

Local & State

Pendleton residents begin to assess flooding damage

By Antonio Sierra
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Patty Haid can pinpoint the exact moment her front deck washed away.

The Riverview Mobile Home Estates resident had a security camera attached on her home, and it was recording Thursday night when the deck started drifting away.

By that time, Haid and her husband had already evacuated, ferrying suitcases above their heads as the floodwaters rose to their waist.

“It was so scary,” she said.

By the time the couple and her adult children came back to begin the cleanup Saturday morning, the deck was several yards away from her home, along with an intact storage shed. The family retrieved a short ladder from the shed to act as a set of stairs to the trailer.

Some residents had it worse than others.

Haid’s daughter later checked in on Haid’s father, J.R. Ybarra, who lived around the corner.

Besides some water in the bathroom and kitchen, Ybarra said his home was mostly dry.

But it could have been worse.

Ybarra gestured toward a neighboring trailer that had floated away from its place and crashed into another home. It came to a rest in the middle of the road.

While the entire park was inundated, damage varied from home to home.

Some residents reported washed away porches and water seeping through the floors and walls, while others found a much more manageable situation.

A resident of Riverview for nearly two decades, Cheryl Baker had seen flooding near her home before and originally thought the sandbags she placed around her home would suffice.

But after returning from evacuation, Baker was reluctant to see the inside of



Ben Lonergan / East Oregonian

Cheryl Baker looks out over the muddy landscape from in front of her home at the Riverview Mobile Home Estates in Pendleton Saturday morning. Baker, who has lived in the park for nearly two decades returned to check on the status of her home after floodwaters receded in the early hours of Saturday.

Baker County officials helping

Two Baker County men have taken their expertise to Umatilla County to help officials deal with the devastation of last week’s severe flooding.

Chris Galiszewski, the Baker County Sheriff’s Search and Rescue team coordinator, and Jason Yencopal, Baker County Emergency Management Program director, are helping in the emergency operations center, Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash said.

Christopher Ingersoll, spokesman for the Umatilla County Joint Information Center, said the effort has moved from recovery to assessment.

“We’re trying to get our arms around what needs to be done next,” he said Monday morning.

— Chris Collins, Baker City Herald

her home again, even as her sister repeatedly exclaimed “Oh my God!” with each new discovery.

It had seen better days, but River Meadows Mobile Home Park seemed to fare better than its next-door neighbor.

Park owners Joe and Angie Coelho were busy cleaning out debris Saturday morning, with Joe operating a small front loader to clear out space.

Angie Coelho said the couple owns several houses in the park, and she worried how they would repair the homes when homeowners

insurance wouldn’t cover it.

Coelho said flood insurance was too expensive to maintain, and a lack of it was a common theme among Riverside residents.

Haid said her home will likely need a new floor, but after inquiring about her insurance plan, the insurance company informed her that it had dropped her years ago, a development she said was done without her knowledge.

“It would have been better if it had caught fire,” she said.

Across Highway 11, Mike Powell didn’t maintain flood

insurance for his business either.

But in his 21 years owning and operating the Auto Clinic of Pendleton on Northeast Riverside Place, Powell said the Umatilla River had never threatened his auto shop. With the facility not even in the floodplain, flood insurance didn’t even seem necessary.

But Thursday’s flood brought 2 to 3 feet of water into his business. Powell said the currents were strong enough that some of Auto Clinic’s tools were found down the river and he had to snag one of his four-wheelers as it floated out of the building and down the street.

Powell said he was ready to close down the business permanently and move on, but his employees rallied to save it.

Auto Clinic organized a work party, and several volunteers came to sweep out the remaining water and clean out the debris.

Powell said that with the city and state declaring an emergency, he hopes his insurer will work with him to address the rest of the damage.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Local students on EOU honor roll

LA GRANDE — More than a dozen local students were among the 523 named to the dean’s list for the fall 2019 term at Eastern Oregon University.

To qualify, students must maintain a grade-point average of at least 3.5 while completing a minimum of 12 hours of graded coursework.

Baker City

Bryan Ames, Keaton Bachman, Koedi Birmingham, Erin Blincoe, Madison Elms, James Hixenbaugh, Makenna Huggins, Hannah Johnson, Rowdy Keller, Megan McGuinness, Lynn Robinson, Corrina Stadler, Braden Staebler-Siewell, Josephine Stearns, Alexandria Wachtel

Haines

Samuel Pointer

Halfway

Aubrey Vannice

Huntington

Gabrielle Smith

North Powder

Tonya Dias, Kate Jesenko

Oxbow

Nathan Seggerman

Diaper drive extended through February

The Rachel Pregnancy Center has extended its Diaper Drive at the request of several participating churches.

The drive, which began on Sanctity of Life Sunday (Jan. 19) will continue through February, said Vera Grove, Rachel Center director.

The Center’s days of operation have changed in February to Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (closed for lunch each day). The office, at 2192 Court Ave., is closed Mondays and Fridays. More information is available by calling the Center at 541-523-5357.

Donation account for Baker City man

A donation account has been set up at Umpqua Bank for Benjamin Humphries of Baker City, who was recently diagnosed with a very aggressive form of leukemia and is undergoing treatment in Boise.

Fireline Safety Refresher class March 21

Eastern Oregon Training Group will have an RT-130 Annual Fireline Safety Refresher class on March 21. The class will start at 8 a.m. at the Baker School District office, 2090 Fourth St. in Baker City. A practice fire shelter deployment will take place. This is a required class for all federal and state contractors that will be on the fire line. A certified National Wildfire Suppression Association (NWSA) instructor will teach the class. Cost is \$100 for NWSA members and \$130 for nonmembers. Registration can be done at oregonfiretraining.com. Pre-registration is requested. More information is available by calling Laurel Goodrich at 541-403-0907 or Jeff Sherman at 541-519-6213.

HEART TO HEART

Great things are happening at the Churchill Dancehall

If you were lucky enough to be at Churchill Dancehall for recent concerts, you witnessed not only incredible entertainment but a true coming of age. Corrine and Brian Vegter’s vision of a Northeast Oregon musical destination for both world class musical acts and appreciative audiences is coming to fruition. An impressive Tuesday night crowd enjoyed the sounds of John and Joanne Lowell. In that same week, a Friday night concert featuring Band of Drifters with guest Bart Budwig filled the dancehall, people spilling out into the hallways. This was followed by another substantial gathering for Dead Lee on Thursday.

A big chunk of credit for this success has been the relentless promotion by our Baker City Herald and the GO! magazine.

Lisa Britton’s wonderful artist’s profiles, stories and interviews along with full cover color photos are a key factor in the ever growing attendance at Churchill.

Word of mouth is also a huge player, so spread the word — great things are happening at Churchill. Hope to see you there!

Peace to all.

Mike Meyer
Baker City

Carbon bill hearing draws crowd

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM — So many people flocked to the Oregon State Capitol to testify Saturday at a public hearing on a climate change bill that the allotted time for each to speak was reduced to 90 seconds.

As a large screen in Hearing Room C showed the seconds ticking off, loggers expressed concern that the bill would lead to increased costs and the demise of their business. Others, taking turns at occupying three seats before the Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources, said global warming was an emergency that was already affecting them and would affect their children and grandchildren even worse.

“Rather than passing the buck, and demanding that the rest of the nation and world take care of us, we have a moral obligation to address our emissions,” Alan Journet, who lives in Jacksonville, a town of 2,700 in southern Oregon, said in written testimony on behalf of 1,500 rural Oregonians who are members of a group called Southern Oregon Climate Action Now.

The so-called cap-and-trade bill calls for the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to at least 45% below 1990 emissions levels by 2035 and to at

least 80% below by 2050. The bill would force big greenhouse gas emitters to obtain credits for each metric ton of carbon dioxide they emit. Opponents say fossil fuel companies will wind up offloading increased costs to customers.

“Applying a carbon tax to Oregon citizens is a poorly disguised strategy to extract huge sales tax amounts from residents,” Nolan Nelson of Eugene said in written testimony ahead of Saturday’s hearing.

At least 150 people signed up to testify, many showing their positions on T-shirts. Opponents often wore Timber Unity shirts. The group on Thursday staged a protest outside the Capitol, with a procession of trucks blasting their horns, to protest the bill.

A demonstration in support of the bill, with an expected attendance of over a thousand, is planned for today at the Capitol.

“Opponents of climate action in Oregon had their day, now it’s advocates’ turn,” said Brad Reed, group spokesman.

Backers of the measure, including many students, wore shirts to Saturday’s hearing saying “Clean energy jobs,” and “I’ll be 30 when my climate fate is sealed,” a reference to some predictions that a tipping point may be reached in a few years.

“Because climate change is a truly global, complex problem with economic, social, political and moral ramifications, the solution will require both a globally-coordinated response

(such as international policies and agreements between countries, a push to cleaner forms of energy) and local efforts on the city- and regional-level (for example, public transport upgrades, energy efficiency improvements, sustainable city planning, etc.),” NASA says on its climate website.

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Exciting News!

Dr. Derek Blankenship is joining Baker Vision Clinic

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Baker Vision Clinic would like to welcome Dr. Derek Blankenship. Dr. Blankenship will start seeing patients March 3, 2020. Derek was born and raised in Baker City. Following high school, he attended George Fox University where he graduated in 2014 with a Bachelor of Science Degree. He then attended Midwestern University Arizona College of Optometry where he graduated with a Doctorate of Optometry in 2018. Upon graduation from Optometry school Dr. Blankenship has been practicing in Pendleton, Oregon. Baker Vision Clinic is very excited to welcome him back home!

Dr. Blankenship is warm and engaging. He easily connects with people through his open honest desire to help others. He enjoys the outdoors and cannot wait to show his wife and son all that is special to him about Baker.

Dr. Derek Blankenship is accepting patients now.
Please contact Baker Vision Clinic today at 541-523-5858 to make an appointment.