



**OUTDOORS B1**  
Finding the way back to Pole Creek Ridge



**LOCAL A2**  
Baker City mayor to resign late this year



**SPORTS A5**  
Ducks, Beavers open football season

# Baker City Herald

IN THIS EDITION: LOCAL • OUTDOORS & REC • SPORTS Serving Baker County since 1870 • bakercityherald.com SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2022 • \$1.50

**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Eric Lamb of Baker City.

**BRIEFING**

**Expect lane closures, reduced speeds on I-84**

Work has begun to repave a 13-mile section of Interstate 84 between Ladd Canyon and North Powder, and drivers should expect lane closures and reduced speeds to 55 mph during daylight hours. Later in September the contractor will work at night to reduce traffic effects. The project is scheduled to be done by Nov. 1. Workers are paving rutted and cracked pavement between Mileposts 272 and 285, including bridges at exits 278 and 283. That section of freeway was last paved in 2003, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation.

**Baker County Garden Club to meet Sept. 7**

The Baker County Garden Club will meet Wednesday, Sept. 7 at 10:30 a.m. at Oregon Trail Nursery, 600 Elm St. Please bring a sack lunch and a chair. The Garden Club will also have a garage sale on Saturday, Sept. 10 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 995 J St. in Baker City.

**Daughters of the American Revolution to meet in Baker City**

The Daughters of the American Revolution will meet Friday, Sept. 9 at noon at the Baker Truck Corral. Those planning to order lunch (no host) should arrive at 11 a.m.

**WEATHER**

**Today**  
88/43  
Chance of storms



**Sunday**  
90/48  
Clear



**Monday**  
89/47  
Clear



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

**EAGLE CAP WILDERNESS**



## Firefighters corral parts of blazes

U.S. Forest Service photo

The Nebo fire burns in the Eagle Cap Wilderness on Aug. 29, 2022.

BY JAYSON JACOBY

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest officials called in firefighters on Thursday, Sept. 1 to slow the spread of one fire that has been burning in the Eagle Cap Wilderness for the past 10 days, and they might take similar steps to curb a second blaze on the opposite side of the wilderness.

Both the Sturgill fire, near the North Minam River on the west side of the wilderness, and the Nebo fire, on the east side, have grown rapidly during a week marked by record-breaking heat.

Each fire produced a large smoke plume on Wednesday, and both spawned a pyrocumulus cloud — a thunderhead generated in part by the fire's heat.

Todd Pederson, assistant fire management officer for the Wallowa-Whitman, said both of the fires, which were started by lightning from storms Aug. 22 and 23, are likely to surpass the 2019 Granite Gulch fire as the biggest blaze in the wilderness since the Wallowa-Whitman adopted a policy about 30 years ago allowing officials to manage lightning fires in the Eagle Cap, a strategy that can include monitoring blazes rather than actively fighting them.

The Granite Gulch fire burned about 5,500 acres.

On Thursday afternoon the Sturgill fire was estimated at 4,815 acres, the Nebo fire at 3,086 acres.

With more hot, dry and windy weather forecast on Friday, Sept. 2,

Pederson said it's likely both fires will continue to spread. He expected burning conditions Friday to be similar to Wednesday.

The fires' growth has already prompted Pederson to summon firefighters and helicopters to corral their spread in certain directions.

On Thursday he dispatched a crew of smokejumpers, along with a helicopter to drop water, to prevent the Sturgill fire from spreading east into the upper Bear Creek drainage.

"We're taking full suppression" on that area, Pederson said on Thursday afternoon.

He said he doesn't want the fire to burn into another large drainage such as Bear Creek or Threemile Creek, where it could grow rapidly.

A helicopter also doused a spot

fire that started on the west side of the Minam River on Wednesday, Aug. 31, Pederson said.

He said the goal is to keep the Sturgill fire on the east side of the Minam and within the North Minam River area, where on Thursday it was also spreading south toward Green Lake, reaching an area burned in the Hazel Mountain fire, which officials also monitored, more than a decade ago. Pederson said he hopes the Sturgill fire will burn some of the downed trees left by the earlier blaze.

This mixture of tactics — monitoring the fire generally but fighting the flames in certain areas — is part of the Wallowa-Whitman's policy for lightning-sparked blazes in the Eagle Cap.

See **Blazes** / A3

## Back to school — and normal

**Classes start Sept. 6 in Baker schools**

BY JAYSON JACOBY

For the first time in three years, students in the Baker School District will have a normal start to the school year.

Tuesday, Sept. 6 is the first day of classes.

This is also the first school year for the district's new superintendent, Erin Lair, a 2004 Baker High School graduate and former math and language arts teacher at Baker Middle School.

Lair was hired in early March and started work earlier this summer.

"Going in to this new school year, I feel a real sense of shared hope and enthusiasm for where we are headed as a district,"



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald, File

Students and parents gathered Aug. 30, 2021, for the first day of classes at Brooklyn Primary School in Baker City.

Lair wrote in an email to the Herald. Students will be headed for their classrooms, the normal destination but

one that during the pandemic suddenly wasn't assured.

See **School** / A3

## Heat could keep mosquito numbers up

**Aerial spraying Aug. 29 in Keating Valley effective, manager says**

BY CLAYTON FRANKE

West Nile virus is sticking around in Baker County mosquitoes, but there's no evidence the bugs have spread the disease to people.

Three batches of mosquitoes trapped recently

in Keating Valley, about 15 miles east of Baker City, tested positive for the virus.

That brings the summer's total of infected mosquito "pools" to 18, said Matt Hutchinson, manager of the Baker Valley Vector Control District.

The mosquitoes, which were tested at a lab at Oregon State University, were caught Aug. 24 in two traps maintained by the U.S. Forest Service, and one by the

vector control district, which is responsible for controlling mosquitoes in a 200,000-acre area that includes most of Baker, Keating and Bowen valleys.

Test results take about a week.

Detecting the virus in mosquitoes throughout the summer and into early September is typical for Baker County, Hutchinson said.

West Nile virus has been detected in mosquitoes in

Baker County every year for the past decade except 2020 and 2018, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

But what isn't typical is excessive heat that has dominated much of August and is forecast to continue at least through Labor Day.

Mosquitoes progress through their growth cycles faster when temperatures warm the water where the eggs hatch, Hutchinson said.

See **Heat** / A3

## Racing to finish a barn

**A new horse barn in Halfway is ready for the 101st Baker County Fair**

BY LISA BRITTON

HALFWAY — Lynda Bird clipped the ribbon to officially dedicate the new horse barn at the Pine Valley Fairgrounds on Thursday, Sept. 1 — just one day before the 101st annual Baker County Fair.

"We want to thank everybody for coming, and for all your donations," Bird said to those gathered in the mid-day sunshine.

This was a project of the Friends of the Pine Valley Fairgrounds.

"We've talked about this for years," Bird said.

The new barn is 12 feet wide and 120 feet long. It is divided into 10 horse stalls, each 12 feet by 12 feet.

According to Bird's research, horse racing in Halfway dates to the early 1900s.

See **Barn** / A3



**TODAY**  
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12 pages

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