

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Chairman Delores Pigsley

During the past month, the Siletz Tribal Council and staff were involved in several important activities.

The Oregonian Visits as Part of "Diversity Policy"

In early May, nine staff members from The Oregonian (including Courtney Thompson, whom many of you know as a principal reporter on Indian affairs) descended on Siletz. Most were here for the first time, and all of them learned about our history and programs, met our staff, and toured our facilities.

The Oregonian selected the Siletz Tribe to help give substance to its policy of recognizing ethnic and cultural diversity. The newspaper is similarly involved with Hispanic, African American, Asian, and other groups.

Tom Maurer, team leader, said The Oregonian wants to make sure Indian issues are written with accurate background information. He said that field trips such as this one to Siletz and orientation sessions The Oregonian staff has had on federal Indian laws and policies are giving them a better basis on which to write Indian articles.

We will see.

National Tribal Conference on Environmental Mgt.

On May 8-11, our tribe hosted the Environmental Protection Agency's Fifth National Tribal Conference on Environmental Management at Chinook Winds. The conference brought together about 600 tribal, state, and federal officials from across the country to tackle various environmental issues that affect Indian tribes.

In my opening comments, I recognized the EPA's efforts in developing greater tribal

understanding and management of environmental issues. I also recognized the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for its efforts to involve tribes in environmental management decisions. The DEQ has been serious about implementing Gov. Kitzhaber's executive order instructing state agencies to deal with tribes on a government-to-government basis.

I expressed the hope that conferences such as this will deepen our understanding of environmental issues and strengthen our tribal and intergovernmental capacity to address them.

Governor's Fee-to-Trust Meeting

At the invitation of Gov. John Kitzhaber, Craig Dorsay and I, along with officials from other Oregon tribes, attended a meeting to discuss fee-to-trust issues.

One of Kitzhaber's concerns was that the current 30-day comment period is insufficient for the state to comment on a tribe's application to put fee land into trust status. The governor's legal counsel, Chip Lazenby, advised that if issues aren't resolved within the time allowed, the state's only recourse is to file its objections officially, which could delay the process.

The governor believes that by extending the current 30-day comment period, issues can be resolved without the state resorting to legal means. He suggested that by extending the comment period, state concerns could be resolved through informal consultations between the tribe and applicable state agencies, i.e., LCDC.

Craig and I expressed the view that especially for terminated tribes, establishing an adequate land base is essential for economic development, and the time factor involved in accomplishing the fee-to-trust process is critical. We said that tribes can't put an option on property, then be forced to go through a lengthy fee-to-trust process. Experience has shown that as soon as it's known that a tribe has targeted a parcel to purchase, the price escalates. This has forced tribes to go through third parties or quickly identify land and purchase it - knowing the fee-to-trust process is lengthy.

Although all tribes are involved in fee-to-trust issues, we pointed out that there are differences between the "landless" coastal tribes that were terminated and those with established reservations in the east. We suggested that specifically for the "landless" tribes on the west side, a need may exist for formulating a special fee-to-trust process.

One frustrated tribal official said discussing the issue further doesn't benefit

tribes at all and questioned the tribes' continued participation. The governor was about to end the meeting, but other tribal officials expressed the need to keep communications flowing in an effort to resolve issues.

I also said that despite difficulties, it was essential we continue the dialogue. After all, we have nothing to lose at this point; it's to our mutual benefit. By the end of the meeting, tribal officials and the governor agreed to continue our dialogue and form work groups to tackle specific issues.

Distorted Media Reports on ECONorthwest Study

In the last issue of Siletz News, I reported on the economic and social impact study conducted by ECONorthwest. Both the Lincoln City and Newport newspapers did a fine job of reporting on the study.

I can't say the same for the Salem Statesman Journal, however. Kari Jensen wrote the article for this newspaper, which distorted some, and omitted other, critical facts. Her report was picked up by the Associated Press and was carried across the country, including The Oregonian. Unfortunately, The Oregonian didn't verify the Associated Press account before printing the article and violated its own "diversity policy."

Jensen wrote that Chinook Winds drew people who would have spent their money elsewhere if the casino had not been there, "resulting in an estimated \$4.8 million loss to local businesses in 1998." She completely ignored ECONorthwest's analysis that "Chinook Winds attracted 475,000 new visitors to the county in 1998 who spent \$14.8 million at local businesses" representing a **net gain** to local non-tribal businesses of **over \$10 million** in 1998.

Mysteriously, Jensen exhumed three members of the now discredited and defunct No-Casino Association of Lincoln City: Lori Hollingsworth, Lisa Voelker, and Leslie Green.

Hollingsworth, the city council member who in 1995 voted against providing city services, including water, to Chinook Winds, tried to cast doubt on the credibility of the study. In fact, the study was conducted by a credible independent economic research firm, the largest in the Northwest.

Voelker, a jeweler, wrote anti-casino articles in the News Guard in a futile attempt to block construction of Chinook Winds. Jensen quotes Voelker as saying "I don't know of anyone jumping up and down because of increased business," failing to mention that Chinook winds was awarded

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