



In **OUTDOORS, 1B**  
Fishing frenzy for a full year

# Baker City Herald

March 15, 2019

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**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Greg Woydziak of Baker City.

**BRIEFING**

**Help available for heating bills**

Community Connection has money available to help people pay heating bills. Call 541-523-6591 for more information.

**Food donations being collected**

The annual Scouting for Food event will collect non-perishable food and monetary donations for The Salvation Army Food Bank in Baker City. Local Scouts and Baker City Rotary Club members will be collecting donations at Albertsons, Grocery Outlet and Safeway stores on March 16. Volunteers will also pick up donations at your home on March 23. To schedule a pickup, call the donation hotline, 541-249-3882, by March 22 and leave your name, phone number and address.

Suggested donation items include: chili, boxed meals, juice, instant potatoes, soup/beef stew, mac and cheese, canned fruit, peanut butter, Hamburger Helper, canned vegetables, tuna, beans.

**WEATHER**

**Today**

48 / 26



Partly sunny

**Saturday**

50 / 29



Partly sunny

**Sunday**

54 / 31



Partly sunny

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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**Baker City Council, Forest Service Meet To Discuss Fire Risk In Watershed**

## Focus on Fire Fears



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald file photo

Most of Baker City's 10,000-acre watershed, including this area along Elk Creek, is heavily forested.

By Casey Crowley  
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The Baker City Council plans to compile a list of fuel reduction projects for the city's heavily forested watershed, and submit it to the Forest Service, which manages most of the area.

The list could be ready for approval as soon as the council's next meeting. On Wednesday city councilors met with Forest Service officials to discuss the watershed, and specifically potential ways to reduce the risk of a large wildfire there.

City officials have long feared that the effects of a big blaze, including ash and dirt soiling the streams from which the city obtains most of its water, would force the city to temporarily find a different source and, ultimately, to build a filtration system that would

cost millions.

Councilor Arvid Andersen, a professional forestry consultant who has been one of the councilors working with Forest Service officials, requested Wednesday's work session.

Andersen said that it is not a matter of if the watershed will burn, but when, if nothing is done to thin some of the dense forests on the east slopes of the Elkhorn Mountains west of town.

A study by fire experts in the 1990s concluded that a large blaze in the watershed is overdue, based on evidence of historic fires in the area.

Some of the projects would take at least two years to start, but there are also smaller projects that could begin much sooner. Because much of the watershed is designated as an

inventoried roadless area, the Forest Service would need to do environmental studies before undertaking projects such as logging.

One project the city could start sooner is thinning trees near Marble Creek, in an area that's outside the inventoried roadless area.

This would constitute a continuation of the work the Forest Service, with the city's backing, did mainly around the fringes of the watershed in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The Forest Service spent more than \$2.2 million over several years to create fuelbreaks — areas where trees are cut to create open spaces where fire crews would have a better chance to stop a blaze.

See Watershed / Page 3A

**Parts of Baker County Had Been In Drought Status For More Than A Year**

## Doing away with the drought

By Jayson Jacoby  
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For the first time in more than a year, no part of Baker County is in a drought.

The U.S. Drought Monitor made that official on Thursday when it released its weekly drought map.

Although most of Baker County is still designated as "abnormally dry" — the exceptions being the northeast and northwest corners, which are rated as normal — the shades of brown and red that denote increasing drought severity are conspicuous by their absence.

This week's map is the first since Jan. 9, 2018, that didn't paint at least a small part of the county in one of those hues.

By the second week of last January, most of the county was in a "moderate" drought. That's the least serious of the four categories of drought, which, in escalating severity, are "severe," "extreme" and "exceptional."



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

The snowy pyramid of Elkhorn Peak, second-highest summit in the Elkhorn Mountains west of Baker City, juts above a layer of clouds. The snowpack in parts of the Elkhorns is nearly double the average for mid-March.

See Drought / Page 2A

PHONED IN BOMB THREAT AGAINST SHERIFF TRAVIS ASH

## Man gets prison for threat

A former Baker City man who has twice been convicted of making bomb threats here was sentenced to two years in prison Wednesday for the more recent conviction, for making an anonymous phone call in March 2016 claiming to have placed a bomb behind Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash's home.

Freddie Armando Butler, 31, of Des Moines, Iowa, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Stephanie M. Rose in Iowa.

Butler admitted using a cellphone to leave the anonymous message for Ash, according to a press release from U.S. Attorney Marc Krickbaum.

See Threat / Page 3A

## Wolf killed

A resident near Halfway shot and killed one of four wolves that was threatening the resident's dog near a home earlier this week.

Oregon State Police are investigating the case, said OSP Capt. Timothy Fox.

He didn't name the resident or give any other details.

See Wolf / Page 5A

## USFS withdraws forest plan

Citing potential confusion among the public, among other factors, a Forest Service official has withdrawn the controversial management plans for the three national forests in the Blue Mountains.

Chris French, the agency's acting deputy chief, this week instructed Regional Forester Glenn Casamassa to withdraw the revised plans, released in June 2018, for the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla and Malheur national forests.

During a series of objection resolution meetings in November and December, including one in Baker City, more than 300 people expressed concerns about the proposed plans, which the Forest Service has been working on for 15 years.

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**TODAY**  
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**MONDAY — BAKER BASEBALL, TRACK AND FIELD SEASONS UNDERWAY**