

# Community

## FIRE

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When he was notified about the fire, Harper said he took one engine, with a water capacity of 250 gallons, while his son, Steven Harper, and another Keating volunteer, Brad Bottoms, headed out with a 1,000-gallon engine.

Buzz Harper said the trio, with the two engines, arrived within a few minutes and had nearly stopped the fire, at about 10 acres, when both ran out of water almost simultaneously.

“When you’re in the middle of it all (the water) goes pretty fast,” he said.

The fire, still propelled by the hot, dry wind, continued to move to the north and northwest, with flame lengths around 20 feet when the blaze hit patches of drought-desiccated sagebrush. Embers were starting spot fires 200 to 300 yards ahead of the main blaze, Harper said.

Harper said multiple fire agencies, responding through the mutual aid system, arrived soon after with a variety of equipment including engines and bulldozers.

Overhead, a pair of single-engine air tankers dropped fire retardant on the fringes of the blaze to block its spread.

“They did a great job of setting up lines,” Harper said of the aircraft.

He was he glad to have two tankers available so quickly, considering that fires



Travis Cook/Contributed Photo

A wildfire burned about 100 acres in the Keating Valley on Tuesday, June 29.

*“If it would have went another 200 to 300 yards into Goose Creek, it would be going for weeks.”*

— Buzz Harper, chief, Keating Rural Fire Protection District

are burning elsewhere in the region, and the fire danger is high due to the record-setting heat wave, so there’s no surplus of firefighting resources.

“We were lucky to get what we got,” Harper said.

Agencies that responded included the Pine Valley and Eagle Valley departments, Baker Rural, the Lookout-Glasgow Rangeland Fire Protection Association, Forest Service, BLM and Oregon Department of Forestry, Harper said.

He said several ranchers

also brought bulldozers to help fight the fire.

Harper said his chief concern was that the fire would push into the steeper, less-accessible ground along Goose Creek, where the sagebrush grows thick and tall.

It was a near thing. “If it would have went another 200 to 300 yards into Goose Creek, it would be going for weeks,” Harper said.

Harper, who has lived in Keating Valley for 32 years and served as the Keating District’s chief for more than 25 years, said fire danger is the “worst I’ve ever seen it here — and this is the end of June.”

Travis Cook, who lives in the northern part of Keating Valley and owns Copper Belt Winery, was home Tuesday afternoon when he got a text message from his mother,

Cathy Cook, who lives nearby, telling him about the fire.

Travis Cook said he watched the fire through binoculars and a spotting scope through the afternoon and evening.

Like Harper, Cook, who grew up in Keating Valley, was worried about the flames reaching the steep canyon of Goose Creek, where there’s an abundance of sagebrush but few roads.

Cook said his dad, Michael Cook, who is a volunteer with the Keating Rural Fire Protection District, was preparing to use his bulldozer to build a protection line around the family’s home, but crews stopped the fire before it was close enough to warrant that precaution.

Travis Cook estimated the fire was about three miles from his house.

“But with that wind, three miles is nothing,” he said.

Perry Jacobs, who also lives in Keating Valley, was in Sunnyside, Washington, near Yakima, picking up equipment when he got a phone call that a fire was burning within half a mile of his property line.

Jacobs said he sped home, arriving in time to help fight the fire.

He said he was relieved that the fire didn’t spread farther.

“There was potential that the wind would’ve got it about right,” he said.

Joanna Mann of the Baker City Herald contributed to this story.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Local students on OSU honor roll

CORVALLIS — Several local students were among those who were named to the honor roll for the spring 2021 term at Oregon State University.

To be eligible, students must have a grade point average of at least 3.5 and a minimum of 12 graded hours of course work.

Baker City students on the OSU honor roll are: Josephine E. Bryan, senior, Design & Innovation Management; Anna C. Carter, sophomore, Business Administration; Zechariah D. Compos, senior, Sociology; Anthony J. Cowan, sophomore, General Engineering; Reno R. Hammond, junior, Chemistry; Kourtney M. Lehman, junior, Agricultural Business Management; Cayn J. Osborn, junior, Civil Engineering; Casey E. Swanson, Post Baccalaureate, Mathematics; Calli N. Ward, senior, Sociology.

Joseph W. Aguilar of Halfway, a senior majoring in Animal Sciences, also was named to the honor roll.

### Fire restrictions tighten on forests

Campfires will be allowed only in campgrounds and other designated recreation sites on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, as well as in wilderness areas, starting Friday, July 2. (The year-round ban on fires in parts of the Eagle Cap Wilderness remains in effect.)

Stoves and heaters that burn liquid or gas fuel are allowed. A list of recreation sites is available on the Baker City Herald’s Facebook page.

## Summer Academy starting on July 6

By Joanna Mann  
jmann@bakercityherald.com

The Baker School District’s Summer Academy program starts Tuesday, July 6 and runs through Aug. 5.

Registration has closed, but Angela Lattin, director of the Baker Early Learning Center, said there was a high level of interest in this summer’s program.

“I think people are ready to get back to doing stuff and they want their kids to get some extra education this summer and have fun,” she said.

The program, which is for kindergarten through sixth grade age, will have a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) theme this year. Plans include a guest talk from the U.S. Forest Service, hiking at Anthony Lakes, food hero classes with OSU Extension Service and banking classes in a course called Financial Beginnings. There will also be reading and writing activities.

“Our focus is to avoid summer slide,” Lattin said.

“There’s a lot enrichment things coming, too. We’re hoping to get back to what we were doing before the pandemic hit when we had partnerships that we could go out and work with in the fields.”

Summer Academy is funded by a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, which Baker School District applied for and received for the 2018-2023 school years. The district gets \$178,000 per year the first three years and 75% of that amount the last two years. Lattin said the grant easily covers the district’s needs each summer.

As for COVID-19 safety, Summer Academy will follow state guidelines.

“We’re just really excited to run it,” Lattin said. “It’s a great opportunity for our high school students, who we hire as assistants for every classroom. So it’s a pretty good opportunity for them to get some experience in case they want to become teachers or work in the educational field.”

## Residents seek relief in shade, river

By Joanna Mann  
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With temperatures soaring above 100 degrees, some Baker City residents rearranged their schedules to beat the heat and still enjoy the outdoors.

At 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, June 29, Geiser-Pollman Park was already bustling.

People were milling about in the shade cast by the park’s more than 75 trees, while others planned to take a dip in the Powder River at a time when they might normally have been eating breakfast.

Two men sipping their coffees at a table in the shade

commented on the intense heat.

“Shade is a good thing,” one said. “It’s a great park so here we are. We usually come here at nine, but today we came at 8:30.”

Parents attempted to keep their children in the shaded areas of the playground so they wouldn’t burn their hands on the plastic and metal play equipment. One mom named Liz fanned herself while watching her two children play tag in the grass. “We’re staying in the shade and trying not to do too much,” Liz said. “It’s too hot to do anything else.”

Liz and her family are

## HOTTEST

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Despite breaking multiple records, Baker County has fared comparatively well during this unprecedented Northwest heat wave.

The temperature topped out at 117 degrees on Tuesday at the Eastern

Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton, and Hermiston recorded a high of 118.

The hottest temperature on record at the Baker City Airport is 109, on Aug. 10, 2018. A three-day stretch that month remains the apex of heat waves here. The highs from Aug. 8-10 were 103, 108 and 109.

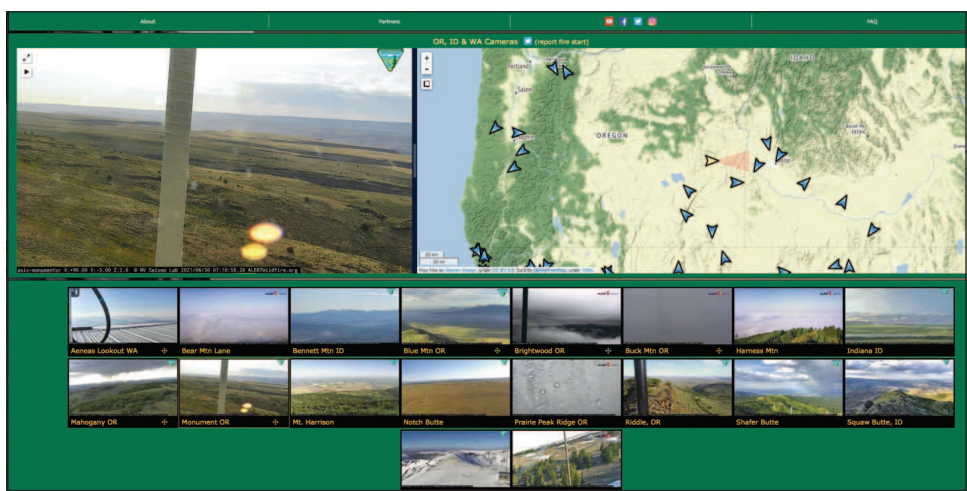
what she calls “transplants from Missouri,” so the dry heat typical in Baker County isn’t too bad for them. She said it’s a different kind of heat.

“It still makes me sweat, but it doesn’t suck the air out of my lungs,” she said.

Several park visitors were preparing for a day of floating on the river and making sure they were back inside by late afternoon.

Teenagers played their guitars in the shade while others flopped on their bellies so they could feel the cool grass on their skin. Without a cloud in the sky, it was hard to imagine that a cool, rainy respite might be coming soon.

And by late afternoon the temperature at the Baker City Airport reached 103 degrees — a record high not only for the day, but for the month.



This screenshot from the AlertWildfire website — www.alertwildfire.org/ — shows the map that allows users to select views from multiple cameras.

## CAMERAS

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Three universities oversee the Alert Wildfire program — University of Oregon, University of Nevada at Reno, and University of California at San Diego.

There are two different ALERTWildfire websites — one with live camera footage for the public to view, with the camera rotating every 30 seconds, and a second site for fire managers, which allows them to control the camera.

Although nobody actively monitors the cameras all the time, fire officials try to take a good look at the full rotation once every hour. Robertson said he displays the camera views on a large

display screen at the Vale Dispatch Center so people can keep an eye on what’s happening.

Footage from cameras in Oregon, Idaho and Washington is available on the same webpage. Viewers can select which location they want to focus on and zoom in and out, as well as play a time lapse of the past 15 minutes, one hour, three hours, six hours or 12 hours.

ALERTWildfire started with ALERTTahoe, a pilot program in which cameras were installed around Lake Tahoe. The network grew into Oregon, Washington and Idaho after success during the summers of 2014-16, and 300 new cameras were installed in the western region of the country during

the 2020 wildfire season. This year, ALERTWildfire is expected to install more than 175 new cameras across five states.

From 2016-2020, the cameras helped firefighters find or monitor more than 1,500 wildfires. Robertson hopes to have nearly as many cameras installed in Oregon as there are in California, where multiple cameras can get different angles.

The Oregon Department of Forestry also maintains a network of fire-detection cameras. One of those, on Monument Mountain in Grant County, helped firefighters pinpoint the Lovlett Corral Fire on the Umatilla National Forest about 10 miles northwest of Monument on Tuesday, June 29.



BY APPOINTMENT ONLY!

Call Baker County Health Department to Schedule @ 541-523-8211

## 2021 WELLNESS EVENT

Ages 12 to 21 years old  
YOUR HEALTH IS IMPORTANT!

- Primary Care Providers
- Mental Health Providers
- Physical Therapy
- Public Health Specialist, Immunizations and Relationship Safety
- Yearly Preventative Checkups
- Sports Physicals Available

“Take care of your body it’s the only place you have to live.”

~ Jim Rohn

July 27, 28, & 29th  
5:30 to 7:30 pm

Adolescents under 15 must be accompanied by a parent

Drawings every night

Bring Insurance cards if available \*

\*NOTE: We cannot access your insurance cards with St. Luke’s

St. Luke’s Clinic  
3950 17<sup>th</sup> St.  
Baker City OR 97814  
Call Baker Health Department to schedule an appointment  
541-523-8211

Registration packets available at The Baker County Health Dept. and <https://www.bakercounty.org/health/regforms.html>