

# Baker City Herald

April 8, 2021

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In SPORTS, 5A

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QUICK HITS

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Molly Ragsdale of Baker City.

**Oregon, 6A**

Facing a "fourth wave" of COVID-19, Oregon will drop eligibility restrictions for COVID-19 vaccinations April 19, up to two weeks earlier than planned.

Oregon had previously planned to drop all eligibility restrictions by May 1, with some counties possibly offering appointments as early as April 26.

BRIEFING

**Online auction raising money for BHS Class of 2021 graduation party**

An online auction will raise money for the drug- and alcohol-free graduation party for Baker High School's Class of 2021. The auction includes a variety of items donated by local businesses and parents. Access the auction online at <https://www.32auctions.com/BHSClassof21>

**Baker County Garden Club to meet April 14**

The Baker County Garden Club will have its first meeting of 2021 on Wednesday, April 14 at 10:30 a.m. at the home of Ken and Mary Hutton, 975 Petry Lane in Baker City. Speaker David Cowan will talk about raised garden beds. Please bring a sack lunch and chair. Everyone is welcome.

WEATHER

**Today**  
48 / 22

Partly sunny

**Friday**  
64 / 31

Partly sunny

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

**Baker County Commissioners Agree To Send Declaration To State**

## County Declares Drought Disaster



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

This photo from a drone, taken in late November 2020, shows Phillips Reservoir in the Sumpter Valley between Baker City and Sumpter. The reservoir, which supplies irrigation water to Baker Valley farms and ranches, was holding about 5,500 acre-feet of water when the photo was taken. Today the reservoir is impounding about 14,500 acre-feet — approximately 19% of its capacity.

**By Samantha O'Conner**  
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Last year Baker County declared a drought disaster when summer was on the wane.

In 2021 the drought situation is dire while spring has barely begun.

On Wednesday morning, April 7, the Baker County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution declaring a drought disaster in the county and asking both Gov. Kate Brown and U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to follow suit.

State and federal drought declarations could make county property

owners eligible for financial aid and other assistance, and give state water regulators more flexibility in allocating water.

Baker County could become the second of Oregon's 36 counties to have a state drought declaration.

Brown on March 31 declared a drought in Klamath County, the first such declaration of 2021.

Jason Yencopal, the county's emergency management director, told commissioners during their regular meeting Wednesday that the drought has been worsening.

"Baker County's had extreme

drought in the county since February second," Yencopal said. "So we're a little over eight weeks now."

Until Feb. 2, the U.S. Drought Monitor Index rated the central part of the county, including Baker Valley, as being in severe drought on a five-level scale that starts at abnormally dry and moves into moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought.

But on Feb. 2 the index, which is updated weekly, added a circular area, including Baker Valley, that's rated as extreme drought.

See **Drought** / Page 3A

## Man hits police officer

Andrew Lane Peterman, 36, of Boise, is accused of punching Officer Mark Powell and a hospital security guard on Tuesday

**By Jayson Jacoby**  
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A Boise man is in the Baker County Jail on multiple charges, including assaulting a peace officer, after he twice punched a Baker City Police officer in the face while resisting arrest early Tuesday, April 6 at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City.

Andrew Lane Peterman, 36, is also charged with fourth-degree assault, second-degree criminal mischief and second-degree disorderly conduct.

Peterman, who was released from an Idaho prison last week after serving a sentence for aggravated assault, was arraigned Tuesday afternoon in Baker County Circuit Court, participating in the proceeding by phone from the jail.

Judge Matt Shirtcliff set Peterman's bail at \$100,000. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for April 13 at 1:15 p.m.

Peterman is accused of hitting both Officer Mark Powell and Dalton Baker, a security guard at the hospital, according to a report written by Baker City Police Sgt. Wayne Chastain.

See **Arrest** / Page 3A

**Ceremony Scheduled For June 6 at Bulldog Memorial Stadium**

## Baker High School plans 'normal' commencement

Baker High School administrators and senior class officers are planning a traditional commencement for Sunday, June 6 at 2 p.m. at Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium.

The 2020 ceremony was quite different due to COVID-19 pandemic precautions.

Rather than walk across the football field to receive their diplomas, with family and friends gathered in the grandstand, graduates rode in vehicles. After collecting their diplomas at BHS, students paraded through town as residents watched and applauded from sidewalks.

The goal this year, according to an announcement from the high school on Tuesday,

April 6, is to have a commencement that's much like graduation ceremonies prior to 2020.

All plans are contingent, however, on the county's COVID-19 risk level, and associated state-imposed restrictions.

Among the differences from the school's traditional commencement:

- Each student will receive six tickets for family and friends.
- Spectators will be seated on both sides of the field, rather than in the covered grandstand on the west side of the stadium as usual.
- Spectators will have to wear facial coverings and physically distance from

groups that aren't from their household.

As was the case with Baker's two home football games in March, there will be four entrances for spectators.

After the ceremony, school officials hope to replicate the 2020 vehicle parade through town, but that plan has not been finalized with Baker City officials.

The high school will release more details later this spring.

According to Tuesday's announcement, school officials wanted to give family and friends advance notice in case they will have to travel to attend the commencement. Graduation will also be livestreamed.

## Baker schools make state tests optional this year

Students in the Baker School District won't have to take annual state tests this spring unless their parents want them to.

In past years, parents could choose to not have their children take the annual tests, but they had to fill out a form.

See **Testing** / Page 3A

## Local temperature roller coaster rolls on

**By Jayson Jacoby**  
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Spring is suffering from an identity crisis in Baker County.

The season, which to be fair isn't known for its consistency, has careened between days bearing summer's warmth and ones that wouldn't feel abnormal in February.

See **Weather** / Page 2A



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