



**SPORTS A2**

**2 Baker girls qualify for state wrestling meet, Baker boys first at Heppner tourney**



**SPORTS A3**

**Reece Dixon's 3-pointer lifts Powder Valley to stunning win over Baker boys**

# Baker City Herald

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**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Jennifer Long of Sumpter.

**BRIEFING**

**GOP candidate to speak Feb. 12 in Baker City**

Marc Thielman, Republican candidate for Oregon governor, will speak Saturday, Feb. 12, in Baker City.

Thielman will speak at the Baker County Events Center, 2600 East St. Doors open at 5 p.m. and the event starts at 6 p.m.

Thielman, who is being hosted by Baker County United, is the superintendent of the Alsea School District in Western Oregon, where he decided in late January to make face masks optional, in defiance of an executive order from Gov. Kate Brown.

**COVID-19 testing, vaccine clinic Feb. 11**

A free COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinic is set for Friday, Feb. 11, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 3175 Pochontas Road, the former Baker Clinic building just east of Saint Alphonsus Medical Center. All three COVID-19 vaccines — Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson — will be available. Please bring your COVID-19 vaccine card if you have previously been vaccinated.

**WEATHER**

**Today**  
34/20  
Mostly sunny

**Wednesday**  
40/24  
Partly sunny

**Full forecast on the back of the B section.**

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



Mark Witty, Baker School District superintendent, stands at the north end of the playground at South Baker Intermediate on Friday, Feb. 4, 2022. Witty said the district's plan to build a new bus lane will require the removal of the backstop and bike rack.

## Easing congestion at South Baker School

### School district plans separate bus lane

BY JAYSON JACOBY  
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Mark Witty isn't a traffic cop but he worries about congestion just the same.

Witty, superintendent of the Baker School District, said a specific concern involves South Baker Intermediate, the school that houses fourth, fifth and sixth graders.

The problem, Witty said, is that buses as well as parents pick up and drop off students in the same area, the one-way block of Grace Street between Third and Fourth streets on the north side of the school.

The result, he said, is a crowded section of street that forces many parents to park elsewhere in the neighborhood and requires students, in many cases, to cross one or more streets.

"We're trying to avoid that," Witty said as he stood beside the school on the chilly afternoon of Friday, Feb. 4. "It's been a goal for a number of years to make this area safer."

The district's solution, which Witty said is slated to happen this summer, is to separate the bus loading and unloading zone from where parents pick up and drop off students.

The plan starting in the fall of 2022 is to have buses, which now travel south on Fourth Street to Grace Street, turn right one block north, on Carter Street, and then continue south on Fifth Street.

That street right-of-way extends south of Grace Street into the northwest corner of the South Baker playground.

The district will pave a lane for buses and install a fence between that lane and the playground, Witty said.

When buses leave the school, they'll drive north on Fourth Street, avoiding Grace Street altogether.

Wayne Paxton, the district's transportation supervisor, said he came up with the proposal a few years ago to alleviate congestion as buses and parents' vehicles vied for the same limited amount of space.

He said there's room for three buses now in the bus lane on the south side of Grace Street next to the school.

"It's just really tight," Paxton said. "I think this is going to open it up quite a bit and be safer."

In addition to separating the buses from parents' vehicles, Paxton said the change will help with traffic issues farther east on Grace Street.

Now, buses, after dropping off or picking up students, continue east on Grace to Second Street, where there are two stop signs in just 50 feet — one at the Grace Street intersection, the other at Dewey Avenue.

Starting this fall, buses will no

longer use Grace Street, Paxton said — they'll be confined to Fourth and Fifth streets.

Witty said the change won't eliminate potential conflicts between buses and other vehicles.

Buses heading north on Fourth Street, for instance, will cross Grace Street where parents will turn left.

But Witty said he's convinced the situation will be safer since buses and cars won't be parking close to each other.

Witty said district officials are still working on the design, and he didn't have an estimated cost for the project.

He emphasized that it is not one of the jobs that will be done with money from the \$4 million bond that district voters approved in May 2021.

Witty said the district should be able to make the changes at South Baker using its capital projects budget.

The district will have to move a chain link baseball backstop at the north end of the South Baker playground, and the lane will reduce the size of the playground, Witty said.

He noted that it is a relatively large playground. The district will move the backstop to another part of the playground if that's feasible, although he said that there is already another backstop on the property.

Witty said the district hopes to install some new playground equipment over the next few years, a project it's working on with the South Baker Parent-Teacher Organization.

## Search fails to turn up Idaho angler who has been missing since Jan. 17

### A steelhead fisherman reported seeing a body in the Snake River on Friday, Feb. 4

BY JAYSON JACOBY  
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A steelhead angler reported seeing what he believed was a body in the Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam on Friday morning, Feb. 4.

A team from the Baker County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue team brought a boat to the site, about one mile downriver from the Hells Canyon Visitors Center, hoping to recover the body of an

Idaho fisherman, Alberto Sillonis, who went missing in the area on Jan. 17.

Searchers did not find the body, Sheriff Travis Ash said on Monday morning, Feb. 7.

The steelhead fisherman, who was fishing on the Oregon side of the river, reported seeing the body in a back eddy where the water is about 10 to 12 feet deep, Ash said.

The Baker County Dispatch Center received the report at 9:13 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 4. Ash said he and four others left the dock at the Visitors Center around 1 p.m. that day.

Ash said the searchers spent a few hours searching but did not find a body.

He said the current in the area is strong and unpredictable, and the Sheriff's Office does not have the ability to put a diver in the water at that site.

Ash said no additional searches are planned unless the Sheriff's Office receives new reports in the area.

The Sheriff's Office announced last month that it believes Sillonis, 85, of Weiser, drowned after falling from a dock into the river

below the Visitors Center. Sillonis had left his home on the morning of Jan. 17 and planned to return home that evening.

Relatives reported him missing about 6 p.m. that day when he failed to return.

Baker County deputies, along with deputies from the Washington County Sheriff's Office in Idaho, began searching the route to Hells Canyon as well as checking hotels in nearby towns.

At about 9:07 p.m. on Jan. 17, deputies found Sillonis' 2008 Nissan Frontier pickup truck in the parking lot at the Hells Canyon Visitors Center.

Deputies searched the immediate vicinity and found

two fishing poles, with the line from one still in the water, on the center dock.

On the morning of Jan. 18, searchers found a felt, short-brimmed hat on rocks about 60 feet from the dock, which Sillonis' family confirmed was his.

Idaho Power Company employees used a remote-operated vehicle with an underwater camera and sonar to search the river, but with no success.

Sillonis is a white man who stands 5-foot-8 and weighs about 160 pounds. He has white hair.

If anyone has information about Sillonis, they can call Ash at 541-523-6415.



Sillonis



**TODAY**  
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