

Chinook tribe has its day in court

The long road to recognition

By **MOLLY SOLOMON**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

TACOMA, Wash. — The Chinook Indian Nation is taking its fight for federal recognition into the courtroom.

U.S. District Court Judge Ronald B. Leighton heard oral arguments and will take the next two weeks to decide if the case moves forward.

The hearing comes after the Chinook hit the Interior Department with a lawsuit in 2017 to force the U.S. government to give the tribe federal status.

The department responded with a motion to dismiss the case. Judge Leighton’s decision could dismiss the case outright or allow some claims to proceed.

Members of the south-west Washington tribe, whose ancestral lands sit at the mouth of the Columbia River, gathered outside the federal courthouse in Tacoma on Tuesday afternoon.

The Chinook beat traditional drums and burned sage to welcome what they hope could be the beginning of a new path toward federal recognition.

A crowd filled the hearing room and the upper balcony shortly after, although



Molly Solomon/Oregon Public Broadcasting

The Chinook Indian Nation gathered outside a federal courthouse in Tacoma to rally support for federal recognition.

some members stayed behind in the main lobby after security denied drum sticks and traditional canes inside the courtroom.

“It’s unbearable to us,” said tribal chairman Tony Johnson, “that our people on our own land are not even acknowledged.”

The battle for recognition is a familiar story for tribal members, who have been fighting for federal status for more than a century.

“The Chinook hired our first lawyers in 1899 to fight about our land issues at home,”

Johnson said. “And here we are, all these years later, fighting this battle.”

The tribe was briefly recognized in 2001, but had its status revoked 18 months later under President George W. Bush.

Federal recognition would allow the Chinook to establish a reservation and gain native fishing rights. Johnson says it would also open up certain health, education and cultural benefits for the tribe’s nearly 3,000 members.

Despite never receiving federal status, the Chinook Indian Nation has played a prom-

inent role in Pacific Northwest history. The tribe guided Lewis and Clark on their journey west. The tribe’s language was used to communicate with white settlers and fur traders. And their name has been lent to a warm breeze, a type of salmon and even a military helicopter.

“Our people have been fighting a war for a heck of a long time,” said tribal elder Joe Brignone, 79, after the hearing.

“It’s something I’ve dreamed since I was a little kid,” he said. “I’d like to see it happen in my lifetime.”

County adopts land use changes in flood-prone areas

Changes a result of new federal requirements

By **JACK HEFFERNAN**
The Daily Astorian

Citing new federal insurance requirements, Clatsop County will soon make alterations to land use rules that will affect several hundred property owners in flood-prone areas.

County commissioners voted unanimously Wednesday to update flood-hazard maps and revise land use rules, including requirements for property owners to pay for a permit when developing their land or seek approval before altering structures. In order for roughly 700 property owners in unin-corporated, flood-prone areas of the county to be eligible for the National Flood Insurance Program, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has mandated the changes.

At a crowded county Planning Commission meeting in March, several people spoke in opposition to the changes. County staff has also fielded hundreds of written comments.

Still, planning commissioners voted 4-1 to recommend the changes, citing the need for the flood insurance program. County residents have been a part of the program since the 1970s.

The county has asked for some regulations to be loosened, but the federal agency did not budge, Community Development Director Gail

Henrikson said. However, the county has discussed combining and lowering the prices of some fees.

The revisions will become effective June 20.

In other business Wednesday, commissioners:

- Agreed unanimously to set a maximum price of \$1.1 million to start construction of a household hazardous-waste facility next to the Astoria Transfer Station on Williamsport Road.

Construction is scheduled to begin in August and finish by January. When completed, the facility will allow residents and qualifying small businesses to drop off hazardous waste, such as pesticides and paint, once a month. After tem-

porary storage, the waste will be transferred to a disposal facility outside of the county.

Commissioners approved a design-build contract with Helligso Construction in 2017. At the time, the proposed 2,500-square-foot facility had an estimated cost of \$600,000.

Initial design estimates, however, were higher than previously budgeted, county Public Health Director Michael McNickle said. Since commissioners approved the project, the state Department of Environmental Quality informed the county of additional underground work that needed to be performed at the former landfill site. The need for structural plies and methane mitigation drove up the project’s price.

Money from the project will come from the county’s special project fund, fee collections at the waste site and loans and grants from the state.

- Held a work session about how to publicize the upcoming \$23.8 million bond measure to relocate the county jail to Warrenton. A representative from DLR Group — the architecture firm that designed the proposed jail — advised commissioners, among other things, to focus most of the campaign between September and the election in November.

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Refillable beer bottles making a comeback

By **CASSANDRA PROFITA**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

In July, seven Oregon craft breweries will start selling beer in reusable glass bottles in the country’s first statewide refillable beer bottle program.

Widmer Brothers, Buoy Beer, Double Mountain, GoodLife, Gigantic, Wild Ride and Rock Bottom breweries will be pioneering the program with some of their beers. Other breweries may join the program later.

The reusable bottles will be on store shelves just like all the other beer, but they’ll look a little different.

The more durable glass bottles will have markings on them to indicate that they can be washed and reused up to 40 times instead of being crushed with the rest of the glass recycling.

The program is being orchestrated by the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, the industry group in charge of collecting and recycling beverage containers for Oregon’s bottle deposit system.

Joel Schoening, a spokesman for the cooperative, said some breweries across the country have launched their own reusable bottle programs. But Oregon’s unique Bottle Bill law, which put the beverage industry in charge of

a statewide bottle collection system, makes a much larger reusable beer bottle program possible here.

“We did use refillable bottles for a long time,” Schoening said. “Because we have the ability to pick that glass up — all those bottles — and get them sorted, we’re in the perfect position to bring back a refillable container.”

The new program will allow consumers to continue returning all their beer bottles the same way they do now, but the refillable ones will be set aside and washed instead of being crushed. Refillable bottles returned to collection machines will be rejected and will need to be hand-counted for a deposit refund.

Initially the participating breweries will use 500-milliliter — or about 17-ounce — refillable bottles before adding 12-ounce bottles by fall.

Until Oregon gets its own glass bottle-washing facility, the refillable containers will be trucked to a facility in Montana to be washed. Schoening said the system should still save money and release much fewer carbon emissions than glass recycling, which involves heating crushed glass to melt it.

“Each time the bottle gets reused it saves money,” he said. “And the more times we use that bottle, the lower the carbon footprint is on that container.”

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