



Photo courtesy of Baker City Public Works Department

Goodrich Reservoir holds about 210 million gallons. Michelle Owen, Baker City's public works director, expects to draw the reservoir down to about 10 million gallons.

WATER

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"People are just spending more time at home," Owen said.

In the last week of July, Owen, citing the city's water curtailment ordinance, asked residents to voluntarily curb their water use. That's Stage 1 of the ordinance.

The city also cut irrigation by 30% at parks, Mount Hope Cemetery and the city-owned Quail Ridge Golf Course, Owen said. That can save around 250,000 gallons per day, she said.

She said she also will ask that the Baker School District reduce irrigation on its properties.

Water consumption dipped after Owen's public request in late July, but she said the trend was short-lived.

Daily water use exceeded 5 million gallons per day on 6 days between July 20-31, but has stayed below 5 million gallons every day since Aug. 1.

However, the average daily water use rose slightly, to 4.5 million gallons per day, the week of Aug. 17-23 compared to the previous week's average of 4.46 million gallons per day.

Water use dipped the last week of August along with temperatures, as the final 2 days of August were the coolest of the month. Average daily use was 3.76 million gallons the last 3 days.

But Owen said demand crept back up to about 4.5

"I'm more nervous than I was 2 weeks ago."

— Michelle Owen, Baker City public works director

million gallons per day as a Labor Day weekend heat wave began.

"I'm more nervous than I was 2 weeks ago," she said.

That said, Owen isn't suggesting the city impose mandatory restrictions under Stage 2 of the water ordinance. Under Stage 2, residents are allowed to use city water (not including wells) to irrigate lawns and gardens only every other day (based on whether their address ends with an odd or even number), and the city can fine violators \$500. Before doing that, Owen said she would cease or severely limit irrigation at parks and other city properties.

The water curtailment ordinance also has Stages 3 and 4, under which lawn watering with city water is banned outright.

(That ordinance, No. 53.25, is available through the city's website, www.bakercity.com. Click on the "Municipal Code" link and type "water curtailment" in the search bar.)

The city has three sources of water.

The primary source is its 10,000-acre watershed on the east slopes of the Elkhorn Mountains about 10 miles west of town. The city taps a dozen springs and streams, which for much of the year have sufficient volume to

meet the city's needs.

The city also has two supplementary sources — Goodrich Reservoir, a natural lake high in the Elkhorns that was dammed decades ago to increase its capacity to 210 million gallons, and a well.

The city has a state permit allowing it to divert up to 200 million gallons from the watershed into the well annually, creating an additional reservoir, this one below ground rather than above.

In a typical summer, Owen said, by around the first of August, as water use rises and the flow of the springs and streams declines, the city starts to supplement its supply with Goodrich and, if needed, the well.

As it almost always does, Goodrich reached its full capacity this spring, Owen said.

The city started tapping the reservoir in late July, and Owen expects to draw it down to about 10 million gallons. The city also has to release water from the reservoir for one Baker Valley landowner whose water right is older than the city's, she said.

The city used some well water in July, and Owen said she expects to start pumping water from it next week.

She said she prefers to use water from Goodrich because it's colder than water from the well.

BAKER CITY DAILY WATER USE*

DAY	2015/2020	HIGH TEMP 2015/2020
8/1	4.54/4.75	99/91
8/2	4.52/4.71	98/95
8/3	4.24/4.93	82/85
8/4	4.58/4.77	88/90
8/5	4.56/4.62	82/95
8/6	4.09/4.13	78/83
8/7	4.17/4.47	84/78
8/8	3.95/4.39	86/84
8/9	3.87/4.49	89/81
8/10	3.91/4.74	87/88
8/11	4.71/4.52	95/93
8/12	4.93/4.19	95/75
8/13	4.69/4.25	97/82
8/14	4.21/4.63	89/85
8/15	3.99/4.42	80/95
8/16	3.74/4.52	82/97
8/17	3.98/4.58	82/99
8/18	3.99/4.56	86/98
8/19	4.09/4.65	85/85
8/20	3.99/4.46	90/87
8/21	4.01/4.56	81/93
8/22	3.77/4.31	89/84
8/23	3.86/4.41	86/90
8/24	4.29/4.27	90/76
8/25	4.29/3.14	90/86
8/26	4.26/3.23	96/85
8/27	4.10/3.57	89/85
8/28	3.76/3.86	80/85
8/29	3.13/3.83	87/87
8/30	2.85/3.84	69/74
8/31	3.72/3.63	78/70

AVG. 4.09/4.30 86.3/86.5

*million gallons

Sources: Baker City Public Works Department, National Weather Service

The well is also a less desirable source — although the water still meets all federal standards — once the injected water has been pumped and water from the aquifer itself starts entering the distribution system.

That groundwater has higher concentrations of iron and manganese, Owen said. The amounts are below federal standards for drinking water but in the past, before the city received its permit to divert mountain water into the well, residents sometimes reported that the well water had stained clothes.

Owen said she plans to have city crews finish its summer pipeline replacement project in the watershed earlier than expected. The city has for more than a decade been replacing the leak-prone concrete pipeline, sections of which are nearly a century old, with PVD pipe and, in sections where the water is at high pressure, ductile iron.

This summer's project is between Elk and Salmon creeks, on the south end of the watershed, and while workers have been installing new pipe the city hasn't been able to tap Salmon Creek, Owen said.

The stream doesn't supply much water in late summer, but she said she'd like to maximize the available water to ease the demand on Goodrich Reservoir and the well.

Owen said 2020 has been similar to 2015, in terms of water use and weather (see chart above).

One difference between the two years is that Owen became concerned about water usage earlier in 2015. That year the city asked residents on July 2 to voluntarily cut back.

The city did not have to impose Stage 2 restrictions that summer.

At The Library

Drive-in hours at 2400 Resort St. are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon-4 p.m.

FICTION

- "Chaos," Iris Johansen
- "The Lying Life of Adult," Elena Ferrante
- "The Mist," Ragnar Jonasson
- "Kingmaker," Margaret Weiss
- "The Oregon Trail romance collection," Short story collection

NONFICTION

- "Live Free or Die," Sean Hannity
- "Becoming Duchess Goldblatt," Anonymous
- "Begin Again," Eddie Glaude
- "The Imposters," Steve Benen
- "Surrounded by Idiots," Thomas Erikson

DVDS

- "Dreamkatcher" (Horror)
- "His Dark Materials" (TV Series)
- "Legacy of Lies" (Action)
- "Olympic Dreams" (Comedy)
- "Westside vs the World" (Documentary)

SCHOOLS

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Even though enrollment is down this year at South Baker, staff was added in preparation for the possibility of returning to in-person classes later in the year, Bates said.

This year's fourth-grade class has 39 fewer students than last year's sixth-grade class, which has moved on to Baker Middle School, Bates said.

Still, six teachers were needed for each grade level at the school. Last year there were five teachers per grade level.

Because teacher availability is at a premium, Bates said three of his specialists will be returning to classroom teaching positions this year, including the school's dean of students, Cassie Moore, who will teach students in the all online program; math coach, Jandy Eskew, will teach fifth grade; and Title I math and reading teacher Dawn O'Grady will teach fourth grade. The Title I instruction will be embedded in each classroom, but the other two positions, math coach and dean of students, are luxuries the school will do without in the coming year, Bates said.

The additional teachers were needed to keep class sizes low in preparation for returning to in-person classes. Gov. Kate Brown's guidelines for schools offering in-person instruction require 35 square feet of classroom space per

student to meet safe social distancing recommendations.

As the comprehensive distance learning instruction begins, the student bodies at both South Baker Intermediate and Brooklyn Primary School, which has grades 1-3, will be separated into two groups. Group A students will receive instruction from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. with their teachers available from 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Monday through Thursday. Group B students will have online classes from noon to 3 p.m. with teachers' office hours set from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

During the first week of school, students will attend classes Tuesday through Friday to make up for the day off on Monday because of the Labor Day holiday.

During a Baker School Board meeting in August, Jodi Thew, the district's director of special programs and curriculum, said students will meet virtually with their teachers and classmates through the Zoom videostreaming computer app. Assignments will be given to be completed during the remainder of the day and paraprofessional educators will provide tutoring.

Students in Grades 7-12 will attend classes through a seven-period day for 30 to 40 minutes per class and a 5- to 15-minute break between classes. Teachers have office hours from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. and tutoring will be available from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Thew said. Students in Grades 7-12

who choose the total online system will receive instruction through Eagle Cap Innovative Junior/Senior High School.

Witty said Thursday that the total number of students who have chosen the total online instruction is about 125 in Grades 7-12 and about 93 students in Grades K-6.

While the District hopes to move to in-person instruction as soon as possible, the Baker School Board and administrators will be keeping an eye on the county's coronavirus numbers with the governor's new metrics — announced Aug. 11 — in mind.

The new metrics were developed specifically for schools in low population density counties with fewer than 6 people per square mile, such as Baker.

Under the metrics, schools in low population density counties can have in-person classes by working with their local health officials to determine that there is no community spread and that the total COVID-19 cases in the prior three weeks were 30 or fewer, with less than half of the cases reported in the last week of the three-week period.

As the school district staff was preparing for the reopening of schools the week of Aug. 24, one of the employees tested positive for the coronavirus. Witty announced the positive case among his staff on Aug. 27, stating that the one who tested positive was quarantining at home. Only one other employee was in close contact with that person, and also

self-quarantined, Witty said Thursday.

"The process worked," Witty said of holding the spread of the virus to just two people.

"The systems in place worked, by physical distancing, wearing face masks and sanitation practices, we lessened the chance of infection in our district and among our staff," Witty said.

The focus for now is on working any bugs out of the online learning system and continuing to follow the safety protocols, he said.

He urged any parents who have not yet registered their students or picked up Chromebooks or iPads or who need help securing adequate bandwidth to connect their child's computer with the District system to call their child's building principal to make arrangements as soon as possible.

"We'll go above and beyond to make sure they get their

equipment," Witty said.

And, in the meantime, Witty said the District will be watching the metrics and how they apply in Baker County to allow the schools to move to in-person instruction as soon as possible.

But he doesn't want to jump into in-person instruction only to have to jump out again because of an increase in the number of positive coronavirus cases in the community.



The schools will rely on the advice of the Baker County Health Department and continue to ask community members to follow the safety protocols established to help stem the spread of COVID-19, which would hasten the District's ability to offer in-person classes.

"It's important we stick to a path for a period of time," Witty said, for the benefit of both the staff and the students and their families.



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