

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Bruce McMillan of Baker City.

Nation, 5A

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Wednesday, Jan. 27, was undertaking the most ambitious effort ever to cut America's oil, gas and coal emissions and stave off the worst effects of climate change. New executive orders target federal subsidies for those industries and halt new oil and gas leases on federal lands and waters. The orders awaiting his signature aim to conserve 30% of the country's lands and ocean waters in the next 10 years, move to an all-electric federal vehicle fleet and elevate climate change to a national security priority. The conservation plan would set aside millions of acres for recreation, wildlife and climate efforts by 2030 as part of Biden's campaign pledge for a \$2 trillion program to slow global warming.

BRIEFING

Sen. Ron Wyden plans online town hall February 5

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden will host an online town hall on Feb. 5 for residents in Baker, Harney and Malheur counties. The event will start at noon. Wyden has postponed in-person town halls during the COVID-19 pandemic. A link to the town hall is at <https://m.facebook.com/events/896647221081599/>

WEATHER

Today

39 / 33

Snow showers

Friday

40 / 29

Cloudy

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

Major Energy Efficiency Project Will Start March 1, 2022

Renovations Will Close Trail Center For 2-Plus Years



Lisa Britton/For the Baker City Herald

The Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, on Flagstaff Hill about 5 miles east of Baker City, has welcomed more than 2.3 million visitors since it opened in May 1992.

■ BLM will operate ‘Oregon Trail Experience’ in Baker City during closure

By Jayson Jacoby

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Starting about a year from now, people who visit Baker County to learn about the Oregon Trail will have to go somewhere other than the Interpretive Center that has stood atop Flagstaff Hill for almost three decades.

But only temporarily.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which owns and operates the Center, is planning a major renovation of the building to make it more energy efficient.

The Center, which has lured nearly 2.4 million visitors since it opened on May 23, 1992, about 5 miles east of Baker City, will be closed during the approximately 2 1/2-year project, which will cost at least \$3 million, said Larisa Bogardus, acting director for the Center.

During the closure, the BLM will have a temporary “Oregon Trail

Experience” in Baker City, Bogardus said.

BLM officials are working on plans for the temporary facility, including its location, she said.

“It will absolutely be in Baker City,” said Bogardus, who is also the public affairs officer for the BLM’s Vale District, which manages the Interpretive Center. “We’re very cognizant of the economic role of the Interpretive Center in Baker County.”

Bogardus said the current plan is to put the renovation project out for bid in July or August of this year.

Construction will start on March 1, 2022. The Center will likely be closed for at least a couple of months before that to allow workers to move artifacts, Bogardus said, and for a couple additional months after the renovations, to allow staff to prepare the Center for reopening.

The impetus for the project, by far

the largest since the Center opened, was a nationwide survey comparing the energy efficiency of BLM buildings, Bogardus said.

That survey, which included an inspection of the Interpretive Center in May 2018, earned the Center the “dubious distinction” of being the agency’s least efficient building, she said.

Among the findings is that the Center’s “Energy Use Intensity” — a measure of its inefficiency — was 170 kilo-British Thermal Units per square foot. The average for BLM facilities is 84, according to the survey.

The Center, which operates solely on electricity (natural gas isn’t available on Flagstaff Hill), runs up a monthly power bill averaging about \$1,000, Bogardus said.

Its location contributes to the Center’s energy gluttony.

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S. John Collins/Baker City Herald File

Exhibits in the grand hall at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center give visitors a sense of what emigrants experienced on the Trail during the 19th century.

Documentation: The photography of Berenice Chavez' opens Feb. 5

GO!

Also inside: livestream concert, local news, this big fish

Virus rate stays slow

By Jayson Jacoby

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Baker County's current slowdown in new COVID-19 cases started too late to spare the county from two more weeks subject to the state's tightest restrictions on businesses and other activities.

But if the trend that started Jan. 17 continues, the county could see relief from some of those limits starting Feb. 12.

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Council OKs bid for sewer project

By Samantha O'Conner

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The Baker City Council on Tuesday, Jan. 26, voted unanimously to hire a local contractor for a nearly \$5.6 million project to build a new wastewater pipeline and storage lagoon.

Councilors authorized City Manager Jonathan Cannon to sign a contract with Gyllenberg Construction Inc. for \$5,577,953.

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Letter urges return of prep sports

By Corey Kirk

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Baker School District athletic director Buell Gonzales Jr. is urging people to endorse a letter advocating for Oregon officials to allow high school football practice to start Feb. 8.

That's the day practices could start, in preparation for a shortened season for football and other fall sports, volleyball, cross-country and soccer.

Those sports were postponed last fall due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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