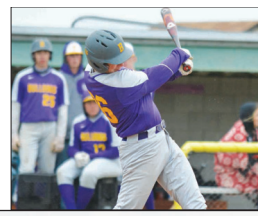




**LOCAL A3**  
Trooper comes to rescue of hungry high schoolers



**SPORTS A6**  
Baker girls 1st, boys 2nd at Vale track meet



**SPORTS A8**  
Baker baseball nips Philomath on walkoff HR

# Baker City Herald

IN THIS EDITION: LOCAL • HOME & LIVING • SPORTS

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TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2022 • \$1.50

**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Rosemary Keeter of Baker City.

**BRIEFING**

**Kindergarten screenings set April 28**

April 28, for children who have not been screened at preschool. The results will be shared with parents/guardians, current preschool teachers and incoming kindergarten teachers to make class placements and improve instructional practices.

Appointments are available April 28 between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. To reserve a screening time, call Emoke Marvin at Baker Early Learning Center, 541-523-2310, or email her at emoke.marvin@bakersed.org.

More appointments will be added if needed.

**City begins testing fire hydrants**

The Baker City Public Works Department started its annual fire hydrant testing and water line flushing Monday, April 25, and the campaign will continue for about two to three weeks.

This work is done each year to flush sediment from the water system and ensure all hydrants are functioning properly and are delivering water at the correct pressure and volume.

Through this, small silt-like particles may become stirred up after settling in water lines that are less active. This can make water run cloudy temporarily.

**WEATHER**

**Today**  
50/30  
Showers



**Wednesday**  
53/31  
Mostly cloudy



Full forecast on the back of the B section.

Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald  
Elk Creek, in the Elkhorn Mountains southwest of Baker City, on Friday, April 22, 2022. Recent storms have slightly improved the drought situation in Northeastern Oregon.



## APRIL SHOWERS take a slight bite out of the drought

BY JAYSON JACOBY  
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

For Curtis Martin the evidence is the green grass among the sagebrush, and for Mark Ward it's the brown mud clinging to his boots.

The fresh white coat adorning lower slopes of the Elkhorn and Wallowa Mountains helps to tell the tale as well.

April has delivered a modicum of relief to drought-stricken Northeastern Oregon.

A shift in the weather pattern has allowed a series of relatively damp storms to sweep into the region over the past couple weeks, and the results are visible in Martin's grass, Ward's mud and those snowy mountains.

Through the first 24 days of April, precipitation at the Baker City Airport totaled 0.77 of an inch.

That's not a deluge, to be sure — but it's more moisture than the airport recorded for the whole of the previous three months.

The total for January, February and March was a meager 0.67 of an inch — 30% of average for that three-month period.

The arid start to 2022 left crop fields parched and rangelands dusty.

But today, in the wake of storms that dropped both rain and, on several days, significant amounts of snow, the situation is quite different.

"It's dramatically better, especially the rangeland grasses," said Martin, a cattle rancher who lives near North Powder. "It's been a huge, huge help."

Ward, whose family grows potatoes, peppermint, wheat and alfalfa in the Baker Valley, agreed.

"April's been a big help," Ward said

on Monday morning, April 25. "Any moisture is welcome."

Both Ward and Martin said the situation just a few weeks ago, when Pacific storms were still being shunted to the north and mostly missing Northeastern Oregon, was more dire.

"I think it looked as bad as I could ever remember it looking for that time of year," said Martin, who's a member of the Oregon Beef Council and a past president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

Martin said the grass that he and other ranchers depend on to fatten their cattle during spring and summer had yet to appear from its winter dormancy.

But now, after the frequent rain and snow over the past two weeks, the grass "is coming on strong," Martin said.

He said the warmer temperatures of the past few days — the high of 63 at the Baker City Airport on Sunday, April 24, was the second-warmest of the month — have helped invigorate this year's grass crop as well.

Ward, who is preparing to plant potatoes later this week, doesn't begrudge muddy patches in the fields.

"If I'm rained out of a field I'm tickled to death," he said.

Ward said that in one way conditions are actually better this spring, even before the recent storms, than

they were the past two years.

"There is more moisture in the soil than either of the past two years," he said. "We're not working totally dry soil, so that's a plus."

Ward also said it seems to him that the winds, which can leach moisture from the soil relatively rapidly, haven't been quite as persistent this spring, although there have been blustery days.

Neither Ward nor Martin believes the drought has significantly waned despite the recent beneficial trends.

Ward pointed out that Phillips Reservoir, along the Powder River about 17 miles southwest of Baker City, is just 10% full after reaching its lowest level last fall since it first filled in 1968.

"We're not out of the woods by a large margin — and we're not going to get out of the woods this year due to the lack of carryover in the reservoir," Ward said.

He credits Jeff Colton, manager of the Baker Valley Irrigation District, for crafting a plan to dole out water from the reservoir this spring.

Ward said that although farmers won't receive anything close to the volume of water they would were the reservoir full or nearly so, he believes Colton's plan is the best option given the dire situation.

See, Drought/Page A5

## City Council to discuss new labor contract, train quiet zone measure

Baker City Herald

The Baker City Council will consider approving a three-year contract with the largest of the city's three labor unions on Tuesday, April 26.

The Council meeting starts at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 1655 First St.

The current contract with the Baker City Employees Association expires June 30, 2022. The union represents about 40 of the city's approximately 75 employees, most of them in the public works department.

The proposed contract calls for salary increases between 3% and 5% each year, the actual amount based on the federal Consumer Price Index.

The city has two other unions. One represents most police officers, the other represents most firefighters.

See, Council/Page A3

## Oregon wolf population grows slightly

BY GEORGE PAVLEN  
Capital Press

Oregon's wolf population increased by just two individuals in 2021, according to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, while the number of wolf deaths was the highest yet in a single year.

ODFW released its annual wolf report on Tuesday, April 19, documenting 175 wolves compared to 173 in 2020. The count is a minimum estimate based on verified evidence, such as wolf sightings, tracks and remote camera photographs.

A total of 26 wolves died in 2021, including 21 killed by humans. Of those, four were hit by vehicles, eight were illegally poisoned, one was legally shot by a rancher on private property and another eight were killed by ODFW after habitually preying on livestock.

Roblyn Brown, ODFW wolf program coordinator, said last year's rise in mortalities "certainly played a role" in the latest population survey remaining mostly flat.

"Despite this, we are confident in the continued health of the state's wolf population as they expand in distribution across the state and show a strong upward population trend," Brown said in a statement.

See, Wolves/Page A5

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

# Salt licks coming back to the block

## Great Salt Lick Contest and Auction returning in September

BY LISA BRITTON  
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The most curious of art shows is coming back to Baker City this fall. "People liked it so much. And it's a fun event," said founder Whit Deschner.

The Great Salt Lick Contest and Auction returns Sept. 17, 2022. The theme is "Bringing Agriculture to Culture."

That evening, viewing begins at 5:30 p.m. at Churchill School, and the auction starts at 6:30 p.m.

This art show, which last happened in 2019, requires some preparation because every entry must first be sculpted by the tongues of livestock or wildlife.

Salt blocks can be entered at any time at Oregon Trail Livestock Supply in Baker City.

Submissions can be taken to Churchill beginning the last week of August.

Prizes will again be awarded in several categories. The cash awards — more than \$1,000 worth — are supported by sponsorships from local businesses and individuals.

Those who would like to support the Great Salt Lick can contact Deschner at 541-519-2736 or deschner-whit@yahoo.com.

**The history**

Deschner had the idea for this unusual art show in 2006 when he and his neighbor, Tom Heriza, noticed an artistically sculpted salt block.

So Deschner asked another neighbor, Mib Dailey, if he'd be willing to be the auctioneer to help sell the submitted salt blocks.

Dailey said yes — and he's been the auctioneer ever since.

"I wouldn't have it without him," Deschner said of Dailey.

Each block is auctioned and the proceeds are donated to the Parkinson's Center at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland.

Deschner was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2000.



Whit Deschner/Contributed Photo

It's always entertaining when auctioneer Mib Dailey, left, and event founder Whit Deschner are talking about salt licks. The unique event returns in September 2022 after a two-year hiatus.

Since the first event in 2007, the Great Salt Lick has raised \$165,000 for OHSU.

The contest has garnered widespread attention over the years. It was named the best Philanthropic Event by the Oregon Festivals and Events Association, and has appeared on NPR's "Weekend Edition" and Oregon Public

Broadcasting's "Oregon Art Beat."

The Great Salt Lick has been featured by Ripley's Believe It or Not and the Smithsonian's website, and in art museums in Chicago, Vancouver, B.C., and the Guggenheim in Los Angeles.

In downtown Baker City, a larger-than-life bronze salt lick at Court Plaza honors the homegrown event. This piece was supported by the Ford Family Foundation.

**The rules**

Entry forms can be downloaded at <https://whitdeschner.com/>.

There are four categories:

- Overall
- Best poem submitted with block
- Best poem submitted without block
- Best Forgery

There are several categories for prizes: People's Choice, Forgeries, Most Artistically Licked Block, Best Poem with a Block and Best Poem Without a Block.

"And I'll try to think of some new ones," Deschner said.



**TODAY**  
Issue 146  
12 pages

Classified.....B4-B6	Crossword.....B4 & B6	Horoscope.....B4 & B6	Opinion.....A4	Sudoku.....B7
Comics.....B7	Dear Abby.....B8	Lottery Results.....A2	Senior Menus.....A2	Turning Backs.....A2
Community News.....A2	Home & Living.....B1-B3	News of Record.....A2	Sports.....A6-A8	Weather.....B8