

Baker City Herald

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Go! Magazine

Your guide to arts, entertainment and other events happening around Northeast Oregon

IN THIS EDITION:

Local • Business & Ag • Sports

\$1.50

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Marjorie Loennig of Baker City.

Sports, A6

TOKYO — Simone Biles returned to the competition at the Tokyo Olympics in style, and will leave with another medal.

What color it is really isn't the point. That she delivered a tense, heart-pounding routine on the balance beam and nailed it with a smile meant everything.

Biles looked calm as she moved, turned and flipped across the beam. It was everyone else watching who held their breath.

BRIEFING

Nadie Strayer Fund awards three scholarships

The Nadie E. Strayer Fund has awarded college scholarships to Abigail Hunt, a 2021 graduate of Pine-Eagle High School, and Hollie Mays and Hailey Zikmund, both 2021 graduates of Baker High School.

Scholarship awards range from \$500 to \$1,000.

The Strayer Fund is administered by the Oregon Community Foundation. Strayer's father, William, was a Baker attorney and long-time Oregon senator. Her mother, Donna, was a direct descendant of the Holcomb family of Eagle Valley. Nadie Strayer was a journalist and pursued mining interests. At the time of her death she had copper and gold mining property and prospects in the areas of Balm Creek and Sparta.

WEATHER

Today

89 / 55
Sunny



Friday

83 / 51
Sunny



Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

Fun at the Fair



Zoey Justus, 15, with her market steer, Yankee, at the Baker County Fair.

By Joanna Mann

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The Baker County Fair is back better than ever, with people enjoying the fun-filled week with extra enthusiasm, as the event was closed to the public last year due to COVID-19.

The fair officially started Aug. 1, and it runs through Friday, Aug. 6. Michelle Kaseberg, a member of the fair board and 4-H leader, said she noticed an increase in attendance earlier this week, even on days where there usually are not a lot of people.

"It's been fun," Kaseberg said. "This is the most steers we've ever had."

4-H/FFA kids showed their animals with pride as spectators munched on corn dogs and cotton candy. For the first time in the history of the fair there was a llama and alpaca showmanship.

Over the course of the week, kids showed cavy, rabbits, poultry, sheep, llama and alpacas, goats, steer and swine. The moos and bleats blended in with the country music playing throughout each day, with singer/songwriter Olivia Harms performing with her band on Wednesday night, Aug. 4.

Joanna Mann/Baker City Herald

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Judge blocks county road survey

By Jayson Jacoby

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A judge has blocked Baker County from trying to declare as a public right-of-way a section of the Pine Creek Road, in the Elkhorn Mountains northwest of Baker City, that's the subject of a lawsuit in which the county is the defendant.

Senior Judge Stephen P. Forte on July 29 granted the plaintiff, David McCarty, a temporary restraining order.

McCarty sued the county on April 30.

The restraining order prohibits the county from continuing the statutory process, which county commissioners started in mid-June, to declare

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ODFW confirms wolf attack

By Jayson Jacoby

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The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has expanded the area in eastern Baker County where a rancher, or agency employees, can kill up to two more nonadult wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack.

ODFW amended the kill permit, issued July 29, which initially covered a mix of public and private land where ranchers Deward and Kathy Thompson's cattle graze.

The amended permit includes areas where another rancher's cattle graze, said Michelle Dennehy, a spokesperson for ODFW.

Agency employees confirmed on July 30 that wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack had injured a six-month-old, 325-pound calf on the rancher's 1,900-acre private pasture. ODFW biologists estimated wolves attacked the calf about three weeks earlier.

The permit allows the ranchers, their designated agents or ODFW employees to kill up to four wolves from the pack — not including its breeding male and female.

The permit is valid through Aug. 21, or when four wolves have been killed, if that happens before Aug. 21.

On Sunday, Aug. 1, ODFW employees in a helicopter shot and killed two wolf pups from the Lookout Mountain pack.

As of Wednesday morning, Aug. 4, ODFW hadn't confirmed whether any additional wolves had been killed, Dennehy said.

ODFW has confirmed that wolves from the pack attacked cattle four times from July 13-26, killing two animals and injuring two others.

Dennehy said the permit is intended to stop chronic attacks "by reducing the pack's food needs and disrupting the pack's behavior so they don't associate livestock with an easy meal."

ODFW didn't authorize killing the pack's breeding pair because doing so likely would disperse the pack entirely.

The pack consists of the two adults, two yearlings born in the spring of 2020, and as many as seven pups born this spring, according to ODFW.

COVID cases set weekly record

Baker County reported 68 cases from July 25-31

By Jayson Jacoby

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After a comparatively tranquil period that started in May and continued through the middle of July, Baker County is in the midst of its biggest COVID-19 surge since the pandemic started.

And Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department, said the recent rapid rise in infections is almost exclusively affecting people who aren't vaccinated.

Staten didn't have precise figures, but she said on Monday, Aug. 2, that the "vast majority" of the county's cases over the past two weeks are in unvaccinated residents.

She said at least two infections are "breakthrough" cases, when a fully vaccinated person is infected.

"There are a few, and we know we're going to get some because no vaccine is 100% effective," Staten said.

According to the Johns Hopkins University, the available vaccines are ef-

fective at protecting people against all variants, including the much more contagious delta variant that health officials say is largely responsible for the recent surge in cases at the local, state and national levels.

The Pfizer vaccine, for instance, is 88% effective against the delta variant in preventing symptomatic disease, according to Johns Hopkins, as compared with a 94% effectiveness against the previously dominant alpha variant.

Baker County's vaccination rate of 46.7% of residents 18 and older is

the eighth-lowest among Oregon's 36 counties.

For the week of July 25-31, Baker County reported 68 new cases, the most in any week during the pandemic.

The previous weekly record was 58 cases from Dec. 25-31.

The 68 cases for the final week of July exceeded the total for all of May — 51 — and was nearly as many as the county reported during June — 70.

Infections increased rapidly late in July — the county had just six cases the week prior to the record, July 18-24.

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Staten

Lightning sparks several small fires

Biggest blaze burned 1.4 acres north of Phillips Reservoir

By Jayson Jacoby

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A series of thunderstorms this week has sparked several new wildfires in and around Baker County, but crews have quickly stopped the new blazes.

Rain, and in some cases hail, that accompanied the lightning helped initial attack crews, said Joel McCraw, fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Whitman Ranger District.

The largest of the fires, sparked by lightning Monday evening, burned about 1.4 acres in the Miners Creek area north of Phillips

Reservoir. The fire was reported by a citizen, and by the fire lookout on Mount Ireland, around noon on Tuesday, Aug. 3.

Firefighters working on another lightning fire a couple miles away, near the top of Elkhorn Ridge, also saw the fire, McCraw said.

The Elkhorn Ridge fire, which was just west of the Baker City Watershed boundary, burned about a quarter of an acre. It was reported Monday evening around 7:45 p.m. and was controlled about 1:30 p.m. Tuesday.

McCraw said fire crews from the Forest Service and Oregon Department of Forestry, along with contracted bulldozers, had good road access to the Miners Creek fire.

The fire was "looking

good" Wednesday morning, McCraw said.

Firefighters on the ground were joined by a couple of single-engine air tankers that dropped fire retardant, as well as a heavy helicopter that dropped about 30 bucketloads of water, each load around 660 gallons, McCraw said.

Another round of storms on Tuesday evening brought more lightning, as well as rain and hail, in the Sumpter Valley area as well as in the Sparta area northeast of Baker City.

Two fires were reported in that area Wednesday morning, both one-tenth of an acre. One fire, near Balm Creek, was controlled at 10:19 a.m. Wednesday. The other fire is near the Del Monte mine about one mile east of Sparta.

Lightning also started a fire in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Firefighters had rappelled from a helicopter to reach that fire, which had burned about one acre Wednesday morning, McCraw said.

He said fire officials were taking airplane flights over the region Wednesday morning to look for other new fires.

McCraw said he expects some blazes will show up based on the amount of lightning from Monday's and Tuesday's storms. Lightning can start fires that smolder for days or even weeks, especially when rain falls to temporarily cool them.

"We're trying to jump on them quick so we can be ready for the next one," he said.



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SATURDAY — NORTH POWDER SUPPLIES THE ROYALTY FOR SHRINE WEEKEND