

# Local

## TURNING BACK THE PAGES

### 50 YEARS AGO from the Democrat-Herald December 18, 1971

After the ballots were counted, the certified teachers in Baker last night voted to reject school district 5-J's proposals after a mediation process under Oregon law.

The law now provides for a fact-finder appointed by the state superintendent of public instruction.

### 25 YEARS AGO from the Baker City Herald December 18, 1996

The Baker County Vector Control District board — which is responsible for killing mosquitoes in the 200,000-acre district — on Tuesday voted 3-1 to renew for one year its contract with Roy Hanan of Eagle Cap Aviation in La Grande.

His three-year contract expired this year.

The board's decision came after an almost three-hour presentation by Glenn Bissell, an entomologist who works for the Crook County Vector Control District.

Board member Michael Borisoff, who cast the dissenting vote, suggested the board hire Bissell, who has worked for vector control districts for more than 20 years.

### 10 YEARS AGO from the Baker City Herald December 19, 2011

Forget, for a moment, the concept of a white Christmas. That's just one day.

Baker City is poised to establish a far more significant meteorological milestone.

An entire December that's not only not white.

It's not wet.

At all.

Such a thing has not happened around here at least since someone set out a receptacle with the intention of tallying the precipitation.

Which is a considerable span — dating back to at least 1913.

### ONE YEAR AGO from the Baker City Herald December 19, 2020

When Jessie Ritch became acquainted with Virginia Kostol she knew straight off that theirs would not be an ordinary friendship.

This, Ritch sensed, was a relationship she would always treasure.

"Virginia was one of those people who, when you first form a friendship, you just know how special that person is going to be in your life," Ritch said on Thursday, Dec. 17. "She was just such a joy to be around. We hit it off right away."

Their bond stayed strong until the very end.

Ritch said she played cards with Virginia on Sunday, Dec. 13, and spoke with her on the phone about 4:30 that afternoon.

Virginia, who has lived in Baker City since 1953 and over the decades amassed a long record of community service, died that night in the North Baker City home where she lived for all those years.

She was 94.

Ritch, 80, said her sadness at losing her friend was tempered by the knowledge that Virginia's daughter, Cris, had arrived two days earlier for a visit.

"I just feel so thankful that Cris was there," Ritch said.

## OREGON LOTTERY

### MEGABUCKS, Dec. 15

13 — 34 — 38 — 42 — 43 — 48  
Next jackpot: \$7.1 million

### POWERBALL, Dec. 15

19 — 20 — 40 — 42 — 59 PB 15  
Next jackpot: \$353 million

### MEGA MILLIONS, Dec. 14

33 — 35 — 44 — 55 — 69 Mega 20  
Next jackpot: \$160 million

### WIN FOR LIFE, Dec. 15

37 — 58 — 75 — 77

### PICK 4, Dec. 16

• 1 p.m.: 6 — 9 — 6 — 0  
• 4 p.m.: 4 — 5 — 3 — 4  
• 7 p.m.: 2 — 0 — 5 — 5  
• 10 p.m.: 5 — 6 — 7 — 7

### LUCKY LINES, Dec. 16

2-5-12-16-20-23-26-31

Next jackpot: \$49,000

## SENIOR MENUS

- **MONDAY:** Chicken strips, mashed potatoes with gravy, corn, rolls, beet-and-onion salad, pudding
- **TUESDAY:** Spaghetti, garlic bread, broccoli, green salad, apple crisp
- **WEDNESDAY:** Ham and beans, mixed vegetables, cornbread, cottage cheese and Jell-O salad, ice cream
- **THURSDAY:** Sweet and sour chicken, rice, rolls, carrots, green salad, brownies
- **FRIDAY:** Closed for Christmas Eve
- **MONDAY (Dec. 27):** Barbecued ribs, baked beans, carrots, rolls, fruit, ambrosia, lemon squares

Public luncheon at the Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St., from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; \$5 donation (60 and older), \$7.50 for those under 60.

## CONTACT THE HERALD

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### Baker City Herald

ISSN-8756-6419  
Serving Baker County since 1870  
Published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays except Christmas Day by the Baker Publishing Co., a part of EO Media Group, at 2005 Washington Ave., Suite 101 (P.O. Box 807), Baker City, OR 97814.  
Subscription rates per month are \$10.75 for print only. Digital-only rates are \$8.25.  
Postmaster: Send address changes to the Baker City Herald, P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814.

Periodicals Postage Paid  
at Pendleton, Oregon 97801

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# Research study examines deer decline



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald, File  
A mule deer buck.

## Work in Starkey Experimental Forest also examines dynamics between various predators

By KATY NESBITT

For EO Media Group

STARKEY — A study looking into predator-prey interaction at the Starkey Experimental Forest and Range in Union County revealed fascinating insight into more than predation on deer and elk, such as the dynamics between competing carnivores.

To answer why mule deer are declining at Starkey and across Northeastern Oregon, researchers are looking at possible contributors, including the role of predators. According to OSU associate professor Taal Levi, who served as an adviser to a 2016-2020 study led by Joel Ruprecht, an Oregon State University wildlife science doctoral student, the study included collaring a sampling of carnivores, monitoring deer and elk kill sites via game cameras and analyzing scat to determine what predators living within the 40-square-mile experimental forest and range were eating.

See, Deer/Page A3

# Reactions vary on new drug law

By DAVIS CARBAUGH

The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — Reactions remain mixed to Oregon's law decriminalizing drugs and boosting the availability and usage of addiction recovery options.

Measure 110 passed by 58.5% in Oregon in November 2020 and went into effect Feb. 1. In Baker County a majority of voters — 62.5% — opposed the measure.

"The difficulty of measuring 110's impact on our community and policing at this time is we only have nine months of experience in determining short-term and long-term effects of Measure 110," La Grande police Lt. Jason Hays said. "Also, COVID-19 also complicates this since COVID mandates, joblessness and other COVID stressors also impact behavior and criminal activity."

The measure adjusts the approach on drug addiction and abuse, reclassifying the penalties for drug possession. The penalty for drug possession is essentially the price of a parking ticket. The new punishment for smaller amounts of controlled substances is a \$100 fine, which can be avoided if the individual seeks out a health assessment at an addiction recovery center.

This shift in drug possession enforcement was put into place to emphasize drug abuse as a public health issue, one that encourages addicts to reach out to addiction services instead of being placed behind bars.

### Mixed reviews

While Measure 110 was drafted with a goal of improving treatment for addictions, law enforcement across the state has had mixed feelings regarding the new procedures. The measure changed the approach of drug abuse enforcement, as police departments across the state are taking a more reactive approach to drug usage in communities.

"Historically we were proactive in our fight against illicit drug abuse, drug possession, drug manufacturing and drug dealing in a way to increase the livability within our community," Hays said. "With the implementation of M110 voted in by the people, it sends a

message that illicit drug activity is not a priority within our communities in Oregon as it once was."

According to Hays, local law enforcement in La Grande saw more success in drug abuse treatment when individuals were ordered by the court to receive drug treatment.

"We deal with citizens daily who are drug dependent, whose health digresses because we don't have the ability to arrest them on drug charges that would typically get them into court-ordered drug treatment when they refuse to get treatment on a voluntary basis," he said. "There is now very little accountability for drug-dependent persons, and we are seeing an increase in certain criminal conduct that could be contributed to the effects of Measure 110."

According to Hays, there is a 135% increase in theft cases, 113% increase in criminal mischief-related calls, a 33% increase in assault-related calls and an 83% decrease in drug law violations that correlate with the start of Measure 110's enforcement in February. The stats compared criminal activity related to drug usage in Union County between the period of February 2019 through November 2019 to statistics from February 2021 through November 2021.

Hays noted that it is difficult to quantify whether or not these stats are a direct result of Measure 110, as the trial period since the start of its enforcement is still fresh. He also stated that these numbers do not include calls for service where a report was not taken by law enforcement. The COVID-19 pandemic is another factor that could be affecting crime trends across the country.

With that being said, Hays also noted mental health is the larger trend playing a negative role in communities impacted by Measure 110.

"My personal feeling is the increase in people suffering from mental health issues has had a much larger impact on our policing and community than Measure 110," he said. "Although, some mental health issues can also be M110 related due to chronic drug abuse."

Hays emphasized it is

still difficult to measure the effectiveness of Measure 110, seeing as a major shift in law enforcement takes time to fully take effect.

### Moving parts

Law enforcement is not seeing the same results from relaxed punishments for drug abuse versus when drugs were criminalized. That is not to say that a focus on recovery and mental health can't be effective, but the legwork to switch the emphasis still is being put in place.

La Grande attorney Jared Boyd weighed in on what he has noticed from the legal side of things, where there has been a significant case drop due to Measure 110. While the intent of the measure is to make treatment and recovery options readily available, Boyd stated those options are lacking in Eastern Oregon.

"It's a measure that was well-intended," he said. "I agree with the goal of the measure, but there needs to be a much better system in place."

Boyd said there are significantly less treatment options in Eastern Oregon as opposed to the western side of the state, which may be having a negative effect on Measure 110's effectiveness on the east side of Oregon.

Court statistics from around the state also show that individuals are not showing up for their court appearances in high frequencies. According to Oregon Public Broadcasting, defendants did not show up for circuit court appearance in about three-fifths of the 978 cases through Oct. 1.

According to Boyd, a rough estimate on reduction in criminal cases filed would be somewhere around 20-30%. He said he also expects a large ripple effect on defense attorneys' budgets due to the absence of drug-related cases.

"I agree with the spirit of it. Jail doesn't treat addiction, we know that," Boyd said. "There needs to be changes and it needs to be fully implemented to fix crimes."

### Path to recovery

Early numbers may not reflect the measure's long-term effects in Oregon, but the

initial stages of Measure 110 have seen a major shakeup in how drug abuse is addressed in the state.

In a letter from Amy Ashton-Williams, the executive director of the Oregon Washington Health Network, she entailed what she described as positive strides that have been made since the passing of Measure 110.

"Measure 110 alone cannot fix this nationwide crisis, but it's an important tool for how we stop treating addiction as a moral failing deserving of punishment, and start treating it as a health issue deserving of medical care," Ashton-Williams said.

OWhN is one of 70 organizations funded through the first round of Measure 110 grants that were distributed this summer. The idea of increased recovery and treatment comes from the notion that money saved from the cost of arrests and incarceration can be spent toward increased medical care.

According to Ashton-Williams, OWhN has opened three new drop-in peer centers in Hermiston, Milton-Freewater and Pendleton — spaces where individuals can share experiences with resources and others who have overcome addiction.

While certain elements of the new system may need time to be implemented and some aspects of law enforcement may see negative impacts, health officials such as Ashton-Williams are optimistic of Measure 110 moving forward.

"Oregon communities have been denied proper access to addiction recovery services for so long that it's going to take some time before we feel the full positive impacts of this new law," Ashton-Williams said. "We've got a lot of people who have, for far too long, fallen through the cracks. We're working hard to meet the tremendous need, ensuring there is no wrong door when it comes to accessing critical care."

As the new measure continues to be established as the new method for handling drug abuse and possession in Oregon, only time will tell the full impact of Measure 110 on substance abuse in the state.

## NEWS OF RECORD

### DEATHS

**Robert George:** 77, of Baker City, died Dec. 16, 2021, at his home, surrounded by family. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Online condolences can be shared at [www.tamispinevalleyfuneral-home.com](http://www.tamispinevalleyfuneral-home.com).

**Thomas Hooton:** 73, of Huntington, died Dec. 16, 2021. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home and Cremation Services. Online condolences can be shared at [www.tamispinevalleyfuneral-home.com](http://www.tamispinevalleyfuneral-home.com).

**Kathleen Mae Bradshaw:** 60, of Baker City, died Dec. 15, 2021, at St. Charles Medical Center in Bend. Her memorial service will take place at Gray's West & Co. Pioneer Chapel in Baker City. The date and time will be announced soon. To leave an online condolence for Kathleen's family, go to [www.grayswestco.com](http://www.grayswestco.com).

**Gwyn Adams:** 68, of Baker City, died Dec. 10, 2021, near Baker City. Gray's West & Co. is looking for relatives to direct his disposition. If you have any information

regarding a relative of Gwyn, call Gray's West & Co. at 541-523-3677 or go to [www.grayswestco.com](http://www.grayswestco.com).

**Doug Nichols:** Doug Dale Nichols, 70, of Sandy, and a former Baker City resident, died Dec. 12, 2021, after severe pneumonia, his grandson and namesake at his side.

**Margaret Helen Starr:** 89, of Baker City, died Dec. 16, 2021, at her residence at Settler's Park Assisted Living Community. Coles Tribute Center is in charge of arrangements. To leave an online condolence, go to [www.colestributecenter.com](http://www.colestributecenter.com).

### POLICE LOG

**Baker County Sheriff's Office Arrests, Citations**  
FOURTH-DEGREE ASSAULT (domestic), HARASSMENT: Martin Bradley Davis, 48, Baker County, 1:52 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 15 on Smelcer Road near Richland; jailed.

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