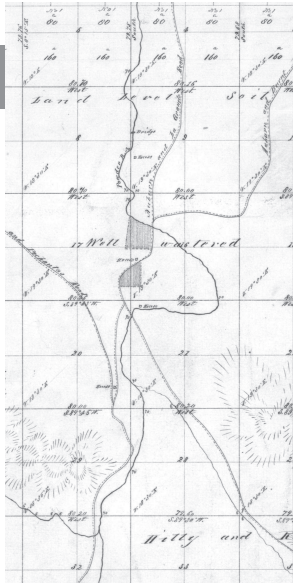


Baker City Herald

April 30, 2020

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IN THIS EDITION: Local • Business & AgLife • Go! magazine \$1.50

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Jim DeMastus of Baker City.

Local, 2A

The Ellis family of Baker City, 1425 Second St., was named best of show in the yard art competition — with the theme “Kindness” — sponsored by Crossroads Carnegie Art Center, CASA of Eastern Oregon and the Baker City Rotary Club.

BRIEFING

Idaho Power to open boat launches Friday

BOISE — Idaho Power will open more than a dozen popular boat launches and day-use areas for outdoor recreation on Friday, May 1, including the boat launch at Woodhead Park on Brownlee Reservoir.

The campground at Woodhead will remain closed.

The openings are part of a phased reopening of Idaho Power recreation sites that were closed in March as the company implemented measures to limit potential spread of COVID-19.

Developed campgrounds and many parks and day-use sites remain closed. Visitors should check the list of facilities at www.idahopower.com to ensure their destination is open.

WEATHER

Today
59 / 32



Showers likely

Friday
68 / 36



Mostly cloudy

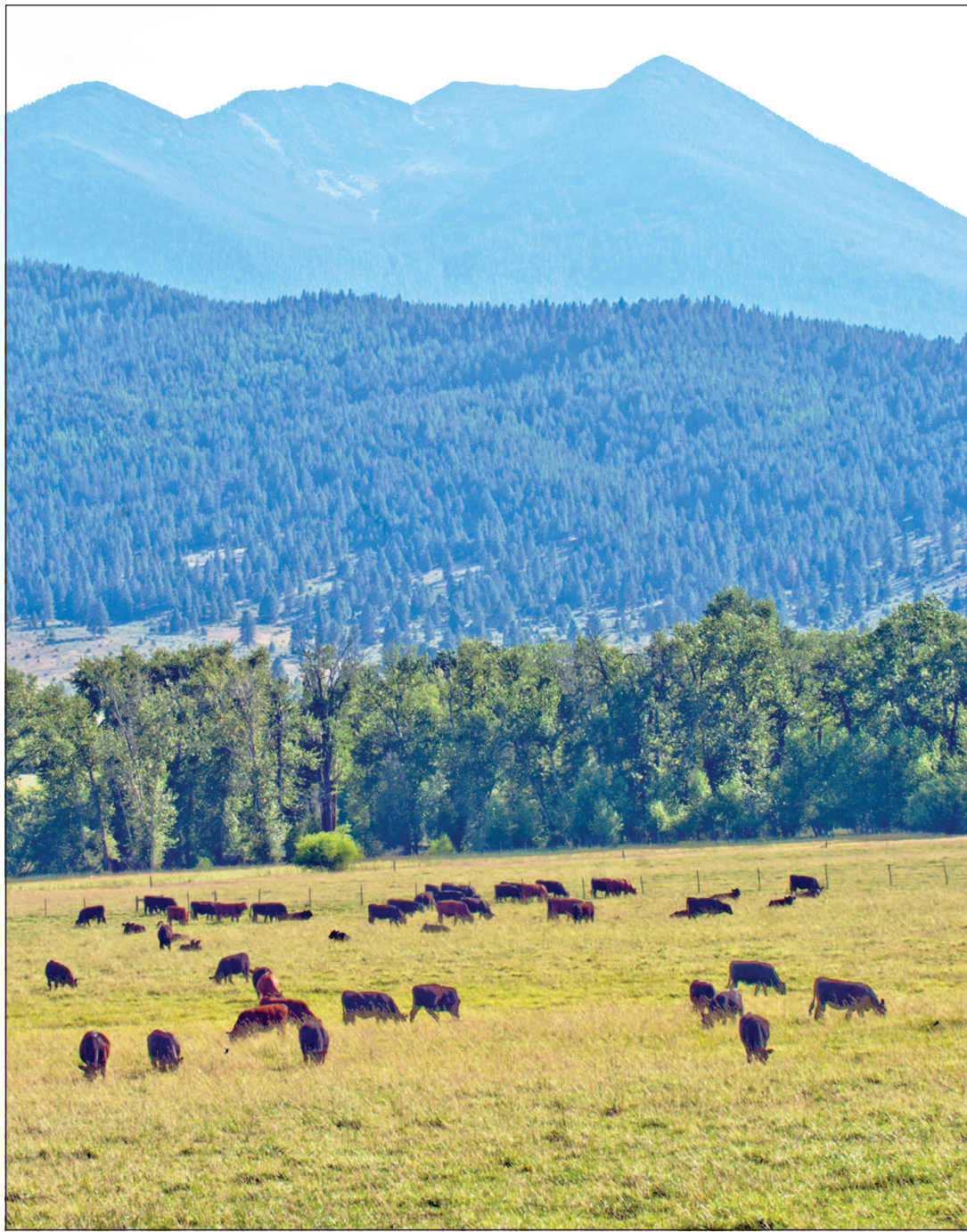
Full forecast on the back of the B section.

The space below is for a postage label for issues that are mailed.

Cattle Prices Plummet During Coronavirus Pandemic

Ranchers Reeling

■ Declining demand, packing plant closures contributing to troubles



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald file photo

Sales of beef cattle totaled \$45 million in Baker County in 2017.

By Jayson Jacoby

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Suzan Ellis Jones and her husband, Keith, were hoping to sell their cattle herd this year and retire.

But with cattle prices plummeting during the coronavirus pandemic she’s not sure that will be possible for the couple, whose Devils Canyon Ranch is near Bridgeport in southern Baker County.

Jones said they sold a load of yearling cattle Tuesday morning.

“Or should I say to give them away!” she wrote in a text.

Jones said prices for yearlings have dipped to around \$1.20 per pound, lower than she’s seen in nearly two decades.

If prices remain that low, Jones said, she and her

husband might not be able to afford to liquidate their cattle herd as they planned to do this year.

“We can’t afford to take a \$500 hit on every animal,” she said. “We’d be giving away good cattle.”

Ranchers can postpone selling cattle, hoping prices will rise, but that option is neither indefinite nor without cost.

Another Baker County rancher, Ralph Morgan, said he usually sells his annual crop of calves by video sale in July.

With prices plunging as low as \$1 to \$1.10 per pound for 500-pound calves, however, Morgan said he might be tempted to hold off until fall, or even potentially until next spring.

But that plan would amount to an “expensive gamble,” Mor-

gan said, because he’d have to buy tons of hay to feed those cattle through the winter, with no guarantee that prices would rise enough to offset the additional, and unexpected, cost.

He said some ranchers might not be willing to take that risk despite current prices so low that, as Jones said, some animals would be sold for less than the rancher invested in them.

“Sometimes you’ve just got to pull the plug and do it and take your lumps,” Morgan said.

\$45 million annual industry

When cattle ranchers struggle in Baker County it has a ripple effect through the county’s economy.

See Ranchers / Page 3A



S. John Collins/Baker City Herald file photo

Most Baker County ranches are cow-calf operations, selling each year’s crop of calves.

Family sues school district

■ Roberta Fast and her daughter, Katrina, claim officials retaliated against Katrina after she complained about a former BHS coach

By Chris Collins

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A Baker City woman and her daughter have filed suit against the Baker School District alleging that district officials retaliated against the daughter after she complained about the actions of Baker High School volleyball coach Warren Wilson.

Roberta Fast and her daughter, Katrina Fast, contend in the suit, filed Tuesday, that the school district violated Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Oregon law in its response to their concerns about Wilson.

See Lawsuit / Page 3A

City Council tables pay raise proposal

By Samantha O’Conner

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The Baker City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to table a proposed resolution that would have given pay raises to seven city employees.

Mayor Loran Joseph and Councilor Randy Schiewe were at City Hall, while the five other councilors participated remotely via Zoom.

Councilors expressed concern about approving the salary raises to some nonunion employees when it’s not clear how much revenue the city will lose due to the coronavirus pandemic.

See Council / Page 5A

Free firewood cutting permits offered in May

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will allow people to cut up to four cords of firewood for no cost between May 1 and June 1. Firewood permits usually cost \$5 per cord, with a minimum purchase of four cords (\$20).

The Wallowa-Whitman will make free permits available from May 1 through June 1, and the permits must be used during that period. The woodcutting season opens May 1. One permit, for up to four cords, is available for each adult.

After June 1 woodcutters will be required to buy permits at the usual price.

See Firewood / Page 2A



TODAY
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Sports6A
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SATURDAY — RESTAURANTS IN SMALLER TOWNS DEAL WITH PANDEMIC