



Third in tournament

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Mining rewrite nears end

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Crack dealer's sentence reduced

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A convicted crack dealer arrested in Baker County in both 2002 and 2003 was sentenced in federal court to 30 years in prison. But thanks to the Obama administration commuting the sentences



Isaac Johnson

of hundreds of nonviolent drug offenders this year, Isaac Simmons Johnson, a native of Lake Butler, was released last week.

Mr. Johnson, now 42 years old, would have spent another 18 years in federal custody if not for the president's policy, which ended his sentence for possession and sale of seven grams of crack of cocaine in 2002, and some 20 grams the following year, on December 28, 2016.

The outgoing president had commuted more sentences at 774 than the previous 11 presidents combined, reported *The Washington Posts'* Sari Horwitz last October.

"Beyond the statistics, though, are stories of individuals who have overcome the longest of odds to earn this second chance," White House Counsel W. Neil Eggleston said in the report following the commutation of 102 federal inmates early that month. "The individuals receiving commutation today are mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, and in some cases grandparents. Today, they and their loved ones share the joy of knowing that they will soon be reunited."

The goal was to release

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Porter refiles prejudice crime bill

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Sheriff finds 'a mess' after swearing in

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Sheriff Scotty Rhoden and his new leadership team at the sheriff's office inherited two major challenges from the previous administration — a budget gap and poor inventory tracking system.

On his first day in office Tuesday, the new sheriff asked for the public's patience as he and his second-in-command, Major Randy Crews, a former member of a federal narcotics task force who now leads all of the agency's departments, attempt to bring order to what's been a chaotic transition of power thus far.

Twelve hours after they were sworn in, Sheriff Rhoden and Maj. Crews were busy Tuesday morning attempting to inventory BCSO office equipment and gear to log and then re-issue to officers. They spoke of missing radios, documents and the like.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement will be auditing the sheriff's office evidence and training records. The sheriff said he is confident the evidence check will turn out well, but an independent audit of agency property, to be performed by an outside sheriff's department, may find problems.

"Just today I can tell you inventory is our biggest problem," said Maj. Crews. "That is a big focus on what we have to do. I've asked some people that's been here about property and 'I don't know' is the answer I'm getting. 'I don't know. It's a mess. It's a mess."



Minutes after he was sworn in Monday, Sheriff Rhoden administers the oath to 150 department employees before a capacity audience.

We've been trying to fix it but haven't done it. That's a priority. That's how you get wasted money when you don't know what you got."

He said the ideal process — which didn't occur in this transition — would've been to have someone from each administration jointly review all agency property together and sign-off that everything was accounted for.

"We don't have that. Matter of fact, there was nothing even left on this desk as far as an inventory list," Maj. Crews noted. He said he asked for the list, and got one, but he questions its accuracy.

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Judge Joey Williams gives oath Monday to Clerk of Courts Stacie Harvey, Elections Supervisor Nita Crawford, Tax Collector Amy Dugger, Sheriff Scotty Rhoden and Property Appraiser Tim Sweat.

Register Ranch seeks to be newest sludge disposal site

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A large tract in Sander-son could soon become the county's fourth site for the disposal of processed sewage sludge from wastewater treatment plants in the region.

However, the 280-acre site owned by Terrell Register and other parties and dubbed Register Ranch, may be a bit a different from those already in operation as what the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation classifies as "biosolids land ap-

plication" sites. Biosolids are nutrient-rich organic material recycled from wastewater treatment plants for use as fertilizer.

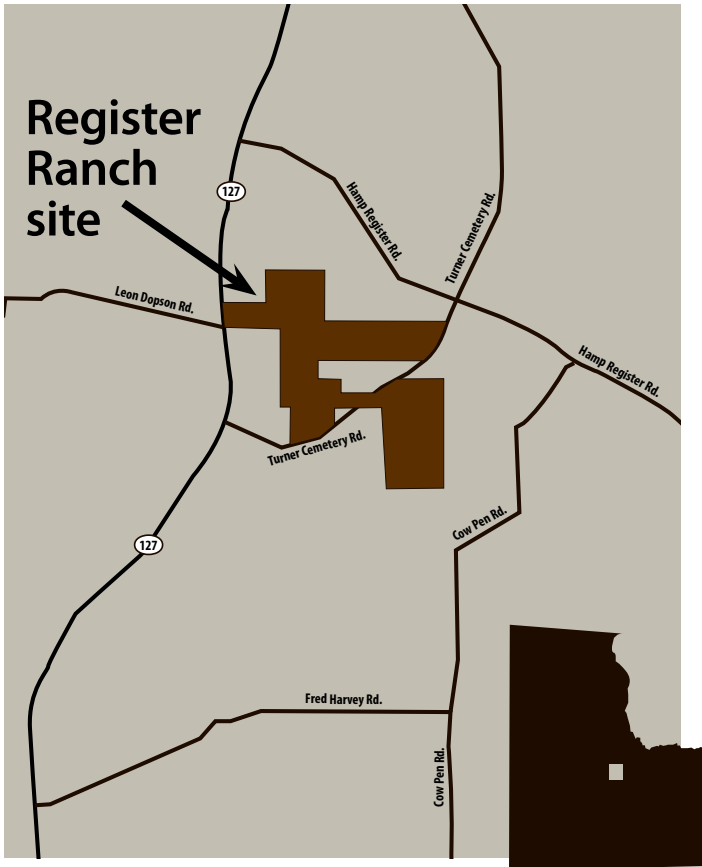
But some of the existing sites have generated controversy in the past due to nuisance odors, conflicts with neighboring property owners and violations of permitting regulations designed to protect the public and environment from potentially harmful effects of using the byproduct of wastewater treatment to stimulate crop growth.

The company that ap-

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Permit application was filed to use Register Ranch, north of Sander-son, as a Biosolids Land Application Site
- Biosolids are nutrient-rich organic material recycled from wastewater treatment plants
- The Class B biosolids are not as clean as Class A biosolids. They are currently applied on land off Steel Bridge Road and two other county sites
- Renewable Resources, LLC is the applicant

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This week we asked our readers...

Where will you ring in the new year?

68%
Home

10%
Friend's party

8%
Bar/club

8%
Great outdoors

Vote in our next poll at www.bakercountypress.com

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