



SPORTS A3
Baker baseball team off to 3-0 start



OUTDOORS B1
Hunting hares in their natural habitat

Baker City Herald

IN THIS EDITION: LOCAL • OUTDOORS & REC • SPORTS

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Kelsey Eastman of Baker City.

BRIEFING

Baker County Library plans several events for spring break

The Baker County Library is planning several special events for spring break. On Tuesday, March 22, there will be a special spring-themed storytime at 10 a.m., and Friday, March 25, is Teen Game Day from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. The library is at 2400 Resort St. in Baker City.

Tickets on sale for Powder Valley halibut feed fundraiser

NORTH POWDER — Tickets are on sale for the 20th-annual Alaskan halibut dinner, a fundraiser for the girls basketball and volleyball programs at Powder Valley High School. The event is set for May 7 in the Powder Valley gym. There will be four sessions: 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.; 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.; 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.; and 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$30 per plate and include halibut, baked potato, coleslaw, bread, dessert and drink. Tickets for a hot dog, chips, cookie and drink meal are \$5.

WEATHER

Today
49/26
Rain likely



Sunday
44/27
Snow showers



Monday
51/35
Morning rain



Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

CITY ISSUES WASTEWATER NOTICE



Baker City Public Works/Contributed Photo

The 70-acre sewage lagoon, the largest of the four lagoons at Baker City's treatment facility about a mile north of town, was still frozen on March 9, 2022.

High bacteria levels in wastewater released into Powder River north of town

BY JAYSON JACOBY
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Baker City issued a notice Thursday morning, March 17, urging people to avoid entering the Powder River or drinking untreated water from the river north of the city's sewer treatment lagoons, which are near Imnaha Road about a mile north of town.

The warning does not affect the reach of the river through Baker City.

Wastewater from the four lagoons, which is released into the river, have contained higher than usual levels of E. coli bacteria, some types of which can make people ill.

The bacteria is not a health concern for cattle, according to a press release from the city.

The river runs through private property north of the lagoons, so there is little, if any, public access to or use of the river in that area.

The city has been releasing wastewater that exceeds the E. coli concentration limits in its permit due to a leak discovered March 7 in a dike on the largest lagoon, which covers about 70 acres, said Michelle Owen, the city's public works director.

City workers plugged the leak with soil and bentonite, but as a precaution

the city also lowered the water level in that lagoon to below the area where the leak was found, moving some of the water to the three smaller lagoons, each about 10 acres, Owen said.

Now, the city is releasing into the river about the same amount of wastewater that is coming into the lagoon complex each day, to avoid overflows from the three smaller lagoons, Owen said.

That's been running at about 0.9 million gallons per day, she said.

That's actually slightly less water than the city usually releases into the river in early spring once the ice melts off the lagoons, Owen said. Typically the city lowers the reservoir levels to make space for the higher volumes of wastewater that start when residents begin to use more water in the warmer days of spring.

The wastewater being released now contains higher bacteria levels than usual because the natural organisms that consume some of the bacteria aren't yet active due to recent cold temperatures, Owen said.

Ice still covers the lagoons, she said.

"We need the ice to come off, and warmer water" to spur the organisms



Baker City Public Works/Contributed Photo

Baker City Public Works Department employees examine a valve structure at the city's sewer lagoon complex on March 7, 2022.

that help to reduce bacteria levels, Owen said.

The city continues to treat wastewater with chlorine, but that disinfectant isn't sufficient to keep bacterial levels below the limits in the city's wastewater permit, Owen said.

The city uses sulfur dioxide to remove the chlorine from wastewater before it's released into the river.

Owen said the city's newly constructed treatment lagoon, which is east of Interstate 84, isn't yet available because the pipeline that leads from

the current lagoons to the new facility has not yet passed a pressure test.

Once that pipeline is available, the city could potentially divert wastewater into the new lagoon, she said.

More information about E. coli is available at www.CDC.gov/ecol.

Owen said the city will be testing water from the Powder River upstream from the lagoons to establish a baseline of E. coli levels and compare the levels there with those in the wastewater the city is releasing into the river downstream.

Fire damages building, vehicles at city's public works facility

BY SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
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A fire that apparently started in a vehicle damaged that vehicle and others, as well as a building at the Baker City Public Works Department facility at Seventh and Place streets Wednesday evening, March 16.

A resident reported the blaze at about 7:49 p.m., according to the Baker County Dispatch Center log.

Michelle Owen, the city's public works director, said it appears that the fire started in the engine compartment of a truck the city uses to clear blockages in sewer lines, possibly resulting from an electrical short.

"We sustained substantial damage to what we call the sewer jetter truck, and that's where they believe the fire started," Owen said on Friday morning, March 18.

David Blair of the Baker City Fire Department, who served as incident commander during the blaze, said there was no indication of arson.

"We believe it was probably a mechanical failure in some part of the vehicle," Blair said on Friday morning, March 18.

See, Fire/Page A3

Wolves kill working dog near Halfway

Wolves from two packs have been mingling in eastern part of county

BY JAYSON JACOBY
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A wolf or wolves from the Cornucopia pack inflicted fatal injuries on a working dog on a cattle ranch near Halfway this week.

And a state wildlife biologist who monitors wolves in Baker County said wolves from the Cornucopia and Keating packs — a total of at least 15 animals — have been making some unusual movements over the past month or so.

"It makes it harder to predict what's going to happen, and it makes it harder on producers," said Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Baker City office.

See, Wolves/Page A2

Cascade Natural Gas replacing lines

Project is north of Campbell Street

Baker City Herald
If you've seen orange paint on the streets in parts of Baker City north of Campbell Street the reason, most likely, involves natural gas.

Cascade Natural Gas Corp., which supplies that fuel to the city, is planning to replace gas mains and service lines in parts of North Baker City starting April 11. The work will continue for an estimated five to six months, depending on weather, according to the company.

In general the area runs between Main and Ninth streets, and north of Campbell. Eighth and Ninth Drives, north of Baker High School, are also included.

The work at any specific property will typically take



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

A contractor has been marking the location of natural gas lines in north Baker City in preparation for Cascade Natural Gas replacing the service lines.

about one week, according to Cascade Natural Gas.

There will be a short interruption to gas service, and the company will notify customers about the timing.

Cascade Natural Gas will fix damage resulting from the line replacements, such as holes in sidewalks or in

lawns, at no cost to the property owner.

Residents can do their own repairs, but Cascade Natural Gas won't reimburse people if they choose that option.

Mark Hanson, a company spokesman, said the project is part of its annual pipeline replacement program under the

federal Gas Distribution Integrity Management Program.

In addition to replacing mains and service lines in neighborhoods, Cascade Natural Gas is also moving a 4-inch-diameter main supply line on Campbell Street as part of the Oregon Department of Transportation's

project to add wheelchair-accessible sidewalk ramps.

That project, which is slated to start Monday, March 21, runs from just east of Cedar Street to Balm Street, on the north side of Campbell, Hanson said.

Tom Fisk, Baker City Public Works operations supervisor, said the contractor Cascade Natural Gas hired is also marking the location of city sewer laterals, which connect homes to main lines. That's necessary to avoid puncturing sewer lines during the natural gas work.

Fisk said that although the city knows where its main sewer lines are, details about the laterals, including the angle at which they run, is not known in all cases so the data the contractor is gathering will help the city in the future in the event of issues with laterals.



TODAY
Issue 130
12 pages

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|---------------------|-------|----------------|---------|----------------------|----|-------------------|---------|--------------------|-------------|
| Classified..... | B2-B4 | Crossword..... | B2 & B4 | Jayson Jacoby..... | A4 | Opinion..... | A4 | Sports..... | A3, A5 & A6 |
| Comics..... | B5 | Dear Abby..... | B6 | Lottery Results..... | A2 | Outdoors..... | B1 & B2 | Turning Backs..... | A2 |
| Community News..... | A2 | Horoscope..... | B2 & B4 | News of Record..... | A2 | Senior Menus..... | A2 | Weather..... | B6 |