in the suggestion box at the library, 2400 Resort St., to have a list of some of the newly arrived books and other materials published in the Herald.

This is the first installment in the weekly feature. The titles below were supplied by John Brockman, tech services librarian.

FICTION

- "Connection in Death," J.D. Robb
- "The Wedding Guest," Jonathan Kellerman
- "The Silhouette Girl," V.C. Andrews
- "Triple Homicide," James Patterson
- "The Next Person You Meet in Heaven," Mitch Albom

NONFICTION

- "Slave Stealers," Timothy Ballard
- "The Green Self-Build Book," Jon Broome
- "The Co-Parenting Handbook," Karen Bonnell
- "Can't Hurt Me," David Goggins
- "Frederick Douglass: Self-Made Man," Timothy Sandefur

DVDS

- "Dr. Suss' The Grinch" (family)
- "Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer" (drama)
- "Indivisible" (drama)
- "The Wife" (drama)
- "Widows" (drama)

Library hours:

- Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Friday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
- Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Sunday, noon-4 p.m.

ASH GROVE

Continued from Page 1A

(The two with higher property tax bills are DE Shaw Renewable Inv. LLC, which owns wind farms in the county and has appealed its bill, totaling \$1.9 million; and Idaho Power Company, which paid almost \$1.3 million last year.)

Findley contends that the carbon emissions bill could potentially prompt the closure of the Durkee plant, which he estimates would lead to 600 lost jobs in Baker and Malheur counties. That includes jobs that depend on the plant but aren't with Ash Grove directly.

The bill would limit — hence "cap" — carbon emissions for companies. Firms that exceed the cap would trade credits with companies that are under the cap in order to avoid fines from the state.

Findley said that although he isn't opposed to efforts to reduce carbon emissions, he doesn't believe the proposed law is a reasonable strategy.

"Oregon's carbon footprint is minute compared to the nation, it's almost indescribable," Findley said.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Oregon produced almost 38 million metric tons of carbon emissions from the use of fossil fuels, which ranks the state at 38th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Overall the U.S. puts out more than 5 billion metric tons of carbon every year. Oregon makes up well under 1 percent of that output.

Gov. Kate Brown has already announced her support for the 98-page draft bill, which proponents have dubbed the Clean Energy Jobs bill.

Since April 2018 the state has had a Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction meeting to work on legislation such as HB 2020, but Findley contends Democrats have worked without input from Republicans or members of

the public to develop the bill.

Sen. Cliff Bentz, a Republican from Ontario whose district includes Baker County, is one of the vice chairs of the committee.

Bentz told The Oregonian in late January that decisions about the first draft of the bill were made without input from himself or other Republican vice chairs.

Findley says it is alarming to him that there hasn't been any chance for public comment on the bill yet.

According to the Legislature's website, information sessions, where the Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction will hear from invited speakers, are scheduled today and Feb. 11.

Public hearings on the bill are scheduled for Feb. 15 and Feb. 18 in Salem.

But Findley said he wants legislative leaders to schedule public hearings around the state, similar to what the state did when crafting legislation dealing with transportation and education reform.

"It's really disappointing that we haven't had public hearings, we've requested that a road show occur and that Eastern Oregon be represented in those hearings," Findley said.

Findley said Brown does plan to visit Eastern Oregon in March and will discuss the carbon emissions bill during the visit.

"The governor surely cares about Oregon, I'm never going to say she doesn't," Findley said.

In addition to the bill's potential effects on Ash Grove Cement, Findley contends the bill could result in fuel prices increasing by 30 cents to 50 cents per gallon.

In addition to outlining the cap and trade system, the draft version of House Bill 2020 also changes the state-wide carbon reduction goals.

The current goals are to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, and by 75 percent by 2050.

The proposed new goals call for reducing greenhouse

gas emissions in the state by at least 45 percent by 2035, and by at least 80 percent by 2050.

The state's most recent report by the Oregon Global Warming Commission states the current goals are not likely to be met and that statewide emissions have actually increased since 1990.

The report's most recent emission's data is from 2017 when there was about 64 million metric tons of carbon emitted statewide. The 1990 statewide emission total was 56.4 million metric tons.

Baker County Commission Chairman Bill Harvey said the bill is a tax that would harm Oregonians, including people who work for Ash Grove's Durkee plant or whose jobs support that facility.

Harvey said he doesn't believe the bill would benefit the environment.

"One volcano going off does everything that we have done in the last 50 years to help the environment, it ruins it in one volcano in about the first week," Harvey said. "There is nothing that this country or the entire world could do to actually make a sizeable dent in any perceived problem that they have."

According to Climate.gov, a website operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and a federal scientific agency, human activities emit 60 times more carbon dioxide than volcanoes every year. Violent eruptions can match human emissions for a few hours but they are rare and fleeting in comparison to human emissions, according to the website.

Harvey said carbon can have beneficial effects, and that Democrats use "fake science" to deceive people.

"There's not much I can do about stopping them," Harvey said. "Do I like it? No, not a bit, obviously, and I believe wholeheartedly ... that (the proposed carbon emissions bill is) going to hurt us in the long run."

Ash Grove's Durkee plant continues to meet mercury limits

By Jayson Jacoby
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

The proposed carbon cap and trade bill the Oregon Legislature is considering isn't the first piece of legislation or regulation that has had a potential effect on Ash Grove Cement's Durkee plant, which opened in 1979.

The factory, along Interstate 84 about 27 miles southeast of Baker City, spent about \$20 million a decade or so ago, in advance of new federal regulations, to install equipment that captures airborne mercury before it's released into the air.

Mercury is a neurotoxin that can accumulate in waterways and fish tissue.

The system at the Durkee plant uses powdered activated

carbon to bind to the mercury, which is naturally occurring in the limestone Ash Grove quarries near its plant and uses to produce Portland cement.

Heating the material releases the mercury contained in the limestone.

Terry Kerby, the Durkee plant manager, has said in the past that limestone quarried there contains as much as 1,100 parts per billion (ppb) of mercury, while some other cement plants process limestone with as little as 5 ppb.

In his 2011 graduate thesis, Joel K. Sikkema, a student at Iowa State University, cited an average mercury concentration of 43 ppb from 89 cement plant kilns.

Before the equipment started operating in July 2010, the Durkee plant was the second-largest emitter of airborne mercury in the nation, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The amount peaked at 2,581 pounds of mercury in 2006, according to the DEQ.

In 2011, the first full year the facility, known as a "baghouse" because the mercury is collected in bags, was operating, the Durkee plant released 85.51 pounds of mercury, a 96.7-percent reduction from 2006.

In 2012, mercury emissions dropped again, to 41 pounds. Ash Grove built the baghouse before new federal regu-

lations took effect. Previously the EPA had not regulated the amount of mercury released by cement manufacturers.

Initially Ash Grove officials were concerned the company could not meet the EPA standards, which required a reduction of about 98 percent in mercury emissions.

But the Durkee plant has been exceeding the 98-percent requirement, said Mark Bailey, air quality manager for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's Eastern Region.

In 2016 the plant released 11.9 pounds of mercury. That's more than a 99-percent reduction from the peak year of 2006.

The baghouse has worked

"better by far than we expected," Kerby said this morning. "Initially nobody knew what the equipment would do."

Kerby said plant employees have "done a great job" in refining the process to remove a higher percentage of mercury.

He said workers have also drilled into the limestone quarry to gather core samples that are tested for mercury concentrations.

With that data plant operators know, in advance, approximately how much mercury will be in each batch of limestone. That allows them to "blend" the stone to avoid having a spike in the mercury levels, Kerby said.

Although mercury has been a major topic at the Durkee

plant, it isn't the only environmental concern.

In 2013 the EPA fined Ash Grove \$2.5 million and required the company to invest \$30 million to reduce the amount of two other pollutants, nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide, at plants in nine states, including the Durkee facility.

FEBRUARY 8-13

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SUN: (1:10) (4:10) 7:10 M-W: 7:10

ON THE BASIS OF SEX PG-13

FRI: (4:00) 7:00, 9:35
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