

Life Flight helicopter rescues hunter after fall in tailings

By Chris Collins

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A Baker City man who was duck hunting in the dredge tailings near Sumpter Sunday morning when he was injured in a fall was located by a Life Flight helicopter that conducted an aerial search of the area before landing and taking the man to a Boise hospital for treatment.

The man, whose artificial hip was dislocated, landed in the water and was cold and in pain when he was loaded onto the helicopter about an hour after his fall, said Wes Morgan, Powder River Rural Fire Protection District chief.

Morgan declined to identify the man, citing federal health care confidentiality regulations. The victim was able to call

his wife on his cellphone and his wife then called the 911 dispatch center to summon help about 8:55 a.m., Morgan said.

Because of a poor phone connection, the man was not able to provide his wife with his location.

"There are a lot of dredge tailing out there," Morgan said. For that reason, the Sheriff's Department's Search and Res-

cue Team had been activated, but the volunteers were called off after Life Flight was able to find the man from the air.

"They're more than willing to do that," Morgan said of the helicopter's search efforts. "Life Flight is a great outfit to work with. They love to fly."

The Life Flight crew led other members of the rescue squad to the victim, who was

loaded on a gurney and placed aboard the helicopter. He was treated in Boise and had been released home and was doing well, Morgan said Monday morning.

In addition to the Baker City ambulance and Life Flight crews, Morgan said volunteers turned out from his department, the Sumpter Volunteer Fire Department and the

Sumpter Valley Railroad to help with the rescue.

The tailings are piles of rock and gravel left by dredges that plied the Sumpter Valley for gold from 1913 to 1954. The tailing piles, some of which are surrounded by ponds, extend for several hundred acres south of Highway 7 and east of Phillips Reservoir.

SCHOOLS

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The requirements state that those counties must have 30 or fewer cases of the coronavirus in a 3-week period. And for the last of those weeks, the county must have five or fewer cases or record less than half the total cases for the entire period.

During the first two weeks, those starting Sept. 20 and Sept. 27, Baker County had 11 new cases. As of Friday, Oct. 9, the county had eight new cases for the third week. That meant the county could record no more than two new cases on Saturday, the final day of the third week, to meet the standard.

The county did report two new cases on Saturday, meaning the last week had 10 of the total 21 cases.

The other requirement for reopening schools was an endorsement from Dr. Eric Lamb, the county's public health officer.

In a Monday statement to the Herald, Lamb said: "I am glad that we are going to be able to get our younger students back in the classroom. The fact that we have been able to meet the state requirements for this first stage of school reopening is a testament to the residents of Baker County in their willingness to

follow social distancing, face coverings, hand washing, isolation and quarantine strategies to help slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. I am cautiously optimistic that if our community continues to do their part, that we will be able to get our older students back in classrooms and our economy moving forward in a timely manner."

"The green light was given," Witty said. "They were comfortable with us moving forward."

COVID-19 precautions will be in place when students return. All students and staff will wear face coverings, and they will be instructed to stay home if they aren't feeling well. Students will be screened daily for symptoms, staff will administer a daily self screening and visitors will be screened as well, Witty said.

"It is critical that we follow all protocols to the best our ability," Witty stated. "In doing so, we will create a safe environment for students to learn and staff to teach."

"I am grateful to our students and families who have demonstrated incredible resiliency through a very difficult time," Witty stated in

the press release. "We must work together to minimize any exposure to COVID-19 if we are to maintain in-person school. This can only be accomplished through serving each other by taking appropriate steps to minimize the spread of COVID-19."

Now that the elementary students are returning to their classrooms, it will be the schools' obligation to control the coronavirus in their buildings.

"The better we can do to keep the number of cases down, the better chance we have of staying in school," Witty said.

There will be no school for the preschool through sixth-grade students today as teachers and other staff prepare their classrooms for in-person instruction. The employees also will spend the day reviewing safety protocols and making sure the necessary instructional materials are in place.

Witty said he had received just a few emails Monday morning seeking clarification of various issues. Overall, there was general excitement about returning the younger students to in-person classes for the first time since mid-March.

"Our goal is to stay in school and to be here for the remainder of the year," he said Monday morning.

As the younger children return to all-day, in-person classes, Witty said the District will continue to look for ways that would allow middle school and high school students to return to in-person classes.

That is not possible now because of the state's "Ready Schools Safe Learners" requirement that limits student interactions to no more than 50 people per week.

Because elementary students meet in self-contained classrooms, that goal can be achieved for them. The older students, who rotate through classes and have contact with as many as 100 people per week, can't meet that goal at this time.

Now that county metrics for in-person classes have been met for the younger students, however, the District might be allowed to provide more in-person instruction for the upper grade levels as well, starting with middle school students, Witty said.

Administrators will present a plan to the Baker School Board for possibly returning seventh- and eighth-graders to a system of in-person and hybrid classes. That would probably mean in-person sessions for one day per week for student cohort groups, rotating them through a hybrid model that would keep each cohort at home receiving classes over the Zoom

computer app the other three days per week, Witty said.

"One day out of four is the only way to make that feasible," he said.

The discussion will take place during a Zoom Board meeting that begins at 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15. More information is available by calling the District Office at 541-524-2260.

At the high school level, the state must raise the number of contacts students are allowed per week to make a return to in-person instruction feasible for them, Witty said.

In the meantime, administrators and classroom teachers will be providing families of elementary age students more information about schedules and other details specific to each building through ParentSquare as their children prepare to return to their classrooms on Wednesday.

Witty said as in-person classes resume, the ability to continue in that setting will be less dependent on county numbers and more dependent on each school's ability to keep the student cohort groups and staff healthy.

If a student tests positive, Baker County Health Department staff will conduct an interview and identify people who might have been in close contact.

ORPHEUM

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The building was most recently occupied by Marilyn's Music.

Work immediately began to find funding. A grant for asbestos abatement was awarded by the Leo Adler Foundation in December 2016. In late 2016-2017, the project earned grants from the Oregon Community Foundation and Ford Family Foundation to fund a feasibility study.

Deconstruction to the shell was completed in mid-2018 and the unseen work since then has been done by architectural and engineering consultants.

Eastern Oregon Regional Theatre (EORT) is the nonprofit fiscal agent for the Baker Orpheum, which will become the theater's permanent home.

"EORT's mission from day one was to find a permanent

home for the regional theater," Bonebrake said.

To spread awareness of the project, the space was open on most First Fridays, and benefited from local fundraising events.

That all came to a halt in 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic hit.

"Our fundraising is predicated on making presentations," Bonebrake said.

A \$16,674 grant from the Oregon Cultural Trust was awarded to develop a patronage database and narrative to share with potential donors — when group meetings resume.

"We have been diligent, things did happen," Bonebrake said. "People believed in us and we're ready to move forward."

The project is entering Phase 5, a \$208,000 phase for structural upgrades to accommodate theater flyloft weights and balcony construction. The remaining three phases of the

\$2.2 million theater project include trim of interior spaces including lobby, balcony, stairs and marquee construction, and equipment (including seats).

The Baker Orpheum Theater will have several uses in addition to being home for EORT. It will also provide a space for local performing arts groups.

"Like our local choirs, and the local orchestra," Bonebrake said.

It will be available to rent for large gatherings, and provide a performance space for traveling artists.

Bonebrake said Burris, in addition to purchasing the building, has set up a fund with the Oregon Community Foundation to underwrite the cost of nationally known artists to keep ticket prices affordable for local residents.

Funding sources

To date, the Baker Orpheum project has received

more than \$530,000. Of that amount, nearly \$291,000 has come from local individuals and event donations.

"The local support we've received is astounding," Bonebrake said.

The remaining funds were grant awards from foundations, including the Oregon Community Foundation, Ford Family Foundation, Leo Adler Foundation, Sunderland Foundation, Oregon Cultural Trust, National Historic Preservation Trust, Autzen Foundation, Buerkel-Zoellner Fund, Kinsman Foundation, Travel Oregon, Reser Family Fund, and Union Pacific Community Fund.

Contact

Donations to the Baker Orpheum can be made in care of Aletha Bonebrake, 2490 Baker St., Baker City, OR 97814.

Those who would like more information about the project can call her at 541-519-3255.

COUNCIL

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The proposed new deal that councilors will consider this evening is a 5-year contract starting Jan. 1, 2021. The contract includes a provision that the 5-year term will automatically be renewed each year unless either the city or the contractor declines to do so. This rollover clause would maintain the contract as a 5-year deal perpetually.

The proposed contract calls for the contractor to pay the city an annual rental fee of \$5,500. The amount would increase, to an amount to be negotiated, starting in January 2026.

In other business Tuesday:

- Councilors will meet in an executive session (closed to the public) at 6:15 p.m. to discuss the recruitment of a new city manager to replace Fred Warner Jr., who is retiring at the end of the year.

Councilors interviewed five candidates last week; the city did not announce their names, citing the potential to affect their current jobs. Mayor Loran Joseph said he expects the Council during this evening's meeting will announce the names of two, three or four finalists whom the Council will invite to Baker City to meet with residents and tour the city. This would happen after the Nov. 3 election. That would allow the finalists to also meet the newly elected councilors. Six of the seven seats on the Council are on the ballot, and among the 13 candidates for those seats are three incumbents. As few as one of the current councilors, and as many as four, will remain on the Council when it meets for the first time in January 2021.

- Councilors will resume a discussion about options for dealing with properties that violate the city's property maintenance ordinance.

Police Chief Ray Duman told councilors in September that the estimated cost to clean up eight properties, for which the city has active abatement orders from the Baker County Justice Court, would exceed by at least several times the \$6,000 the city budgets annually for such purposes.

Among the options councilors will discuss Tuesday are passing an ordinance requiring all habitable properties to be connected to an approved water and sewer system (either the city's system or a verified well and septic system), creating a committee to look into the underlying issues leading to the maintenance violations, and allocating more money — \$50,000 or more annually — to clean up properties.

NEWS OF RECORD

DEATHS

Gordon Schroeder: 85, of Baker City, died Oct. 12, 2020, at home surrounded by his family. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Online condolences may be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

FUNERALS PENDING

Jan Haga: A memorial service and celebration of his life will take place Friday, Oct. 16, at 1 p.m. at Harvest Church, 3720 Birch St. in Baker City. COVID-19 precautions will be in place, and people attending should bring a mask and follow social distancing requirements. The family suggests donations in Jan's memory be made to Harvest Church through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834. Online condolences can be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

Nancy Denison: A celebration of her life will take place Saturday, Oct. 17, at 3 p.m. at

St. Therese Catholic Church in Halfway with Father Telagani officiating. Should there be inclement weather, the celebration will move to the Lions Club pavilion in the park. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, please bring a chair, your mask and remember social distancing. An online virtual service will take place later, with the time to be announced. Remembrances can be made to St. Elizabeth Seton School or the Pine Valley Fair Association through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834. Online condolences can be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

POLICE LOG

Baker City Police
Arrests, citations
BAKER COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT WARRANTS, SECOND-DEGREE THEFT (two counts) and NEGOTIATING A BAD CHECK (four counts): Alexander Allen Adams, 24, of 2375 Campbell St., 6:05 p.m. Sunday, on David Eccles Road; jailed.

FOURTH-DEGREE DOMESTIC ASSAULT: Johnathon Dale Fields, 33, of 1738 1/2 Valley Ave., 4:16 p.m. Saturday, at his home; jailed.

SECOND-DEGREE CRIMINAL TRESPASSING: Timothy Kelly Slaney, 31, of Baker City, 11:19 a.m. Friday, at Albertsons, 1120 Campbell Street; cited and released. Slaney was cited a second time on a charge of second-degree criminal trespassing at 12:37 p.m. Friday at 10th and Broadway streets.

POSSESSION OF A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE (Washington State warrant): Thomas Anthony Crews, 27, of Baker City, 2:39 p.m. Friday, in the 700 block of Campbell Street; jailed.
DRIVING WHILE OPERATOR'S LICENSE SUSPENDED OR REVOKED: James Robert Hensen, 33, of 3440 Ninth St., 11:18 p.m.

Friday, in the 500 block of Campbell Street; cited and released.

Baker County Sheriff's Office

Arrests, citations
PROVIDING FALSE INFORMATION TO A POLICE OFFICER and RECKLESS ENDANGERING OF ANOTHER PERSON: Derek Frank Navarro, 28, of Ogden, Utah, 1:07 a.m. Sunday, on Interstate 84 at Baker City; cited and released.

HARASSMENT (Baker County Circuit Court warrant): Richard Eugene Cummings, 77, of Huntington, 6:32 p.m. Sunday, on Old Oregon Trail Road; cited and released.

FAILURE TO APPEAR (Baker County warrant): Shebb Robert Bassman, 32, of Baker City, 3:11 p.m. Friday, at the Sheriff's Office; booked and released.

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2021

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