

Grand Ronde supports Standing Rock protest

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal Council voted at its Wednesday, Aug. 31, meeting to join other Tribes in support of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North Dakota as it protests construction of an oil pipeline project adjacent to its Reservation boundary.

Tribal Council approved a resolution of support, as well as a \$2,500 donation.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has given its approval for the Dakota Access pipeline to run within a half-mile of the Standing Rock Reservation. Tribal Council is concerned by the lack of meaningful consultation between federal agencies and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe regarding the Dakota Access Pipeline,” states the Grand Ronde resolution. “Tribal Council stands with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and its efforts to preserve and protect its reservation, its waterways and its natural resources.”

Standing Rock Sioux Executive Secretary Johnelle Leingang said that her Tribal Council is using monetary donations from Tribes across the nation for practical things like hand washing units and for important things like legal fees.

In addition, several Grand Ronde Tribal members, including Ann Lewis, Jackie Many Hides, Molly Leno and Rena Anderson, among others, traveled to North Dakota to join in the protest. Many Hides took a Grand Ronde Tribal flag with her to demonstrate the Tribe’s support.

The Grand Ronde Tribe urged the Army Corps of Engineers to re-examine its consultation process to ensure that treaty rights and natural resources are protected and that the Standing Rock Sioux are not “deprived of their Tribal sovereignty.”

State of emergency

On Friday, Aug. 26, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council declared a state of emergency due to the threat and potential harmful effects that could occur from the construction of the pipeline project through its ancestral land.

The Dakota Access Pipeline is a 1,172-mile pipeline designed to connect the Bakken and Three Forks oil production areas of North Dakota to Patoka, Ill., by way of South Dakota and Iowa.

The proposed pipeline would be 30 inches in diameter and carry up to 470,000 barrels of oil daily with the capacity to increase to 570,000 barrels daily if needed. The pipeline project is being promoted as a way to reduce rail and truck transportation.

Standing Rock Tribal officials have publicly stated that they are not willing to gamble on the potential of a pipeline break that could be devastating to Tribal natural resources, especially water.

Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault II said the Tribe declared the state of emergency to address the serious nature of the situation.

“The Tribe will continue to protect our waters, sacred places and most importantly our children,”



Contributed photo

Tribal member Molly Leno stands before the Grand Ronde Tribal flag that flies at the site of Standing Rock Sioux protests against a proposed pipeline being constructed next to the Tribe’s reservation. The flag was transported to North Dakota by Tribal Elder Jackie Many Hides.

said Archambault in a press statement.

The National Congress of American Indians also issued statements urging Tribes to join the Standing Rock Sioux in its opposition to the pipeline project and asked Tribal Councils across the nation to send resolutions and letters of support. People also were urged to donate funds or goods to the Tribe to support its efforts.

U.S. District Court Judge James Boasberg said that the Dakota Access Pipeline has yet to secure permission from the federal government to have the project cross Lake Oahe in North Dakota. Part of Lake Oahe’s shoreline makes the border of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The project cannot move forward without approval of the permit.

When the project continued and construction of the pipeline came within a half-mile of the Tribe’s reservation boundary, the Tribal Council asked the court for a preliminary injunction to stop construction.

Dakota Access then secured a temporary restraining order against Archambault and the Tribe that prevents them from interfering in construction of the pipeline.

In April, the Tribe established the “Camp of the Sacred Stones” near the pipeline’s proposed crossing and have since hosted as many as 2,000 people from as many as 90 Tribal nations across the United States. In recent weeks, protests have become more violent with footage showing up on social media sites of security guards allowing guard dogs to attack Native protesters.

Administration steps in

On Friday, Sept. 9, Boasberg

declined to issue an order that would have shut down all pipeline construction, but President Barack Obama’s administration stepped in.

During a Town Hall meeting at Souphanouvong University in Laos, Obama was asked what he could do to protect ancestral lands and clean water in reference to the issue at Standing Rock.

“I can tell you that we have actually restored more rights among Native Americans to their ancestral lands, sacred sites, waters, hunting grounds. ... We have done a lot more work on that over the last eight years than we had in the previous 20 or 30 years and that is something I hope will continue as we go forward,” said Obama.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe had been challenging the Army Corps of Engineers’ granting of permits to Energy Transfer Partners of Dallas, Texas, to allow for as many as 200 water crossings in the construction of the \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline project.

Boasberg denied the Tribe’s request for a temporary injunction to halt the pipeline’s construction and ordered both sides of the conflict to appear at a status conference on Friday, Sept. 16.

Within an hour of Boasberg’s ruling, the Department of Justice, the Army and the Department of the Interior announced that pipeline construction would stop while options could be discussed further with all parties involved.

The agencies issued a press statement saying all construction within 20 miles of the planned Lake Oahe crossing would cease.

“We appreciate the District Court’s opinion on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ compliance with the National Historic Preser-

vation Act,” said a joint statement issued by the three federal agencies. “However, important issues raised by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other Tribal nations and their members regarding the Dakota Access pipeline specifically, and pipeline-related decision-making generally, remain.

“Therefore ... the Army will not authorize constructing the Dakota Access pipeline on Corps’ land bordering or under Lake Oahe until it can determine whether it will need to reconsider any of its previous decisions regarding the Lake Oahe site under the National Environmental Policy Act or other federal laws.

“Therefore, construction of the pipeline on Army Corps land bordering or under Lake Oahe will not go forward at this time. The Army will move expeditiously to make this determination, as everyone involved – including the pipeline company and its workers – deserves a clear and timely resolution. In the interim, we request that the pipeline company voluntarily pause all construction activity within 20 miles east or west of Lake Oahe.”

News program “Democracy Now” tweeted an interview from the nearby Red Warrior Camp with Native American activist Winona LaDuke in which she said it is time for a national change in how the country regards the business of oil and that is why she traveled to the protest site.

LaDuke, who is the executive director of Honor the Earth and lives on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota, said she was there to support the people.

“It’s time to end the fossil-fuel infrastructure,” said LaDuke. “These people on this reservation they don’t have adequate infrastructure for their houses, they don’t have adequate energy infrastructure, they don’t have adequate highway infrastructure and yet they are looking at a \$3.8 billion pipeline that will not help them. It will only help oil companies. That’s why we’re here. We’re here to protect this land.”

Tribal members urge support

Many Grand Ronde Tribal members took to social media to express their desire to have the Grand Ronde Tribe join other Tribal nations offering letters of support to the Standing Rock Sioux.

Tribal member Lorena Rivera said she wanted her 10-year-old Tribal member daughter Anavey to know that she has a voice and so she urged Tribal Council to declare its support hoping it would set an example.

“I’m happy to see Grand Ronde move in the direction of supporting the Standing Rock,” said Rivera via Facebook Messenger. “I believe that water is sacred like most Natives do. The water and land takes care of us and we need to take care of it for our children and our communities.”

Tribal Elder Adrainne Llaneza

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