# **N.E. Oregon Snowpack Report**

=. 0.080oba.etabe					
Elevation	Snow Water Equivalent (inches)				Last
	Now	Average	% of avg.	Last year	month
7,300	10.5	17.0	62	N/A	9.2
7,125	17.6	19.8	89	22.7	14.8
5,150	8.5	9.0	94	13.9	6.7
5,800	9.2	12.4	74	16.0	9.8
4,530	4.0	3.2	125	6.4	4.4
5,440	9.6	8.6	112	13.1	8.6
5,340	9.1	8.5	107	14.6	7.5
4,980	19.1	20.1	91	32.1	15.8
6,300	8.6	10.4	83	13.0	7.0
4,560	7.4	8.8	84	10.4	6.6
5,850	17.7	20.2	88	26.6	13.6
7,910	9.2	12.0	77	11.3	7.9
5,400	18.2	23.8	76	29.5	17.3
5,740	12.2	17.0	72	26.7	10.3
5,150	8.4	10.3	82	13.8	7.7
5,630	6.0	14.6	48	15.9	6.0
			85		
	7,300 7,125 5,150 5,800 4,530 5,440 5,340 4,980 6,300 4,560 5,850 7,910 5,400 5,740 5,150	Now           7,300         10.5           7,125         17.6           5,150         8.5           5,800         9.2           4,530         4.0           5,440         9.6           5,340         9.1           4,980         19.1           6,300         8.6           4,560         7.4           5,850         17.7           7,910         9.2           5,400         18.2           5,740         12.2           5,150         8.4	Now         Average           7,300         10.5         17.0           7,125         17.6         19.8           5,150         8.5         9.0           5,800         9.2         12.4           4,530         4.0         3.2           5,440         9.6         8.6           5,340         9.1         8.5           4,980         19.1         20.1           6,300         8.6         10.4           4,560         7.4         8.8           5,850         17.7         20.2           7,910         9.2         12.0           5,400         18.2         23.8           5,740         12.2         17.0           5,150         8.4         10.3	Now         Average         % of avg.           7,300         10.5         17.0         62           7,125         17.6         19.8         89           5,150         8.5         9.0         94           5,800         9.2         12.4         74           4,530         4.0         3.2         125           5,440         9.6         8.6         112           5,340         9.1         8.5         107           4,980         19.1         20.1         91           6,300         8.6         10.4         83           4,560         7.4         8.8         84           5,850         17.7         20.2         88           7,910         9.2         12.0         77           5,400         18.2         23.8         76           5,740         12.2         17.0         72           5,150         8.4         10.3         82           5,630         6.0         14.6         48           85	Now         Average         % of avg.         Last year           7,300         10.5         17.0         62         N/A           7,125         17.6         19.8         89         22.7           5,150         8.5         9.0         94         13.9           5,800         9.2         12.4         74         16.0           4,530         4.0         3.2         125         6.4           5,440         9.6         8.6         112         13.1           5,340         9.1         8.5         107         14.6           4,980         19.1         20.1         91         32.1           6,300         8.6         10.4         83         13.0           4,560         7.4         8.8         84         10.4           5,850         17.7         20.2         88         26.6           7,910         9.2         12.0         77         11.3           5,400         18.2         23.8         76         29.5           5,740         12.2         17.0         72         26.7           5,150         8.4         10.3         82         13.8           <

Source: U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service

## **Snowpack**

Continued from Page A1

He was, by coincidence, speaking from Portland, there to attend a meeting of the Oregon Potato Commission, which he chairs.

Ward said rain was sluicing down as he spoke.

"We just can't seem to get it across the mountains," he said.

Few of the storms that have pushed inland this winter have maintained much momentum, or brought much moisture, to the bulk of Oregon that lies east of the Cascade Mountains.

The Baker City Airport's rain gauge measured a paltry 0.01 of an inch of moisture for February.

And that meager amount
— anything less wouldn't even
have qualified as measurable
precipitation — came down on
the final day of the month.

February is not notable for its deluges, to be sure.

The shortest month is also the third-driest at the airport, with an average of 0.62 of an inch.

Only July (0.51) and September (0.57) are more dessicated

(August is close behind, with an average of 0.63 of an inch.)

But even for a month distinguished by a scarcity of moisture rather than a surfeit, this February stands alone.

The 0.01 total is the least measured at the airport since 1943, when record-keeping be gan there.

The previous record was .10 of an inch, a dubious distinction shared by 1997 and 2006.

2002 was only slightly more moist, with 0.12 of an inch.
The absence of any significant storms also is reflected in the mountain snowpack

icant storms also is reflected in the mountain snowpack around Northeastern Oregon — a vital source of water for farms and ranches, fish habitat, recreation and some municipal water supplies.

Although the snowpack increased at most measuring sites, the rises were modest even by February's standards.

As a result, the snowpack actually lost ground, in terms of percentage of average, during the month — dipping from 6% below average at the start of February to 15% below average at month's end.

That's a troubling trend for Ward and other farmers who depend on the snowpack to nourish their crops come summer. Ward's family grows peppermint, wheat and alfalfa as well as potatoes.

well as potatoes.

"The concern level is high," Ward said. "This could be worse than last year. And last year was the worst I've

ever seen."

The snowpack certainly is well beyond where it was one year ago.

At the start of March 2021, the snowpack in Northeastern Oregon was about 29% above average.

But that bountiful snowpack didn't translate into brimful reservoirs, mainly because the ground was so dry that much



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Bare patches in the ponderosa pine forests near Phillips Reservoir on Feb. 26, 2022, reflect the scarcity of recent snowfall in Northeastern Oregon.

"The concern level is high. This could be worse than last year. And last year was the worst I've ever seen."

## — Mark Ward, Baker Valley farmer

of the melting snow soaked into the soil.

If there's a bright spot in the current situation, Ward said, it's that widespread rain in the fall of 2021 partially replenished the desiccated soil before the ground froze and the snow fell.

"We're ahead of where we were last year as far as ground moisture." he said.

That could lead to more of the snowpack, paltry though it is at this point, trickling into streams and reservoirs compared with 2021.

## **Snowpack varies across region**The loss was more signifi-

cant in some areas.

At Bourne, for instance, in the headwaters of the Powder River north of Sumpter, the water content of the snow — a more relevant metric than snow depth, since the moisture content of snow can vary greatly — actually shrank during February, from 9.8 inches (exactly average) to 9.2 inches, which is 26% below

average.

Bourne is a bellwether measuring site for estimating the amount of water that will flow into Phillips Reservoir this spring and summer.

That vital source of irrigation water for about 30,000 acres in Baker Valley was depleted during the 2021 drought more than in any year since it first filled in 1968.

As of Tuesday, March 1, the reservoir was holding 2,500 acre-feet of water — just 3% of its capacity.

(One acre-foot of water would cover one acre of flat ground to a depth of one foot.)

Elsewhere in the Elkhorn Mountains, the snowpack dropped during February from 5% below average at Anthony Lakes to 11% below average, and from 3% below average at Little Antone (near the Gorham Butte Road) to

16% below average.

The decline was much less at Eilertson Meadow along Rock Creek, one of the few places where the water content remains above average — 12% above, almost identical to the 13% above at the start of February.

In the Wallowas, the water content at Schneider Meadow, which was just 7% below average on Feb. 1, is now 24% below average after growing by slightly less than one inch during the month.

# School board to pick new chief

Baker City Herald

The Baker School Board is scheduled to choose a new superintendent for the Baker 5J School District during a special meeting at noon on Thursday, March 3.

The meeting will be conducted via Zoom.

Last month the board picked three finalists for the job: Erin Lair, David Marshall and William Schildbach.

About 50 people attended a public event to meet the trio on Feb. 24, at Baker High School.

The finalists are:

• Erin Lair, a Baker High School graduate who is the

director of school improvement for the Intermountain Education Service District. She worked previously as director of curriculum, instruction and technology for the Sherwood School District, and before that she was assistant charter administrator for Vision Charter

School in Caldwell.

• David Marshall, the superintendent of Brookings-Harbor School District. Previously, Marshall was assistant superintendent for the Hermiston and Milton-Freewater school districts, following more than 20 years of classroom teaching experience.

• William Schildbach, principal of Tikigaq School, a pre-kindergarten through 12th grade school in Point Hope, Alaska.

Hope, Alaska.

He earlier served as superintendent of the Nome Public Schools in Nome, Alaska, and also worked as principal of Mt. Spurr Elementary and Emmonak School, both in Alaska.

Baker's superintendent since 2015, Mark Witty, announced in June 2021 that he intended to retire through the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System on July 1 of that year, but that he would continue to work as superintendent for up to two years.

#### Books

Continued from Page A1

Readers are encouraged to pick up a book bracket, fill in their predictions, and submit it at the end of March for a prize.

Book titles were chosen based on the popularity at the local library, bestseller lists, recommendations from participants in Oregon Battle of the Books, and from the library's tween book club.

"These are some really good books," Grammon said. "Most of them are award winners."

And, she pointed out, she didn't include popular titles like "Percy Jackson" or the Harry Potter series.

"I want people to know there are other books out



A March Madness competition at the Baker County Public Library allows younger readers to decide which books advance in the bracket.

there than the usual," she said.

The book display, and place to vote, is located in the children's section at the library.

The featured titles are all available to check out — and if they are, Grammon said she'll have a paper replica in place so readers can still see the selections.

## Sumpter

Continued from Page A1

Patterson said he does have a city water connection and that guests would be allowed to use it, but there will not be individual water service at each campsite.

The park would not have sewer connections at each site, either.

Patterson plans to install a septic tank for sewage disposal that would be available to guests.

Patterson also said that most of the park property is in the Powder River flood zone.

"We're trying to be environ."

"We're trying to be environmentally responsible with our campground," he said.

Patterson said he is not accusing anyone of being responsible for the graffiti because he doesn't know who did it.

But he is angry about what he calls a "runaround" that he and his wife have experienced with the Sumpter City Council regarding their business.

During the City Council's most recent meeting, on Feb. 22, which both Pattersons attended, Council President Linda Wise mentioned the graffiti, telling Jon Patterson she was sorry that it had happened.

"I can't believe there's people in this town that would lower themselves to that," Wise said. "I really thought people were better than that."

In a phone interview on Tuesday, March 1, Sumpter Mayor Greg Lucas also said he was dismayed by the graffiti at Whistle Stop RV Park.

Lucas, who did not attend the Feb. 22 meeting but said he watched a video of it, said "what took place at his RV park, the council condemns that behavior. We adamantly condemn that behavior. It's pathetic, it disrupts his ability to do business, and it costs him money."

But Patterson isn't convinced that his disagreements with the City Council didn't somehow contribute to the graffiti.

During the public comment period at the end of the Feb. 22 meeting, Patterson spoke directly to councilors Marsha Demaris and Charlie Briscoe.

"What I'm going to ask right now is that Marsha Demaris and Charlie Briscoe stop harassing us with your gossip around town, and that's the result on my signs out there," Patterson said. "I think you should resign right now from this council, effective immediately. I'm here to help this town. We've said it from day one."

Neither Briscoe nor Demaris responded.

Lucas, though, disputes Patterson's contention that the city councilors have done anything to encourage someone to deface Patterson's property.

"We also take the stand that there is nothing that Council has done or said that would have given anybody impetus to target him," Lucas said.

Demaris declined to comment to the Baker City Herald, and Briscoe did not return a phone message.

### Disagreements date to 2021

According to the minutes from the City Council's June 8, 2021, meeting, the Council tabled Patterson's application for 60 days.

Patterson said the RV park is an outright use on his property and that the city can't impose requirements on its design and construction based on city ordinances.

On June 28, 2021, the City Council approved Patterson's application.

Councilor Martin Leuenberger abstained. Patterson said he has used Leuenberger's services as an attorney, though not for anything related to the RV park or other properties Patterson owns in Sumpter.

Patterson said the approval for the Whistle Stop RV Park is for up to 100 spaces, but he is planning to open in May with 50 sites.

During the Feb. 22 meeting, councilors discussed with Patterson how much the city should charge him for water and sewer at his RV park.

Briscoe contends that although the sites don't have water and sewer connections, campers are likely to want to obtain water from the park and to dump gray and black water from their holding tanks, since the additional weight of that water reduces gas mileage. But Patterson responded by

saying that Briscoe can't predict what guests will do.
"You've been trying to kill

this park since day one," Patterson said.
"No I haven't," Briscoe said.
"How about you guys just come down to my park, and

take turns every weekend, and count how many people fill up and dump, and I'll pay for that," Patterson said. "We're not here to tell

"We're not here to tell you how to run your park," Briscoe said.

Demaris pointed out that Sumpter's two other RV parks — which, unlike Patterson's, have water and sewer connections for their sites — pay a monthly fee based on the number of sites.

She asked why it wasn't feasible for the city to charge all RV parks based on the same criteria.

"I don't like charging people for something I'm not giving them," Patterson said, referring to the lack of water and sewer connections at the Whistle Stop RV park.

Demaris replied that filling up their water tanks, or emptying their holding tanks, would be an option for guests.

Ultimately the Council agreed to charge Patterson \$93 per month for water service during the period when the park is open, and \$46.50 per month when it's not. The monthly sewer bill is \$176.

"I can live with that," Patterson said. "I think you're being fair now."

Patterson said in a phone interview on Tuesday, March 1, that he remains upset about what he considers harassment by the City Council.

He said he intends to run for Sumpter mayor this fall. He is a member of Sumpter's planning commission.

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