

ROCKS

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And second, that the recent collaboration between their two organizations is fortuitous.

Schirack is the museum's director.

Stafford is a founder of the Baker Rockhounds, a group of local rock and mineral enthusiasts.

This winter the Baker Rockhounds were looking at potential places to have their monthly meetings, and the Heritage Museum, at 2480 Grove St., was mentioned as a possible option, Stafford said.

The idea was attractive, not least because the museum has multiple rock collections, most notably the Cavin-Warfel Collection.

Two Baker City sisters, Mamie Cavin and Elizabeth Cavin Warfel, started the collection in the 1930s and added to it over 45 years. The Cavin-Warfel collection, all 18 tons of it, was donated to the Museum in 1983.

In discussing the use of meeting space with Schirack, Stafford said the question of revamping the Museum's rock collections arose.

Schirack, who has a background in archaeology, said she figured the Baker Rockhounds would be a natural choice to help with the project.

She was right.

"This is a fantastic learning opportunity," Stafford said.

She said that many of the Baker Rockhounds, though enthusiastic about their hobby, don't have extensive knowledge of geology. The chance to work with the Museum's extensive collections, which span many epochs of geologic history and include specimens from across the globe, is exciting, she said.

Some of the work is simple cataloging — replacing lost labels on individual items, for instance.

But the overall goal, both Schirack and Stafford said, is to refresh the displays to emphasize to visitors the unique geology of Baker County.

"What we'd like to do is organize the collections in a way that promotes local geology first and foremost," Schirack said. "I'd like people to leave here and understand something about the local geology. Anna's the right person for the job. I'm excited that (the Baker Rockhounds) are committed to the project."



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Anna Stafford guides the group of Baker Rockhounds for a project under way at the Heritage Museum. She says she will suggest plans to refresh the rock displays to draw more interest to a younger crowd.



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Plans are under way to make the rock room a "destination collection," according to Anna Stafford, a rockhound volunteering with the project.

Stafford believes that emphasizing local rocks and minerals will make the Museum's displays "more relevant to visitors."

She said the volunteer rockhounds are focusing now on the Cavin-Warfel collection, which includes specimens found in Baker County.

"It's an enormous collection, and it's pretty interesting too in the diversity," Schirack said. "And it does have a Baker County connection. The Cavin sisters got their start here."

Revising all the Museum's displays — it also includes the Wyatt Family Collection, which consists of 2,000 agates, picture jaspers and other specimens — will likely take months, Schirack and Stafford said.

Although the current project is focusing on the Museum's displays, Schirack said she is excited about the possibility that it will lead to other changes, including the possibility of creating an area where local rockhounds can cut and polish rocks while visitors watch.

As for the issue that prompted the initial discussion between Stafford and Schirack, Stafford said she hopes to move the Baker Rockhounds' monthly meeting to the Museum starting in April, though that hasn't been finalized. The location will be announced on the group's Facebook page. They meet the second Sunday of each month at 3 p.m.



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Local rockhound Dick McClarin examines the seashell and coral collection for possible ideas to clarify labeling and make sure everything has a name.

BENNETT

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The fire also fouled Portland's air with ash and smoke.

The 2018 fire season was the most expensive in Oregon history, with firefighting costs exceeding \$533 million, according to the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center.

That surpassed the \$447 million tab for the 2017 season.

"All of a sudden people are realizing that this is all of our responsibilities," Bennett said Wednesday. "It's not just some areas in the state. There are a lot of westside folks that have not historically experienced the challenges we've had on the east side."

Brown has charged the Council, which has 19 regular members and 20 ex-officio members (who represent other organizations such as the Oregon Legislature, including Rep. Lynn Findley, the Vale Republican whose district includes Baker County, the BLM and the Oregon Department of Forestry), with making recommendations about improving Oregon's wildfire management.

That will include firefighting as well as reduce the risk of blazes.

"Fire threatens communities, smoke compromises our health, and our local economy suffers," Brown said when announcing that she was

"There are a lot of westside folks that have not historically experienced the challenges we've had on the east side."

— **Mark Bennett, Baker County commissioner and member of Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's Wildlife Response Council**

creating the Wildfire Council. "We need to make sure we are doing everything we can, and that we are building support for the sustainable funding needed to change this pattern. I'm so pleased to bring many experts together to tackle this important issue that deeply affects Oregonians and our lands."

Bennett said the governor's goal of having the Council report its findings by September is ambitious but plausible.

Bennett, who is the only county commissioner from east of the Cascades on the Council, said he is especially interested in promoting more aggressive management of public land to curb the fire threat.

Public land makes up about 51 percent of Baker County's 2 million acres.

After the Council's first meeting, Bennett said he's optimistic that members realize the scope of the problem, with vast areas of forests across the state, but especial-

ly east of the Cascades, being "phenomenally overstocked" with trees.

Experts say these dense forests are more susceptible to insects and disease.

Drought exacerbates the problem, Bennett said.

As a general rule, trees that emerge from a fire with their crowns unburned have a good chance to survive.

But Bennett, who frequently drives through the heart of the Cornet/Windy Ridge fire while traveling from his ranch near Unity to Baker City for county meetings and other business, said he has noticed that many trees with intact crowns have died since the fire burned through in August 2015.

He attributes this to drought.

Bennett acknowledges that the Wildfire Council has no authority to dictate how federal agencies manage the public land where wildfires, especially east of the Cascades, are most common.

But he hopes that the Council's report will at least encourage those agencies to strive to accelerate the pace of forest management, which Bennett describes as "glacial."

He cites as an example the Rail fire, which burned 42,000 acres, mostly in Baker County, in 2016.

The Forest Service had been planning to thin overcrowded, bark beetle-infested forests in that area.

But the fire started before the work crews arrived.

"It's a tragedy that all that beautiful ground was burned," Bennett said.

Although the past few years have shown residents across Oregon that smoke, evacuations and blocked highways are no longer problems confined to the sparsely populated lands east of the Cascades, Bennett believes another threat — to drinking water supplies — has also helped to spur interest in taking action at the state level.

During the Council's initial meeting Monday, members discussed the vulnerabilities to fire of two major water supplies — Portland's Bull Run, the source of water for almost 1 million people, and Ashland's watershed.

This, too, qualifies as old news for Baker County. Baker City officials have been worried for decades about the possibility of a major fire in the city's 10,000-acre watershed in the Elkhorn Mountains. Such a blaze could force the city to find a temporary replacement source, and to build a multimillion-dollar filtration plant.

Whether or not the Wildfire Council's work yields

tangible, and timely, benefits in Oregon, Bennett said he's gratified that officials across the state recognize the validity of the concerns that people in Central and Eastern Oregon have been expressing for many years.

"We have this phenomenal risk, and we've been educating the main population base in this state that this is important," Bennett said. "I believe there's momentum here, an opportunity to push this forward, to move from complacency to action."

Oregon Wildfire Response Council members

Matt Donegan, chair; Mark Labhart, former Tillamook County commissioner and Oregon Department of Forestry employee; Stefan Bird, president and CEO, Pacific Power; Charles Wilhoite, Nature Conservancy, Meyer Memorial Trust; Sally Russell, Bend mayor; Tricia Connolly, president, International Association of Firefighters Local 227, Bend Fire Department; Eric Cutler, senior vice president of operations, Sublimity Insurance Company; Les Hallman, assistant chief, Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue; Caroline (Park) Lipps, Thunder Island Brewing; Allyn Ford, timber industry at large; Eric Hunter,

Care Oregon; Chris Chambers, city of Ashland; Mark Bennett, Baker County commissioner; Russ Hoeflich, 1000 Friends of Oregon; Ismael Perez, West Coast Roofing and Building; Karla Chambers, agriculture at large; Carol Whipple, timber industry (small); Curtis Robinhold, transportation; Katrina Holland, Community Alliance of Tenants

Ex-officio members

State Sen. Lew Frederick; State Sen. Herman Baertschiger; State Rep. Pam Marsh; State Rep. Lynn Findley; Peter Daugherty, state forester; Jim Walker, state fire marshal; Nils Christofferson, state board of forestry; Anthony Davis, Oregon State University Forestry Department; Glenn Casamassa, U.S. Forest Service; Theresa Hanley, BLM; Kirsten Aird, Oregon Health Authority; Luci Moore, Oregon Department of Transportation; Sara Morrissey, Travel Oregon; Mary Gautreaux and Sarah Bittleman, Sen. Ron Wyden's office; Jessica Keys, Sen. Jeff Merkley's office; Nick Strader, Rep. Greg Walden's office; Andrew Stolff, Oregon insurance commissioner; Cailin O'Brien-Feeney, Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation; Lauren Henderson, Oregon Department of Agriculture

Drunk driver gets 7 years for killing man

A Boise woman who hit and killed a man while she was driving drunk last fall near Baker City was sentenced to 7 years in custody Thursday after pleading guilty to second-degree manslaughter and driving under the influence of intoxicants.

Adrienne Marie Larsen, 33, was sentenced to 75 months in prison on the manslaughter conviction, and to 9 months in the Baker County Jail on the DUII conviction. The sentences will run consecutively, meaning Larsen will be incarcerated for 84 months.

Her driver's license was suspended for life, and she was ordered to complete alcohol treatment while in prison and while on three years of post-prison supervision.

Larsen was driving west at a high speed on Highway 86 near Baker City on Oct. 19, 2018, when her vehicle drifted over the fog line and struck Dennis Cheney, 59, of Walla Walla, Washington. Larsen was on probation for a DUII conviction in Idaho at the time of the incident.

"The victim's family was very pleased with the sentence in the case," Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff said in a press release.

HAINES

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In a letter he sent to the Haines City Council on March 7, Fry also contends that when he was hired, city officials knew he didn't have a commercial driver's license, which is required to drive the city's dump truck and road grader.

He claims Brown told him to drive the vehicles even though he lacks the license.

Brown declined to comment on Fry's letter.

Fry had planned to discuss his allegations during the City Council's March 12 meeting, and several people attended the meeting for the same reasons.

But Brown announced at the start of the meeting that Fry's allegations would not be discussed during the open meeting, but would instead be addressed during a later executive session, which is closed to the public.

(City councils can't make any decisions during executive sessions.)

On Aug. 30, 2017, the DEQ sent a letter to Brown to notify him that Haines had failed to record sewer flow data on some weekends and holidays.

Fry said Brown later told him to submit monthly reports to DEQ that included readings from weekends and other days on which Fry didn't actually take measurements.

"I was instructed by the Mayor to 'fudge the numbers' and make our monthly (reports) appear as if these readings have occurred," Fry wrote in his letter to city councilors. "It has come to my attention this practice is illegal with the state of Oregon and morally wrong in the interest of saving the City money."

Fry wrote that after he brought his concerns to Brown, with whom he said he previously had a "great" relationship "including good open communication," that relationship "has grown hostile and my words or opinions are not being heard. I have grown fearful of termination because of these illegal or ethically wrong practices..."

Three of the six other Haines councilors declined to comment on Fry's letter. Three other councilors had not returned phone calls by press time.

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