

FEBRUARY

■ High Temperature: 48, on the 3rd

• Low Temperature: 4, on the 7th

• Total Precipitation: 1.92 (avg.: .63)

State Lawmaker Fears Legislation Could Harm Ash Grove Cement's Durkee Plant

Cap, trade, trouble?



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald file photo

Ash Grove Cement's Durkee plant southeast of Baker City employs about 115 workers.

By Casey Crowley

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FEBRUARY 8 — Baker County's state representative contends that a bill intended to reduce Oregon's carbon emissions could have the opposite effect globally and also threaten one of the county's largest private employers.

Rep. Lynn Findley, a Republican from Vale, said during a floor speech at the Capitol on Jan. 31 that House Bill 2020, the carbon "cap and trade" bill, could have what he described in a press release as "unintended consequences."

Among those is the potential to make Ash Grove Cement, which operates a plant near Durkee, about 27 miles southeast of Baker City, less competitive against Chinese cement makers.

During his speech to the House of

Representatives, Findley said that if Oregon levies a carbon tax on Ash Grove, it could result in more cement being imported from China.

"It would make it harder to compete with China because China doesn't have the same land use, same environmental regulations that Ash Grove complies with," Findley said.

Ash Grove employees about 115 people at the Durkee plant with an annual payroll of \$13 million, according to the company, which is based in Overland Park, Kansas.

(Some of the Durkee plant employees live in Malheur County or in Idaho.)

Ash Grove is the third largest property tax payer in Baker County, having paid about \$739,000 last year,



Findley

according to County Assessor Kerry Savage.

(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.

Neighbors hold pair at gunpoint until police arrive

By Jayson Jacoby

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FEBRUARY 20 — An alert Durkee resident who noticed a car parked in the driveway of a home that was supposed to be empty, and then went to the house armed with a shotgun, led to the arrest of two Idaho residents on trespassing and other charges Monday night.

Olive Phillips, a commercial truck driver, noticed the car in the driveway when he exited Interstate 84 at Durkee, an unincorporated community about 23 miles southeast of Baker City.

The house belongs to a relative of Phillips' wife, Lessie.

Cindy Fortin, who is the Phillips' neighbor, said Lessie called her and asked her to drive her to the home, which is just across the freeway, on Vandecar Road.

Fortin said they jotted down the car's license number and also saw at least one person, a man, inside the home, which was dimly lit.

They returned to their homes, and Phillips called Baker County Dispatch.



Loos



Adair

County asks judge to open gated road

By Casey Crowley

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FEBRUARY 8 — The Baker County Board of Commissioners voted 3-0 Wednesday to file a legal challenge seeking to force a landowner to remove a locked gate across a road near Lookout Mountain in eastern Baker County.

The gate, installed in August 2017, is near the upper end of the road that starts at the mouth of Connor Creek at Brownlee Reservoir. The road, which commissioners believe is a public right-of-way, connects to the Daly Creek Road northeast of Lookout Mountain.

The legal complaint names property owners Todd Long-

good and Dennis Hansen as defendants.

In a July 2018 letter to the county's attorney, Larry Sullivan of Vale, Longgood and Hansen's lawyer, Charles Hudson of Lane Powell in Portland, disputed the county's contention that the section of road running through his clients' property is public.

Hudson cited historic maps and property deed records as evidence that the gated road was built after the formerly public land was transferred into private ownership, and thus can't be deemed a public right-of-way based on the 1866 one-sentence federal statute that the county referenced in its complaint.

Ranchers seek money to cover losses from wolves

By Casey Crowley

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FEBRUARY 15 — The Baker County Wolf Depredation Committee recommends the state pay Panhandle ranchers almost \$66,000 for cattle injured or killed by wolves last year, or that went missing.

The committee met Wednesday to review applications from several ranchers through the Oregon Department of Agriculture's compensation program.

Typically state officials pay ranchers for the full market value of animals that state wildlife biologists confirm

were killed or injured by wolves.

Three ranchers in the Halfway area about 50 miles east of Baker City — Dean Tucker of Pine Valley Ranch, Barry DelCurto and Chad DelCurto — combined requested \$10,584 for 12 animals that were either killed or injured in April 2018 by wolves from the Pine Creek Pack.

Those three ranchers, along with three others, also submitted requests for compensation for missing cattle they believe might have been killed by wolves.

Those requests total \$55,399.

School board members visit D.C.

By Chris Collins

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FEBRUARY 6 — Kevin Cassidy and Andrew Bryan have taken their roles as school board members to a higher level.

They not only represent the Baker School District as board members, but for the past several years both men have represented all of Eastern Oregon — and at times, all of Oregon — as representatives from the region in their respective roles with the Oregon School Boards Association.

This year Cassidy, 48, a 1988 Baker High School graduate, is president-elect on the OSBA Board. He will step into the president's role next year and will remain a Board officer the year after that in the position of past president.

Bryan, 53, serves as the



Submitted photo

Baker School Board member Kevin Cassidy, left, met with Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore.

Eastern Oregon representative on the association's Legislative Policy Committee.

He is the longest tenured member of the 5J Board. Bryan was appointed to fill

an unexpired term in July 2010 and was first elected to a four-year term in 2011.

Bryan is completing his second full term on the Baker School Board this

year.

Cassidy began his service on the 5J board in July 2013. He was re-elected to a second four-year term in 2017. His term will expire in 2021.

Schools deal with illness

By Chris Collins

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FEBRUARY 18 — Baker schools have been taking turns sending out letters to parents this winter alerting them of the high rate of absenteeism linked to illness.

Baker High School Principal Greg Mitchell said the letters were distributed by his school last week as a preventive measure designed to keep more students from getting sick.

Mitchell noted in the letter that many Baker County residents have been sick over the past month.

"A lot of students and teachers in our school are sick with the flu also," he wrote. "We hope they will all get better quickly. At this time, the county health department tells us that students who are not ill can safely come to school.

"Schools will remain open," he stated. "We will keep you updated with any important information."

Mitchell's letter is similar to those sent out by other Baker schools in the past several weeks as the flu season has made its way through the community, said Assistant Superintendent Betty Palmer.



It has been a pleasure to serve you. Have a wonderful year!

Joint construction of the scenic hand painted in oil view, tracks of the replica rail road and Sumpter Junction Restaurant took over a year. This replica rail road is a world class attraction, with train enthusiasts from around the world seeking out Baker City to see this amazing work of art. The original train was hand built in Europe and is a collectable.

There is roughly 1000 feet of track.

The train makes one lap approximately every 5 minutes.

The Sumpter Junction Restaurant is open 363 days a year, 16 hours a day.

That equals 192 laps per day or 36.36 miles.

Every year the train runs 13,199.76 miles.

To date the train has covered 382,793.04 miles.

33 Years