



**SPORTS A5**  
Baker girls hoops beat La Grande and Vale



**SPORTS A6**  
Bulldog boys rout La Grande, 67-47

# Baker City Herald

IN THIS EDITION: LOCAL • HOME & LIVING • SPORTS

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**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscribers Mary and Keith Romtvedt of Baker City.

**BRIEFING**

**Lecture, sneak peek of Oregon Trail Experience Feb. 8 at Heritage Museum**

The Baker Heritage Museum's monthly lecture on Tuesday, Feb. 8, features Barbara Mahoney and her talk "The Salem Clique: Oregon's Founding Brothers." The event starts at 6 p.m. at the museum, 2480 Grove St. Following the talk, at 7 p.m., there will be a celebration of Oregon's birthday with treats and a sneak peek at the new Oregon Trail Experience exhibit designed by the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.

**Public hearing set on North Baker transportation plan**

The Baker City Planning Commission will have a public hearing on Feb. 16, to discuss proposed revisions to the city's comprehensive plan related to the Northern Baker Transportation Improvement Plan.

That plan covers proposed changes to Cedar Street, Hughes Lane, 10th Street and Pocahontas Road.

The public hearing is scheduled for 6 p.m. at City Hall, 1655 First St.

Materials that will be used in the hearing will be available by Feb. 9 at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St., and copies can be emailed for free by emailing tandrews@bakercity.org.

**WEATHER**

**Today**  
32/12  
Mostly sunny

**Wednesday**  
27/13  
Light snow

Full forecast on the back of the B section.



Although little snow has fallen in Northeastern Oregon since the first week of January, cold temperatures have preserved the snowpack along the Powder River just below Mason Dam, seen here on Friday, Jan. 28, 2022.

## Snowpack starts fast, turns sluggish

**Remains close to average, and drought severity has eased a bit**

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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The mountain snowpack in Northeastern Oregon sprinted off the line when 2022 began.

But then it got stuck. Or mired. Or pulled a hamstring. Or whatever term best captures the concept of a nearly complete lack of progress.

After prodigious amounts of snow piled up during the first week of January, pushing the snowpack to well above average in many parts of the region, a persistent pattern of stagnation dominated thereafter.

A meager storm brought light snow on the final

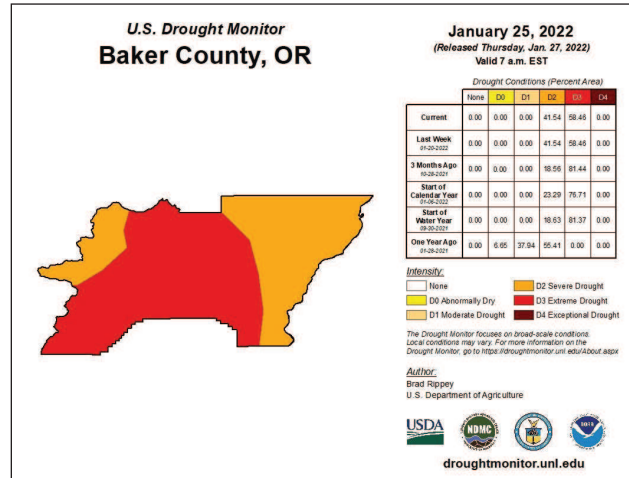
morning of the month, but that hardly compensated for the previous three weeks of placid weather.

Despite the lack of recent progress, the prospect for a hefty snowpack to diminish the severe drought that has plagued Northeastern Oregon remains.

The snowpack — the most important source of water for irrigation, recreation, fish habitat and, in places such as Baker City, for drinking water — remains above average in some places.

Moreover, February and March often bring the bulk of the winter snow, and the snowpack typically doesn't reach its annual peak, especially at higher elevations, until April.

"It's awfully early," Wes Morgan, manager of the Burnt River Irrigation District in southern Baker County, said on Monday morning, Jan. 31. "I'm more



The drought situation has improved a bit in Baker County since the start of 2022.

interested in what I've got at the end of February and the end of March."

Morgan pointed out that much of the current mountain snowpack accumulated during a two-week period spanning the end of 2021 and the debut of 2022.

"One or two more periods like that could help us a whole bunch," said Morgan, whose irrigation district covers the Burnt River Valley below Unity Reservoir.

See, **Snowpack**/Page A3

## COVID cases dropped slightly last week

BAKER CITY HERALD

New COVID-19 cases in Baker County dropped slightly late last week, and the weekly total, for the first time this month, was lower than the previous week.

The Baker County Health Department reported 15 cases on Friday, Jan. 28, and 16 cases on Saturday, Jan. 29, the last day of the reporting week.

The county's total for the week Jan. 23-29 was 165 cases.

That's the third-highest weekly total during the pandemic, but it's down from the record-setting weeks of Jan. 16-22 (183 cases) and Jan. 9-15 (176).

The county's rate of positive tests also appears to be declining for the first time in more than a month.

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) reported the county's test positivity rate, for the week Jan. 23-29, at 24.8% as of Friday, Jan. 28 (the complete weekly statistics weren't available by press time).

The positivity rate was 33.2% for the previous week, Jan. 16-22, the fourth straight week with an increasing positivity rate.

**Cases in children**

According to OHA data, Baker County has had 96 COVID-19 cases in residents younger than 18 since Jan. 2.

The county has had a total of 473 pediatric cases during the pandemic, out of a population of about 3,081 residents 17 and younger.

The county's pediatric case rate of 15,354 per 100,000 residents is the 10th-highest among Oregon's counties, but one of the lower rates in Northeastern Oregon.

See, **COVID**/Page A3

## 5 train cars carrying grain derail

BAKER CITY HERALD

Five cars on a westbound freight train derailed Friday afternoon, Jan. 28, near Baker City, spilling grain.

The incident happened about 4 p.m. near Old Highway 30 about one mile south of the Milepost 306 interchange in south Baker City, said Susan Stevens, manager of communications for Union Pacific Railroad.

The train crew was not injured, and the railroad resumed normal operations after several hours.

The case of the derailment is under investigation, Stevens said.

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



Baker County Sheriff's Office/Contributed Photo

**Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash and Marine Deputy Wayne Paxton rescued three stranded hunters along Brownlee Reservoir late on Sunday, Jan. 30, 2022.**

## Hatchet proves invaluable for stranded hunters

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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With his feet freezing and the prospect of a long and snowy winter night ahead with a bloody elk hide the only shelter, Noah Chaney was never so glad to hear the rumble of a boat motor.

Although his affinity for his brother's new hatchet was, if anything, greater still.

Noah, 20, along with his older brother, Neil Chaney Jr., 22 (who goes by John), and Noah's best friend, Isaac Logan, 20, were in quite a predicament as the sun went down on Sunday, Jan. 30, at the eastern edge of Baker County.

The trio had started the day hoping to fill their elk tags in the steep country above

Brownlee Reservoir, several miles southeast of Richland. Isaac killed a big cow around 9:30 a.m.

The friends, along with the Chaney's dad, Neil Sr., 43, of Baker City, came up with a plan.

They were too far below their rigs to haul 400 pounds or so of elk meat up the precipitous, snow-covered slopes.

Better, they figured, to take advantage of gravity to ease their burden.

Neil Sr. agreed to hike to the ridge, drive back to Baker City and haul the family's boat. He'd meet the trio on the shore, more than 1,000 feet below.

See, **Hatchet**/Page A3



**TODAY**  
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