

SCHOOLS

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After that meeting, district administrators, including principals, will convene to talk about pandemic protocols, McDowell said.

The Baker School Board, which is slated to meet Aug. 5, also will discuss the upcoming school year. The district might not announce the policy until after the board meeting, McDowell said.

The district intends to have a full schedule of in-person classes for all grades — as was the case for the last six weeks or so of the previous school year.

The district will continue to offer

online learning options as well.

As for COVID protocols, the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education on July 22 announced recommendations for the 2021-22 school year. McDowell points out, though, that those are recommendations, not mandates.

The state agencies recommend schools require students and staff for all grades, who are not vaccinated, to wear face masks while indoors.

But the Baker School District has used a less strict policy for its Summer Academy programs, McDowell said, requiring staff and students to wear masks only indoors and only when K-6 students are present (most of whom

are younger than 12 and thus not eligible to be vaccinated). McDowell said the district does not plan to enforce any policy that has different standards for students or staff based solely on whether they're vaccinated.

McDowell said that as of Monday the district has had only one positive COVID-19 case in the Summer Academy.

District officials will be considering keeping the cohort system in place, which aims to reduce interactions between groups of students. This means that a positive case might require only one group to quarantine at home, rather than an entire school, McDowell said.

WOLVES

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Biologists from the agency confirmed earlier this month that wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack twice attacked cattle in the Manning Creek area northeast of Durkee.

Wolves killed a five-month-old calf on a public land grazing allotment around July 13, and injured a steer, which is about a year and a half old, several days later on a private land pasture, according to ODFW reports.

A possible wolf attack was reported to the Baker County

Sheriff's Office about 11 a.m. on Friday, July 23, in the Durkee area.

Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at ODFW's Baker City office, said a report on that case was not available Monday morning, July 26. Ratliff said he was investigating a possible attack on a cow in the same area that morning.

Ratliff said earlier this month that the Lookout Mountain pack consists of an adult male and female, the breeding pair, two yearlings that were born in the spring of 2020, and an unknown number of pups born in May 2021.

POWER

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Idaho Power set a record for energy demand on June 30, when the peak load reached 3,745 megawatts.

On the west side of the Cascades and in Canada, by contrast, peak demand tends to happen during winter, Colburn said, and the transmission line can move power in the opposite direction as needed during that season.

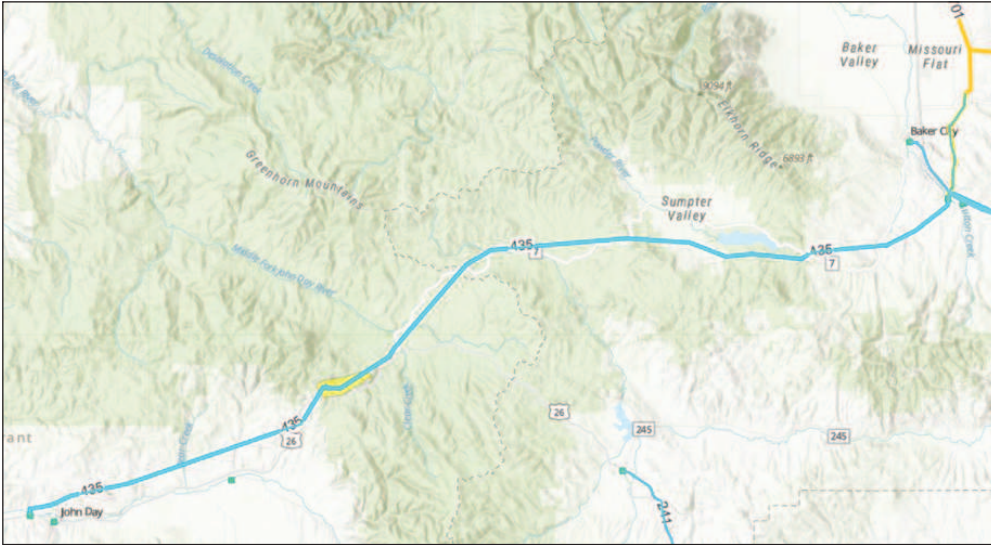
Idaho Power inspects the transmission line every year, including by helicopter, drone and on foot, Colburn said.

Those annual inspections usually reveal relatively minor maintenance tasks, he said.

But every decade the company conducts a more comprehensive inspection of the line, including examining the wooden poles and crossarms, insulators and other hardware, and the conductor (the wire that actually transmits electricity).

Colburn said this once-a-decade survey also includes using thermal imaging devices that can detect excessive heat from components, which can indicate a flaw or pending failure.

Idaho Power did the detailed examination of poles, crossarms and wires in 2017, followed by a further assess-



Idaho Power's 138-kilovolt line (blue line) runs through Baker County.

ment of the poles in 2018.

Following that work, Idaho Power had to obtain permits from the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, federal agencies that manage the public land through which the line runs, allowing the maintenance work, Colburn said.

Among the typical jobs that follow the detailed inspection are:

- Replacing dilapidated poles and other wooden pieces, which deteriorate over time and can also be damaged by woodpeckers.

During this year's project Idaho Power will replace 29 wooden "H-frame" structures that suspend the power lines, and replace one of the two poles on four other H-

frame structures.

Some structures, in steeper terrain, have three poles because they are more stable, said Sven Berg, corporate communications specialist for Idaho Power.

There are 493 wooden structures on the 70-mile line, Berg said.

- Replacing cracked or broken insulators.
- Replacing frayed guy lines.

Colburn said the Baker City-John Day line, at 54 years old, is not especially old, even for its wooden parts.

The conductor, made of aluminum and steel, generally lasts longer than wood, he said, although crews will replace sections of the

conductor if needed.

"There's a lot of hardware and components in a transmission line," Colburn said.

In some cases Idaho Power hires contractors to do work on transmission lines. But in this year's Baker City-John Day project, the company's own employees will handle the tasks, Colburn said.

Sections of the transmission line are visible from recreation sites such as Phillips Lake; the line also crosses Highway 7 at several places, including near Old Auburn Road south of Bowen Valley, along the Powder River just downstream from Mason Dam, and at Larch Summit south of Sumpter.

Colburn said people should expect to see Idaho



Idaho Power Company/Contributed Photo

Idaho Power crews will be doing this type of work this fall on the company's 70-mile transmission line between Baker City and John Day.

Power trucks and workers along sections of the line this fall.

Although the work is slated to start in mid-September, he said the project could be delayed if the fire danger is so severe that the Forest Ser-

vice or BLM prohibits work.

"We're not going to go in there unless it's safe to do so," Colburn said.

He said the Idaho Power crews will have fire extinguishers and water available in case of a fire.



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