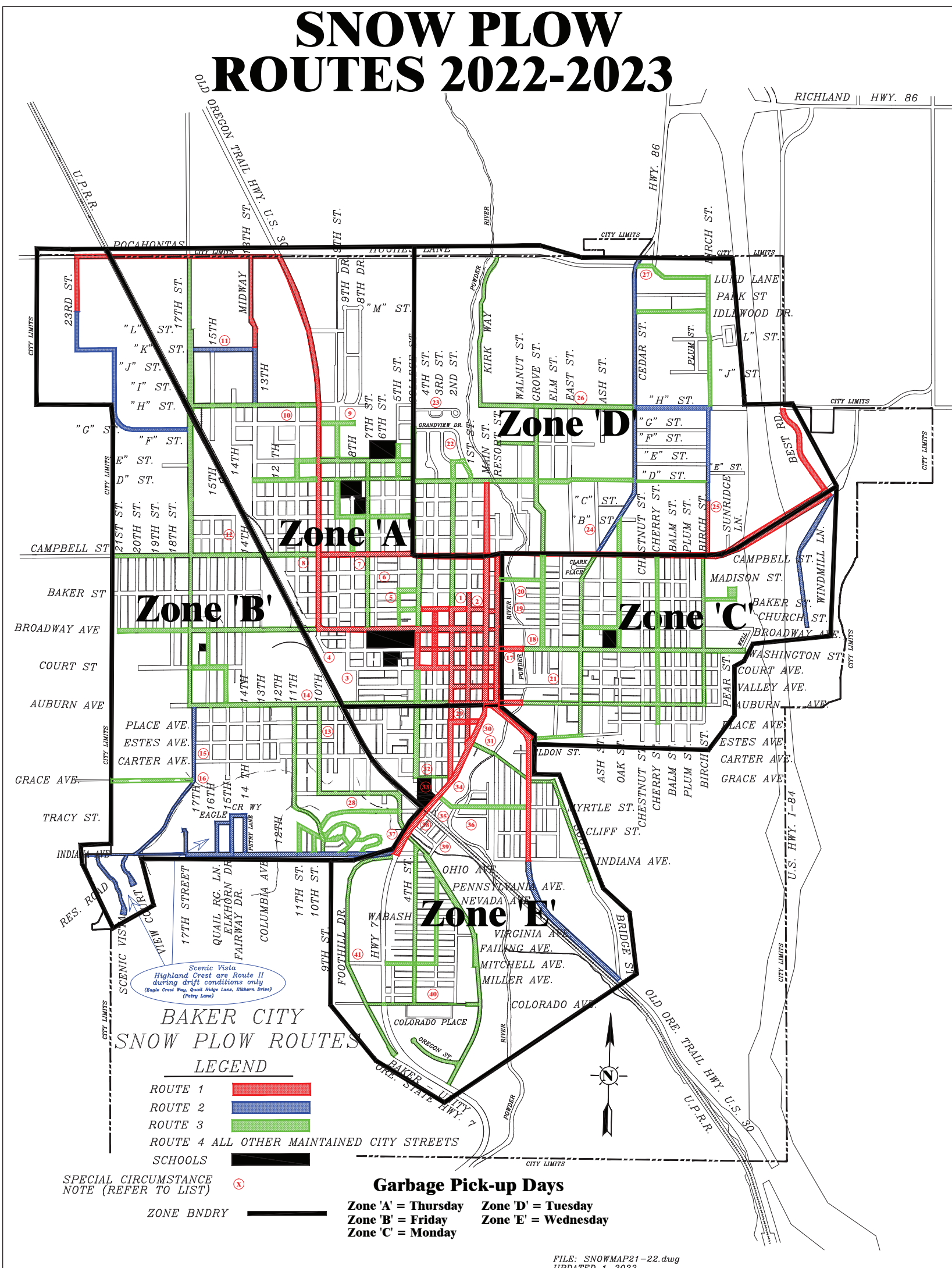


SNOW PLOW ROUTES 2022-2023



Oregon State Police/Contributed Photo
Oregon State Police on Monday, Nov. 28, 2022, reported evidence seized during a search in December 2021 in a poaching case led to indictments against Walker Erickson, 28, of Pendleton, and Hunter Wagner, 23, of Pilot Rock.

Two local men face charges in big game poaching case

East Oregonian
 PENDLETON — Oregon State Police reported two local men face charges for poaching following an investigation that began more than two years ago. OSP Fish & Wildlife Troopers from the Pendleton Area Command received information on several individuals who were unlawfully taking big game animals, according to a press release from state police. Troopers in the summer of 2020 began gathering information and evidence during the following year, which led to a search at a Pendleton residence in December 2021.

Evidence seized from the search warrant included six sets of deer antlers and three sets of elk antlers, including a 7x7 trophy bull elk, a rifle, a bow and meat, which led to the indictment of Walker Erickson, 28, of Pendleton, and Hunter Wagner, 23, of Pilot Rock.

State court records show a Umatilla County grand jury in October indicted Erickson was indicted on the following:

- Three counts of unlawful take of a cow elk.
- Four counts of unlawful take of a whitetail buck.
- Two counts of unlawful take of a mule deer buck.
- Four counts of unlawful take of bull elk.
- Three counts of waste of game.
- One count of unlawful possession of big game.
- One count of hunting while criminally trespassing.
- One count of hunting on another's cultivated or enclosed land.
- One count of hunting from a motor vehicle.
- And two counts of tampering with physical evidence.

The charges for unlawful taking of the elk and deer are Class C felonies. Erickson has a pre-trial conference Jan. 3, according to court records. State police reported Wagner was indicted on seven counts of counseling, aiding, or assisting in another's unlawful take of a big game animal, but state court records do not show that indictment.

The anti-poaching prosecutor with the Oregon Department of Justice in coordination with the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office is prosecuting the case.

City outlines snowplowing priorities

Baker City Herald
 The National Weather Service is predicting a significant snowstorm this week in Baker City, and enough snow could fall to bring the city's snowplows and graders into action. The city's snowplowing policy is that when at least 4 inches of snow has fallen, with more likely to come, crews will start plowing city streets. City officials ask that residents avoid parking cars along streets if possible so plows can clear snow to the curb. This is especially important on priority 1, 2 and

3 routes (see map on this page) as they are plowed more often than residential streets. Plow crews often start around midnight, both to plow snow and to haul away snow from the berms that are plowed into the center of some streets. Although plowing depends on snow depth, city trucks do spread salt and sand at busier intersection and in some other places as needed, regardless of the snow depth. Because it depends on the weather, the city's cost for snow and ice control can vary widely from year to year.

In fiscal 2020-21, for instance, when there was relatively little snow, the city spend about \$39,000. But the previous year the city spent more than twice as much, at almost \$80,000. During the winter of 2016-17, the snowiest in Baker City in a couple decades, the city spent \$312,000 and had to transfer \$100,000 from the street fund's contingency budget. Other tips from the city's public works department:

- Code enforcement will be out assisting with tagging and towing of vehicles

and other items stored on the street.

- When shoveling out driveways after the plow has been by, place shoveled snow behind the curb.
- Please keep snow on private property. It is a municipal code violation to push snow from private property onto city streets.
- Allow extra time while traveling so that you don't have to drive faster than the conditions warrant.

More information is available by calling the public works department at 541-524-2047.

Massive die-off hits fir trees in Central, Southern Oregon

Scientists blame drought, insects, disease

BY NATHAN GILLES
 Columbia Insight
 PORTLAND — Fir trees in parts of Oregon and Washington died in record-breaking numbers in 2022, according to as-yet-unpublished research conducted by the U.S. Forest Service. Called "Firmageddon" by researchers, the "significant and disturbing" mortality event is the largest die-off ever recorded for fir trees in the two states. In total, the Forest Service observed fir die-offs occurring on more than 1.23 million acres — over 1,900 square miles — in Oregon and Washington. Oregon, however, was the hardest hit. The Forest Service

observed dead firs on roughly 1.1 million acres of forest in Oregon alone. This year's numbers for the state are nearly double the acres recorded during previous die-offs. Heavily affected areas include the Fremont, Winema, Ochoco and Malheur national forests. The most southerly of the forests, the Fremont Na-

tional Forest, was the hardest hit, according to survey data. "We're calling it 'Firmageddon,'" Daniel DePinte, who led the survey for the USFS Pacific Northwest Region Aerial Survey, told a gathering of colleagues in October. "It is unprecedented, the number of acres we have seen impacted. It's definitely significant and it's disturbing."

Many factors contribute to unprecedented deaths
 DePinte said although his team's results are preliminary and further analysis is needed, the 2022 Firmageddon

appears to be due to a combination of drought coupled with insects and fungal diseases working together to weaken and kill trees.

See **Trees** / A6