

SLM Ambulance Well Used

Projections exceeded for first year of service – Page 6 ––

FABULOUS FOSDICK

Benefit has raised \$700K for Meadows Valley groups

—Page 7—



THURSDAY, JULY 22, 2021 McCALL, IDAHO 55TH YEAR, \$1.25



Shortages hamper efforts to keep Dixie Fire at bay

Focus is on protecting structures, communities

BY MAX SILVERSON

Firefighters on the Dixie Fire in Idaho County have had to contend with a national shortage of crews, helicopters, heavy equipment and other firefighting equipment.

With limited means to fight

the 29,000 acre fire directly, firefighters have focused on protecting buildings and communities, including Dixie, Comstock and Mallard as well as ranches along the Salmon River, fire officials said.

Many crews and aircraft that historically have been more available to support fires in Idaho have been dispatched to fires in Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, California and elsewhere, officials said.

The Dixie fire is the largest fire on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest and has a high priority, but other fires like the 107,000-acre Snake River Complex about 70 miles to the west have drawn crews

See SHORTAGE, Page 2

Dixie Fire grows to 29,000 acres and spreading

Blaze stays on the north side of the Salmon River

BY MAX SILVERSON

The lightning caused Dixie Fire about 51 miles northeast of McCall grew to about 29,300 acres as of Tuesday, mostly on the north of the fire and along the Salmon River.

 $Controlled \ burning \ conducted \ last$ week created a buffer between the community of Dixie and the fire, and firefighters continued to strengthen containment lines with similar burnouts as well bulldozer lines and retardant drops around the perimeter.

Containment lines near Dixie and Comstock have been holding the fire to the east of those communities, but the fire could grow to the south of Comstock and in the northeast portion of the fire, said Operations Section Chief Kendal Wilson.

The fire was listed as 10% contained as of Tuesday.

The fire was burning along the north shore of the Salmon River between Allison Ranch and Mackay Bar but had not yet jumped the river to the south side.

See DIXIE, Page 2

♦ Lightning Starts Six Fires in Frank Church Wilderness/P2

COVID-19 numbers rise in Valley County

20 new positive cases reported in past week

BY TOM GROTE

Valley County's two hospitals reported 20 new cases of COVID-19 in the past week.

St. Luke's McCall reported eight new cases during the week ending Monday and Cascade Medical Center reported 12 new cases during the same period.

The latest numbers bring the total new cases since July 1 to 27. By comparison, 29 new cases were reported in all of June.

A total of 826 cases of COVID-19 have been reported by the two hospitals since the first case was detected in March 2020

See COVID-19, Page 2

STRINGING THE AUDIENCE ALONG

Photo by Chelsea Tuttle / For The Star-News



Nick Piccininni, left, and Allie Kral of the band Yonder Mountain String Band play to an appreciative crowd Saturday night at the Summer Music Festival at Roseberry. The festival was canceled last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but returned this year expanded to four nights with limited seating. All the performances sold out in advance of the weekend.

U of I researchers dig at Salmon River ranch of Polly Bemis

400 artifacts to give insight into life of Chinese immigrant

BY RALPH BARTHOLDT

About 400 artifacts linked to Chinese immigrant and Idaho pioneer Polly Bemis have been unearthed by University of Idaho archaeologists.

The first year of what researchers hope will be a multi-year excavation was completed in April at the Polly Bemis Ranch on the Salmon River 44 miles east of Riggins.

The team, directed by U of I Professor Mark Warner and led by doctoral student Renae Campbell, will clean, analyze and document the artifacts this fall for eventual display in the reconstructed cabin of Bemis

Researchers found a small dump where Bemis likely disposed of her trash, including food cans and bottles that tell about the commercial products that made their way up to remote parts of the Salmon River.

Also discovered were personal items including a tobacco tin used by the pipesmoking Bemis as well as fragments from a stoneware crock probably used to store

food from the garden kept by Bemis and her husband, Charlie.

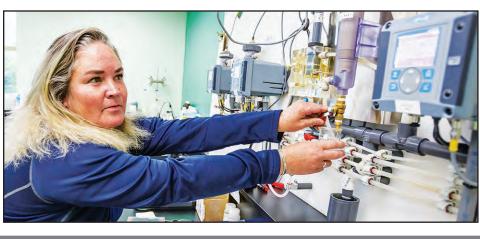
In addition to the excavation, researchers used metal detectors over a portion of the property surrounding the cabin, and dug several smaller probes where metal detectors showed there were possible artifacts.

Project Obstacles

It took U of I several years to gain access to the 25-acre property because the site is owned by a corporation. The property is also a designated national historic site in an area protected by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

See BEMIS, Page 3

City of McCall Water Systems Manager Sabrina Sims takes a sample from the city water system for a daily test of chlorine, acidity and temperature. Photo by Chelsea Tuttle/For The Star-News



McCall sets record for water use during June heat wave

26.1 million gallons pumped week of June 28-July 6

BY DREW DODSON

The City of McCall sent a record amount of water to its customers during June as the current heat wave took hold, the city reported.

The city treated and distributed a total of 65.5 million gallons of water, the most ever in the month of June, according to city records.

Demand peaked the week of July 4, when the water system pumped a total of 26.1 million gallons of water.

See WATER, Page 2

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University of Idaho anthropology master's students Conner Weygint, standing, Katie Kitch, left, and Meghan Caves, right, remove sod before starting excavation at the Polly Bemis Ranch on the Salmon River, 44 miles east of Riggins.

Bemis

(Continued from Page 1) The ranch is also surrounded by Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area.

A statue of Bemis will be unveiled at noon on Aug. 10 on the front steps of the Idaho State Capitol in Boise. Gov. Brad Little and Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, will declare Aug. 10 "Polly Bemis Day." The statue will eventually be placed at the ranch.

Bemis, who was just over 4 feet tall, was smuggled to the United States and sold as a slave in California.

She was taken from San Francisco to Portland and eventually the Idaho Territory to the mining community of Warrens, now Warren, where she worked in a sa-

She eventually gained her freedom from her Chinese owner, and the 1880 U.S. Census showed her living with saloon owner Charlie Bemis (1848-1922).

Polly Bemis took in laundry from miners and ran a boarding house. Charlie was almost killed during a gambling dispute in 1890 when he was shot in the cheek, but Polly nursed him back to health.

Polly Bemis was also a good fisherman and caught and sold fish from the Salmon River. Eventually she and Charlie moved to their ranch 17 miles north of Warren on the Salmon River where they had a mining claim.

They were among the first pioneers to live on the Salmon River. The story of Polly Bemis was the subject of a 1991 film, "A Thousand Pieces of Gold."

(Ralph Bartholdt is **Communications Manager** of University Communications and Marketing for the University of Idaho.)

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Volunteer Dan Lute, left, and Priscilla Wegars use a metal detector to search grids established around the reconstructed Polly Bemis cabin.



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McCall seeks comments on Pine Creek Ranch study

BY DREW DODSON

The City of McCall is seeking public comments on what to include in a study of a 158-acre site near Payette Lakes Middle School and Barbara Morgan Elementary School that could soon see hundreds of homes built.

The 10-day public comment period closes on July 31. Comments can be made at www.mccall.id.us/AOCC.

The study is intended to be a "comprehensive analy sis of the natural and built environment" associated with Pine Creek Ranch, a subdivision planned by Don-

nelly resident Craig Groves. Groves plans to build single family homes, duplexes and townhomes on 158 acres that back up to existing homes on Woodlands Drive and Fox Ridge Lane. An application has not yet been

submitted to the city.
The McCall City Council last month designated the 158 acres as an "area of critical concern," which allows the city to require a detailed study of the area before accepting applications.

The results of the study are expected to guide the application for Pine Creek Ranch, McCall City Planner

Brian Parker said. Another 10-day public comment period would follow the release of the study. The timeline for completion of the study is dependent on

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the developer, Parker said. A draft scope of work released by the city would require the developer to study the site's water features, plants, wildlife, soils, topography and potential

climate harm if developed. That would include an inventory of all soils, plants and wildlife as well as suggestions for how to design the development in harmony with the site's natural features

The study would also weigh how development on the site could affect the surrounding community, under the proposed draft

That would include an analysis of adjacent land uses, transportation, access roads, utility connections and wildfire danger.

The assessment would also consider how development could affect local schools, housing, childcare facilities, open space preservation and police and fire agencies.

The study will be done by a team of consultants that will be hired and paid

for by Groves, Parker said. The study is beyond the normal review to which proposed developments are subject by the McCall Area Planning and Zoning Commission.

Pine Creek Ranch is the first development to be subjected to the "area of critical concern" designation, which was added to city code in 2006.

It is unclear how many homes Pine Creek Ranch would build, but Groves expects to submit an application by the end of the year.
The city's future land

use plan designates most of the 158 acres as low-density residential allowing up to four homes per acre.

Home prices are expected to range from about \$350,000 up to \$1 million, while rental homes would rent for about \$1,695 to \$2,000 per month, Groves said.

 $Conceptual \, plans \, call \, for \,$ homes with one bedroom and one bathroom, two bedrooms and two bathrooms, and three bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms, Groves said.

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