

No more chopping

■ Off-channel watering system means Baker County rancher no longer needs to chop holes in creek ice to water his livestock

By **Corey Kirk**
Baker City Herald

The long Pine Valley winters of chopping through creek ice to create a watering hole for his livestock is a task of the past for Rob Crawford.

Thanks to a collaborative effort involving Idaho Power Company and the Powder Basin Watershed Council, an off-channel watering project finished last year on Crawford's property has been deemed a success.

"I've been very satisfied with the project, it was wonderful working with Comco construction, Mark Chrisman's outfit, and it was great working with Idaho Power and the (Powder Basin) Watershed Council," Crawford said.

The idea behind off-channel watering is to provide a place for cattle and other livestock to drink that, as the name implies, is not within a stream channel.

Having cattle drink directly from a creek or river can cause a variety of problems, said Christo Morris, executive director of the Powder Basin Watershed Council.

"Allowing livestock direct access to the creek can cause water quality problems from excrement in the creek, they can damage the riparian vegetation, and it's dangerous for livestock because it is difficult to get down to the creek," Morris said.

And in Crawford's case it also meant a lot of cold work during the winter in one of the snowiest valleys in Northeastern Oregon, where snow depths are more typically measured in feet than in inches.

Better still, Crawford didn't have to spend any money on the project that installed three watering troughs on his property.

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