

# Baker City Herald

July 10, 2021

Serving Baker County since 1870 • bakercityherald.com



In OUTDOORS, B1  
Gravel road bicycling

IN THIS EDITION:

Local • Oregon • Outdoors • TV

\$1.50

QUICK HITS

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber William Hanks of Baker City.

BRIEFING

**Road over Hells Canyon Dam closed part of the day July 13**

OXBOW — The road across Hells Canyon Dam will be closed from 8 a.m. to noon, PDT, on Tuesday, July 13 while Idaho Power Company maintenance crews clear vegetation from the face of the dam.

The schedule could change depending on the weather. Visitors planning to travel over the dam can confirm the road status by calling 541-785-7251.

**Baker High School Class of 1961 planning reunion on July 17**

The Baker High School Class of 1961 will have a reunion July 17 at 5 p.m. at Lefty's, 1934 Broadway St. Other BHS alumni and friends are invited to join the group at 8 p.m.

WEATHER

**Today**  
98 / 52  
Sunny

**Sunday**  
95 / 48  
Sunny

**Monday**  
95 / 50  
Sunny

**Correction:** A story in the July 6 issue about a grant for renovations at Churchill School contained two errors. The grant is for repairing windows only, not windows and the roof. And the building was designed by Charles B. Miller, not Charles Lee Miller.

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

**Baker City's Water Usage Staying High While Supply Dwindles**

## 'We Can't Do This The Whole Summer'



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baker City officials are asking residents to cut back on outdoor watering during this summer's drought.

By Jayson Jacoby and Samantha O'Conner  
Baker City Herald

Michelle Owen is worried about water, and she wants Baker City residents to worry too.

More to the point, she wants them to keep their outside faucets closed more often than they have been doing during this summer of drought.

Owen is the city's public works director.

And for the past couple weeks, since a historic heat wave started smothering the region (see related story below, at right), Owen has been tracking two troubling trends in the city.

We've been using a lot of water at the same time the city's supply of that most precious commodity has been dwindling.

The math is pretty simple, she said. "We can't do this the whole summer," Owen said on Thursday, July 8.

"We cannot run all summer at 5 million gallons a day. That's what it comes down to."

— Michelle Owen, Baker City public works director



"This," meaning going through close to 5 million gallons of water each day.

For the first five days of July, the city's use averaged 4.88 million gallons per day.

That followed a June in which the city's overall thirst amounted to 129.9 million gallons, a 45% increase over the use during June 2020, and a daily average of 4.3 million gallons.

The usage rate so far in July is not sustainable, through the end of summer, based on the city's water supply, Owen said.

"We cannot run all summer at 5 million gallons a day," she said. "That's what it comes down to."

If current trends continue, city officials might need to enact the third stage of the city's four-stage water curtailment ordinance, something that's never been done, Owen said.

Under the third stage, the city would prohibit residents from using city water outdoors — for watering lawns or gardens or washing cars. The city could fine violators \$500.

See Water / Page A3

## Cause of power outage a mystery

By Jayson Jacoby  
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Charlie Tracy and a team of Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative employees spent much of Wednesday, July 7, trying to solve an electrical mystery.

But the investigation has so far proved fruitless.

And Tracy, who is the director of engineering for

OTEC, concedes that the mystery might continue to stymie the cooperative's sleuths.

"Given where we are, it's unlikely that we'll know what caused (the outage)," Tracy said on Thursday afternoon.

The outage, which lasted for about two hours on Wednesday morning,

affected around 8,000 OTEC members, including all of Baker City, Baker Valley, Haines and North Powder.

Although a precise solution remains elusive, here's what Tracy and other OTEC officials know:

The power went out when a circuit breaker opened at the Quartz sub-

station, near the landfill off Highway 30 a few miles southeast of Baker City.

That breaker, like the ones in the electrical panel in homes and businesses, is a safety measure, designed to cut the flow of power when there's a short circuit.

See Outage / Page A3

## Candidate says Baker GOP chair suggested she not attend Jubilee

By Joanna Mann and Jayson Jacoby  
Baker City Herald

Republican gubernatorial candidate Jessica Gomez's campaign claims Suzan Ellis Jones, chair of the Baker County Republicans and mother of one of Gomez's rivals, told Gomez's campaign director that Gomez should consider not attending Miners Jubilee because a local candidate is also in the race.

Gomez made the claim in a press release on Friday, July 9.

Jones' daughter, Baker City mayor Kerry McQuisten, announced on June 29 that she would seek the Republican nomination for governor in the May 2022 primary.

Gomez, of Medford, announced

her campaign on June 8.

Jones disputes the implication that Gomez is not welcome in the GOP booth at Geiser-Pollman Park during Miners Jubilee.

"The Gomez campaign was offered a Sunday time slot," Jones wrote in an email to the Herald.

See Candidate / Page A6

## Jubilee parade needs entries

By Joanna Mann  
jmann@bakercityherald.com

Miners Jubilee will return next week after a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic, but one of the event's top draws, the downtown parade, might not.

With just a dozen entries signed up as of Thursday, July 8, the parade is in jeopardy, said Shelly Cutler, executive director of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce, which puts on Miners Jubilee.

She needs at least 30 entries to have the parade, which traditionally happens Saturday morning of Jubilee.

See Parade / Page A5

## Fast work douses wildfire

By Jayson Jacoby  
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

A rare morning lightning storm touched off a wildfire in northern Malheur County on Wednesday morning, July 7, that could easily have turned into a major blaze fanned by gusty winds.

But firefighters, aided by good road access for bulldozers and by an armada of eight airplanes and one helicopter, contained the fire, at an estimated 100 acres, before dusk Wednesday.

"The winds on that fire were incredible," said Al Crouch of the Bureau of Land Management's Vale District. "There were sustained winds of at least 20 miles an hour."

See Wildfire / Page A3

## Heat wave misses record by 1 degree

By Jayson Jacoby  
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Baker City's bid to break another heat wave record ended Wednesday, July 7.

But it was a near thing. As near as it could possibly be, in fact.

The high temperature at the Baker City Airport Wednesday was 89 degrees.

That snapped a streak of 11 straight days when the temperature topped 90 degrees — the longest such stretch in almost four years, and the sixth-longest in at least the past half century.

See Heat Wave / Page A2



TODAY  
Issue 26, 12 pages

Classified..... B2-B4  
Comics..... B5  
Community News .... B3

Crossword.....B3 & B4  
Dear Abby..... B6  
Horoscope.....B3 & B4

Jayson Jacoby.....A4  
News of Record.....A2  
Obituaries.....A2

Opinion.....A4  
Outdoors.....B1 & B6  
Sports.....A6

Senior Menus.....A1  
Turning Backs.....A2  
Weather..... B6

TUESDAY — WORK CONTINUES ON BAKER CITY'S BIG SEWER PROJECT