

WELL

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Owen said the drill has so far been encountering clay soils and has yet to reach layers of rock that contain the aquifer that will be tapped.

The drillers expect to reach rock soon, she said. "That would be good," Owen said.

She said it's not uncommon for well-drillers to find surprises underground.

The predictions were based on the log made by the company that drilled a nearby well that supplies water to the golf course.

Schneider Water Services has until May 1 to finish drilling the well.

The next phase, which includes installing a pump and distribution pipes, and building a structure around the well, will be more expensive, costing an estimated \$2 million, Owen said.

That work won't start until



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

A contractor has been drilling a new well near the Quail Ridge Golf Course since early October. This well will be a supplementary source of water for the city.

the new fiscal year, which begins July 1, 2021.

Owen said the new well, which will supplement the

city's main water source — a dozen streams and springs in the 10,000-acre watershed on the east slopes of the Elkhorn

Mountains about 10 miles west of town — likely will be available to deliver water to homes and businesses starting

in the spring of 2022.

"When complete, we hope that it will produce about 1,500 gallons a minute," Owen said.

That's about 2.16 million gallons per day.

This past summer, the city's daily water demand averaged more than 4 million gallons during August.

The city definitely would have relied on the new well this summer had it been finished, Owen said.

The city likely will tap the new well both during the summer, when demand peaks and the supply from the watershed diminishes, and in some years during the spring, when rapidly melting snow in the mountains can temporarily cause streams to carry too much silt for the water to be safely used.

The new well is one of the major projects that prompted the City Council to boost water rates by 10% in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Those increases will pay for the well and for the continuation of a long-term effort to replace the century-old, leaky concrete pipeline that brings water to town from the city's watershed.

The new well will be the city's second.

The other well, which the city drilled in 1977 near its water treatment plant and reservoir on the hill near Reservoir Road, is about 800 feet deep.

Owen said the new well, like the existing one, will be part of the city's Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) system.

Baker City was the first Oregon city to receive a state permit allowing it to divert water from surface sources — the watershed streams and springs — into a well during the winter when the watershed produces far more water than the city needs.

That water is stored in the well aquifer and can be pumped later into the city's distribution system.

TREES

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The size of the affected area is one reason Rob Klavins objects not only to the new policy itself, but also the method by which the Trump administration went about making it.

Klavins is the Northeast Oregon field coordinator for Oregon Wild, one of four environmental groups that lobbied the Forest Service in August to study the potential effects of the change in an environmental impact statement rather than the less detailed environmental assessment the agency has conducted.

Critics have argued that allowing widespread cutting of large trees will harm wildlife species that depend on mature forests.

"We think this is wrong both in process and in substance," Klavins said on Monday, Jan. 18. "It eliminates protection entirely for most large and mature trees."

In a press release announcing that Hubbard had signed a docu-

"We think this is wrong both in process and in substance. It eliminates protection entirely for most large and mature trees."

— Rob Klavins, Northeast Oregon director, Oregon Wild

ment establishing the new policy, Glenn Casamassa, Pacific Northwest regional forester for the Forest Service, said the policy includes a system for monitoring its effects.

"This decision will help us to better manage forests for wildfires and other disturbances, and to protect old trees that are hard to replace once lost," Casamassa said in the press release.

Forest Service officials contend that removing the 21-inch rule will give the agency more flexibility in managing forests to reduce the risk of wildfires that can kill all ages of trees, including the older, bigger trees the former rule was meant to protect.

According to the decision notice that Hubbard signed, the new policy states that forest managers "should retain and generally emphasize recruitment of old trees and large trees, including clumps of old trees."

The notice also states that "management activities" (which can include logging) should put a priority on "old trees for retention and recruitment."

The Forest Service defines old trees as those that have "external ... characteristics that suggest an age" of 150 years or more.

The agency defines large trees as grand firs or white firs 30 inches or larger in diameter, and other species that are 21 inches or more in diameter.

Forest Service officials say that over the past century or so the composition of eastside forests have changed, with more firs, which are more susceptible to fires, insects and disease, and fewer ponderosa pines.

Klavins said Oregon Wild officials haven't decided whether to file a

legal challenge to the new policy.

"We're going to look at all our options," he said.

Klavins said he will lobby Oregon's two U.S. senators, Democrats Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, to push the new Biden administration to overturn the decision and restart the process.

Klavins said he is concerned that the incoming administration might be so overwhelmed with tasks that the elimination of the 21-inch rule will not be a high enough priority to be addressed.

He called it "really egregious" that the Trump administration would do away with the logging restriction less than a week before Biden is inaugurated.

Klavins contends that "going back to the bad old days of arguing about whether to log old growth" trees will not result in healthier forests, and that it takes the debate over proper management of public forests in the "wrong direction."

Arvid Andersen, a private forestry

consultant from Baker City, said in an interview in August that he believes eliminating the 21-inch limit would give the Forest Service more flexibility in its effort, in conjunction with Baker City, to thin some of the forests in the city's watershed and thus reduce the wildfire danger.

Andersen, who also served on the Baker City Council until his term ended Dec. 31, 2020, describes the 21-inch limit as "arbitrary" and said he believes it has contributed to the severity of some wildfires by restricting the Forest Service's ability to thin forests and reduce the fuel load.

"You can cut all the little trees you want but you've got to get that fuel loading down," Andersen said in August.

He said he doesn't advocate for wholesale removal of large trees, but he believes the Forest Service should have more flexibility.

Klavins contends that the Forest Service can reduce the fire danger by cutting smaller trees in areas close to homes and towns.

VACCINES in Baker County

- Dec. 18 — 34 doses
- Dec. 19 — 1
- Dec. 20 — 0
- Dec. 21 — 25
- Dec. 22 — 1
- Dec. 23 — 32
- Dec. 24 — 0
- Dec. 25 — 0
- Dec. 26 — 1
- Dec. 27 — 2
- Dec. 28 — 7
- Dec. 29 — 10
- Dec. 30 — 78
- Dec. 31 — 11
- Jan. 1 — 0
- Jan. 2 — 0
- Jan. 3 — 1
- Jan. 4 — 0
- Jan. 5 — 6
- Jan. 6 — 4
- Jan. 7 — 46
- Jan. 8 — 140
- Jan. 9 — 7
- Jan. 10 — 0
- Jan. 11 — 1
- Jan. 12 — 9
- Jan. 13 — 95
- Jan. 14 — 75
- Jan. 15 — 29
- Jan. 16 — 8*

* some doses not yet reported

VACCINE

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The new plan calls for vaccinations of teachers and other school employees to start Jan. 25.

Inoculations for people 80 and older will start Feb. 8, expanding to people 75 and older Feb. 15, 70 and older on Feb. 22 and 65 and older on March 1.

Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department, said the county must follow the state guidelines.

But there are no guarantees the county will be able to start vaccinating school employees on Jan. 25, Staten said.

To do so, the Health Department would need to receive more vaccine doses from the state, Staten said.

But she said that on Friday, Jan. 15, a state official told her not to expect a shipment of vaccines this week.

"I don't know what's going to happen," Staten said on Monday, Jan. 18. "We're hoping to do a larger (vaccination) event, but we have to have vaccines in hand to do so. We're kind of holding our breath."

"I'm confident that as the vaccine rolls in, the county will be able to get it out to folks."

— Nancy Staten, director, Baker County Health Department



Staten said the Health Department and its two partners, Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City and the Pine Eagle Clinic in Halfway, have offered vaccines to almost all health care workers and other residents who belong to the state's phase 1a category, which has been the priority since inoculations started in mid-December.

As of Monday, a total of 605 Baker County residents — about 3.6% of the county's population of 16,800 — have been vaccinated. That includes 530 people who have received the first of two required doses, and 75 who have received both doses.

The second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is recommended 21 days after the first, and the second dose of the Moderna vaccine 28 days after the first.

Staten said that as of Monday, Jan. 18, the Health Department had about 180 doses. Most of those are

slated to be given to health care workers or others in the phase 1a category within the next week or so, she said.

Vaccinating the county's older residents will be a bigger task than what has happened so far, Staten said.

That's due in part to sheer numbers.

According to the Oregon Employment Department, which lists education and health workers as a single category, there are about 970 jobs in the county. Some of those workers live outside Baker County.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates there are about 4,275 residents in Baker County who are 65 or older — about 26.5% of the population.

Moreover, Staten said she expects, based in part on the number of phone calls and other inquiries the Health Department has received recently from older residents about vaccinations, that a higher percentage of older residents will take the vac-

cine as compared to the phase 1a category.

About half of the people in that category who have been offered the vaccine have chosen to take it, Staten said.

She said that despite the "big changes" in the state's vaccination plan announced

Friday, she's optimistic that Baker County and its partners will be ready to ramp up inoculations as soon as the doses are available.

"I'm confident that as the vaccine rolls in, the county will be able to get it out to folks," Staten said.

New At The Library

Patrons can reserve materials in advance online or by calling 541-523-6419. Drive-in hours at 2400 Resort St. are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

FICTION

- "Weather," Jenny Offill
- "A Beginning at the End," Mike Chen
- "Come Tumbling Down," Seanan McGuire
- "The Adventure of the Peculiar Protocols," Nicholas Meyer
- "Looking for a Miracle," Wanda Brunstette

NONFICTION

- "Punching Nazis," Keith Jensen
- "Uncensored," Zachary Wood
- "Through the Valley," William Reeder
- "Objective Troy," Scott Shane
- "Prozac Nation," Elizabeth Wurtzel

DVDS

- "Infidel" (Action)
- "Peninsula" [Pando] (Horror)
- "The War With Grandpa" (Family)
- "The Wiggles" (Juvenile Video)
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Baker County Veteran Services

Until further notice Veterans will not be seen in person. If you need assistance, call Rick's work number 541-523-8223 and he will call you back to help you over the phone. This is a measure that is being implemented to minimize the spread of COVID-19.