

Baker City Herald

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IN THIS EDITION: Local • Health & Fitness • Outdoors • TV \$1.50



In **OUTDOORS**, 1B

Bike ride ends at Anthony Lake

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Marion Reeves of Baker City.

BRIEFING

River clean up set for Saturday

The Powder Basin Watershed Council is planning a clean up of the Powder River in Baker City for Saturday, Sept. 21, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Volunteers should meet at Geiser-Pollman Park. Snacks and water will be provided. To pre-register, call 541-523-7288.

Community Choir rehearsals start on Monday at BHS

The Baker Community Choir will begin rehearsals on Monday, Sept. 23, for its Christmas performances. Rehearsals are scheduled for every Monday at 7 p.m. in the choir practice room at Baker High School, 2500 E St. Choir members should arrive by 6:45 p.m. this Monday to receive their music. No experience is necessary, and singers from high school age and up are welcome. Middle school students can join if accompanied by an adult. Cost is \$15 per person. Christmas concerts are set for Dec. 13, 14 and 15.

WEATHER

Today
64 / 38
Partly sunny

Saturday
70 / 40
Mostly sunny

Sunday
70 / 41
Chance of afternoon rain

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Touring The Historic Rock Creek Power Plant In The Elkhorn Mountains

Power of the Past



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Don Wagner led tours of the Rock Creek power plant northwest of Haines.

By Samantha O’Conner
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A piece of Baker County history has returned briefly to relevance this month in the Elkhorn Mountains.

The owner of the Rock Creek power plant opened the doors to the 116-year-old facility and welcomed visitors to what amounts to a museum of small-scale hydroelectric power.

Terry Daugherty has continued the tradition started by the plant’s previous owner, Mark Henderson.

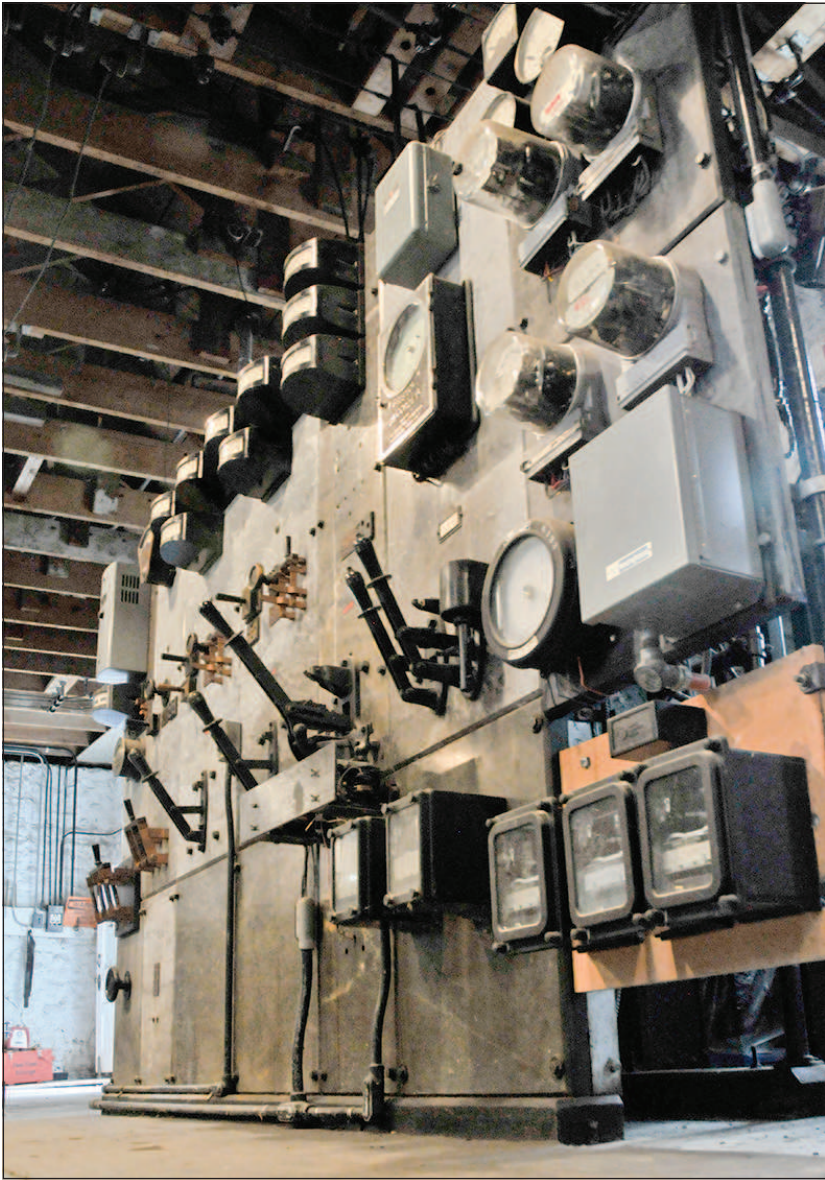
Each year Daugherty invites people over a 10-day period to walk through the plant, which produced power until March 31, 1995.

Daugherty, 61, of Adrian, bought the plant from Henderson, who acquired it from Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative. OTEC closed the plant not long before its license expired. OTEC officials estimated in 1995 that it would have cost \$500,000 to relicense the plant, with the tab to upgrade the facility pegged at around \$3.8 million.

But though the plant no longer injects electricity into the local grid, it does intrigue visitors.

“It’s been enjoyable,” Daugherty said of the tours, which are offered at no cost. “Everyone that comes out and sees it loves it.”

This year’s tours started Sept. 12. Saturday is the final day.



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

A power board invites people to pull switches, read dials and imagine the power coursing through the Rock Creek power plant.

How the plant produced power

Rock Creek power plant is a comparatively tiny, and somewhat anachronistic, version of hydroelectric giants such as Bonneville or Grand Coulee dam.

For each, water is power. For Rock Creek, let’s start at the source.

Rock Creek Lake is at 7,600 feet elevation in the Elkhorn Mountains. The lake feeds the main fork of Rock Creek, which collects the north fork about 4 miles below the lake.

A few miles farther downstream, near its confluence with Killamacue Creek, some of Rock Creek’s water is diverted into a wood and metal flume. The diversion is at about 5,400 feet elevation.

The 7,000-foot-long flume parallels Rock Creek, crosses several trestles, then empties into a reservoir at 4,962 feet. The reservoir is about 100 feet wide, 200 feet long and 4 feet deep.

A penstock — a pipe, basically — carries water from the reservoir down a steep hill to the plant, at 4,020 feet.

When it escapes the penstock, the water splashes two Pelton water wheels, spinning them with the pressure amassed during the plunge from the reservoir. Each wheel sends its energy to an adjacent General Electric generator.

Kim Baer, who lives in Baker City, was the plant’s resident operator for its final 20 years.

He made the final entry in the plant’s guest book when he shut it down on March 31, 1995. That book carries the names of visitors both local, such as students from the Muddy Creek School just down the mountain (the school no longer exists), and from as far away as Panama.

On July 14, 1951, a rather more well-known visitor made his way through the plant. His name was Harry Truman.

— Jayson Jacoby

Harvey relates trip to nation’s capital

By Samantha O’Conner
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Baker County Commission Chairman Bill Harvey updated his two fellow commissioners Wednesday about his recent week-long trip to Washington, D.C.

Harvey traveled last week with several other members of the Eastern Oregon Counties Association to meet with members of the state’s congressional delegation and federal officials to discuss management of federal land.

About half of Baker County’s 2 million acres are managed by the federal government.

Harvey told commissioners Mark Bennett and Bruce Nichols that the Eastern Oregon officials focused on two federal programs that compensate counties, including Baker, for the loss of property tax revenue and reductions in timber harvesting.

PILT is the Payment In Lieu of Taxes program.

See **Harvey** / Page 3A

Maurice’s collects clothing, other items for MayDay

A two-week campaign at the Maurice’s store in Baker City yielded about 160 pairs of jeans as well as dozens of other items of clothing and bedding that will be available to clients of MayDay.

That’s the Baker City nonprofit that helps victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence.

Each year the Duluth, Minnesota-based company has a “Best Day Ever” event in which employees from the company’s home office, and its design office in New York City, volunteer at local nonprofits.

Amanda Tepponen, who manages the Baker City store, said she received permission to do the clothing drive to benefit MayDay.

Customers who donated a pair of jeans from Aug. 26 to Sept. 9 received a 25% discount on their purchase that day.

Tepponen said many customers donated quite a lot more than a pair of jeans.

See **Donations** / Page 3A



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MONDAY — SIXTH-GRADERS TAKE THEIR CLASSROOMS OUTDOORS