

Curated: The Wave served 29,000 hot meals in 2020

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tribally sourced and cooked salmon at the University of Oregon's Autzen Stadium. They worked to get local salmon on the menu, while simultaneously giving community vendors a chance to network and grow, showing off their products.

Jeffrey Mora — a fellow co-founder of The Wave, former executive chef for the Los Angeles Lakers and CEO of Food Fleet — says they worked tirelessly to meet the needs of both the tribal communities, as well as those on the business side of the university. They believed that a launching pad, such as Autzen, could be a proving ground for their model to help support local businesses. They aimed to assist farmers, fishermen, restaurants and transportation. Anything involved with getting food to people, specifically to assist and lift up BIPOC communities.

"Local, to me, is more regional than local," Mora said. "It doesn't necessarily have to be 10 miles, 20 miles, 30 miles right? There's local, there's hyper-local, there's regional. Supporting the food system as a whole, regionally, is more the key."

Quantity over quality

After historic floods in February 2020 wrecked areas of Pendleton, Elliott says the reservation was prompted to help its neighbors.

Just as they were recovering from the floods, COVID-19 hit. The reservation's Wildhorse Resort & Casino closed and 800-plus community employees were out of work. Elliott says the tribe allocated money toward food relief as the reservation began buying food in bulk from Sysco through the USDA's program.

It became quickly appar-



The Wave Foundation/Contributed Photo

Volunteers assist in distributing The Wave Foundation food boxes, USDA food boxes and bottles of water to CTUIR members at a drive-thru distribution site in Mission on Dec. 30, 2020.

ent to Elliott, however, that the food being offered by the USDA wasn't nutritional.

While the dairy products were suitable, Elliott says the protein options were a red flag. She recalls several batches of "chicken" taco meat that she believed was fake.

"If that's all you're gonna send us, we don't want it," she said. "It didn't look real to me. (It looked) awful, I wouldn't even feed that to my dog, if I had a dog."

Despite the discontent, nothing changed. Elliott says the USDA never made direct contact with the community. The reservation continued to take anything and everything they could get, often donating the unwanted proteins to the Salvation Army.

"I think that's where the issue is particularly poignant when you think of communities of color, because it's one thing to be given a box of food this month that has things in

it that you kind of think, 'Eh, I don't really want to eat that, it's not what I'm used to,'" Edwards said. "But if month after month that's what you're getting, that's bad right? Maybe even harmful to your health?"

Zeulner and his associates worked to provide sustainable options to target communities. In July 2020, the reservation became one of The Wave's first long-term clients.

Curated with care

The Wave and members of the reservation had a previous relationship. The Wave had bought fish from their Tribes' fisheries in the past, which Elliott says created a favorable template for the two sides to work together the second time around.

The Wave's partner, Food Fleet, headed by Mora, works alongside The Wave to craft healthy and sustainably-sourced food box compo-

nents. Before the reservation had even started working with the USDA, The Wave provided the community with monthly food box distributions. The boxes included a vast selection of fresh produce, some of which the community members had never seen or tried, and ultimately, declined to eat, Elliott said.

But The Wave was bringing nutritional options. So, the reservation upscaled its collaboration with The Wave through fall and winter as it too changed its approach.

Elliott said The Wave not only began bringing more food — nearly 700 boxes a month with biweekly distributions — but came to the table with a community-oriented approach that differed greatly from other programs.

For Zeulner, Mora and their Wave counterparts, it's just the type of implementation they envisioned.

"That's a coalition, right,"

Zeulner said. "A coalition is one that welcomes the masses and says, 'How can we help you? You know we're in this together?'"

Elliott recalls a story she heard from a fellow community member about an afternoon that Wave workers spent with tribal elders learning how to prepare salmon using tribal techniques. She says the elders taught The Wave members how to clean and filet salmon before showing them how to properly can the fish.

"The (Wave) chefs said they would never look at salmon the same way again," Elliott said. "I really like that they were willing to learn and didn't step in and say, 'Well that's not how you do it.' They were willing to learn how we do it. They're great people and they're genuine, which is pretty important to us."

Despite the possibility of an extension as The Wave awaits further grant funding, the reservation is set to work with The Wave until April 2021. Even if that were to be the last time the parties work hand-in-hand, Elliott feels confident that The Wave has left a lasting impression.

A model built to last

In partnership with The Wave, Food Fleet has applied to become a licensed distributor through the USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box Program. Zeulner said if granted, the organization plans to bring its model to the USDA's operation in hopes of expanding to the national scale.

According to The Wave's 2020 annual report, the coalition served more than 143,000 meal equivalents and over 29,000 hot meals in the last year.

As food security continues to plague the nation, disproportionately skewed toward

BIPOC communities, Zeulner said The Wave is seeking continued grant-sourced funding that could enable them to extend community support from May to December of 2021. In conjunction with the drive for further funding, The Wave plans to begin serving Tribal Nation members in the Portland-metro region, as well as communities and tribes in the Spokane, Colville and Puget Sound areas of Washington.

The Wave has a vision outside of the Pacific Northwest as well. Zeulner said they are exploring branching out south toward Los Angeles where they could impact and serve Latino community members in addition to African American and Tribal Nation members living in Central and South Los Angeles neighborhoods.

Zeulner said they are presenting their model to stakeholders within the Biden administration, Congress and USDA with the intent to land a national pilot which would "encompass 20 markets and focused primarily on Tribal Nation communities."

"We don't want to waste time," Zeulner said. "We want to be laser focused as an aggregate and a community on the things that matter the most. And once we get those accomplished, we'll move on to the next one."

This story was developed as part of the Catalyst Journalism Project at the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication. Catalyst brings together investigative reporting and solutions journalism to spark action and response to Oregon's most perplexing issues. To learn more visit Journalism.UOregon.edu/Catalyst or follow the project on Twitter @UO_catalyst.

Energy:

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nomah County Circuit Court on April 5 stating the project would cease construction and the company would ask the Energy Facility Siting Council to terminate the project's state-issued permit.

"We think this is a huge win for the climate," said Erin Saylor, an attorney for Columbia Riverkeeper. "Hopefully it shows developers that Oregon is just not a place for new fossil fuel infrastructure."

The subject of the groups' lawsuit, Perennial-Wind-Chaser LLC, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Perennial Power Holdings. Perennial Power Holdings did not return an email requesting confirmation of its plans to cancel the project.

Court records available online regarding the lawsuit do not include the letter, but do note that a hearing on the company's motion to dismiss the lawsuit was canceled on April 6 as "stipulated by parties."

The hearing on April 6 would have presented oral arguments before the Multnomah County Circuit Court, where Columbia Riverkeeper and Friends of the Columbia River Gorge had filed a petition for judicial review against Perennial and the Oregon Department of Energy.

The groups alleged the state violated its own rules by allowing Perennial to begin construction without obtaining proper permits and approval from the Energy Facility Siting Council, which is staffed by the ODOE.

Critics say the company rushed to begin construction and meet the regulatory deadline to avoid millions of dollars in emissions fees under Gov. Kate Brown's latest executive order on climate change.

The plant would have emitted more than 1 million tons of greenhouse gases per year, according to news reports, making it one of the state's largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Only a few other power plants produce more.

Saylor said that environmental health in Eastern

Oregon will benefit from Perennial's decision to abandon the project.

"Not just the greenhouse gas emissions associated with it, but all the particulate matter and other associated pollutants that would have come out of this facility are not going to be happening now," she said.

And for Hermiston residents, Saylor said the change means that "their city won't become a dumping ground for these plants."

The project was proposed in an area outside of Hermiston near where two gas power plants currently stand — the Hermiston Power Proj-

have to reapply for a new site certificate from EFSC if it did not begin construction on the project by Sept. 23, 2020. To meet that deadline, Perennial began construction of a road despite not having a required stormwater permit from the Department of Environmental Quality.

Jennifer Kalez, communications director for Oregon Department of Energy, told the *East Oregonian* in October 2020 that DEQ could choose to take enforcement action against Perennial for being out of compliance with its rules, but that the permit was not one of the "precon-

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ect, owned and operated by Calpine Corporation, and the Hermiston Generating Project. Perennial Power Holdings is a co-owner and operator of Hermiston Generating Project, a 474-megawatt natural gas plant.

In an interview with the *East Oregonian* in 2015, David Daley, speaking as Perennial Power Holdings' senior vice president of operations and development, said while the proposed Perennial Wind Chaser project was a natural gas plant, its primary goal was to support renewable energy in the area. The plant would be able to power up in as little as 10 minutes, he said, as a way to quickly and reliably backfill other sources of energy when, for example, the wind stops blowing at an Eastern Oregon wind farm.

The project received its site certificate from the Energy Facility Siting Council in 2015, but it finally broke ground in September 2020, when developers started clearing land for a road at the site to meet a regulatory deadline.

According to the lawsuit filed by Columbia Riverkeeper and Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Perennial would

struction" conditions that Perennial was required to meet in order to meet EFSC's Sept. 23, 2020, deadline.

The project was the last of several proposals for new gas-fired power plants in Oregon that have been canceled over the past five years, and now, "no proposals to build any new gas-fired power plants in Oregon remain pending with" the state, according to environmentalists.

Saylor said it's "very likely this will be the last proposed gas-fired power plant that we see in Oregon" because of the political and social climate and clean energy bills moving through the Oregon Legislature.

"Just five years ago, several proposals for new gas-fired power plants threatened to harm air quality in the Columbia River Gorge and exacerbate climate change, but public opposition to each of these projects has prevailed," said Nathan Baker, an attorney for Friends of the Columbia Gorge. "We hope and expect that Oregon's future begins today, free of new fossil fuel power plants, which are dirty dinosaurs of a bygone era."

BMCC:

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budget and hierarchy the last time she was in charge of BMCC in an interim capacity, between the tenures of Cam Preus and Dennis Bailey-Fougner in 2019.

But at the time, Green said, the BMCC Board of Education wanted her to keep everything in place so that the next president could make the necessary decisions. The board went on to hire Bailey-Fougner, who recommended eliminating 23 positions, including 11 layoffs.

When she returned in March following Bailey-Fougner's abrupt resignation, Green knew more budget cuts would be needed to make up for a \$1.9 million shortfall, and this time, the board empowered her to work with staff to make more structural changes.

As a part of the planned changes, BMCC will cut 16 positions, including 11 layoffs. Among the layoffs, BMCC is looking at laying off seven people in supervisory roles, three faculty members and one assistant.

One of the trends that necessitated the layoffs was the college's declining enrollment, Green said.

According to the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission, BMCC saw its enrollment nearly halved from 2012 to 2019, shrinking from 4,142 students to 2,185. In 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment fell to 1,561.

But Green isn't just overseeing another round of layoffs, but a complete restructuring of the college's administration.

Instead of a team of five vice presidents who report directly to the president, Green is recommending reducing the number of administrators directly under the president to two — an executive vice president and a chief operating officer.

Under the new organizational chart, Vice President of Instruction John Fields would become executive vice president, overseeing all departments related to student services and instruc-



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

BMCC plans on cutting 16 positions in its next budget as it looks to restructure some of its top jobs.

tion. David Shellberg, the vice president of administrative services, would transition to chief operating officer, managing less front-facing departments like finance, human resources, technology and facilities.

There are also changes further down the supervisory tree, with all deans being asked to reapply for their jobs because their roles are changing and BMCC is outsourcing its grant, marketing and disability services to the InterMountain Education Service District.

Green maintained that the layoffs and restructuring had nothing to do with individual employee performance and was instead a part of a process of "right sizing" BMCC for future growth.

But not everyone on the faculty agrees with the college's decisions.

Sheri Jordan, an English instructor, said she was one of the faculty members who was informed that she was slated to be laid off over the summer.

Working her fourth year at BMCC and nearing tenure, Jordan said she felt more a sense of sorrow than bitterness.

"It feels like a cheap shot from the college," she said.

Jordan remembers her endeavor to assign free online resources instead of textbooks to save students money and her efforts during the pandemic to keep students engaged as classes moved online, trying to put students first.

Ki Russell, the co-chair of the writing department, said Jordan's impending layoff would also be a blow to the

whole department. Jordan teaches the college's remedial writing courses, critical classes for students trying to get a GED or play catch-up as they work on their associate's degree. Without Jordan, Russell said she doesn't know how she'll offer those courses, much less continue to offer other popular courses like literature and philosophy.

"This will hurt our most vulnerable and marginalized students," she said.

Pete Hernberg, a math instructor and the president of the college's faculty union, is in the midst of negotiating the layoffs with BMCC's administration.

Hernberg said BMCC has less of a budget problem and more of an enrollment problem. He added that the college could use the money it received over multiple rounds of federal stimulus to keep BMCC whole over the next few years, using the extra time to work on its recruiting and retention efforts.

Under the plan Green and the staff put together, BMCC would direct stimulus funds to create temporary jobs that worked on outreach to lapsed college students and high school students and the creation of an unmanned aerial systems certification program. Laid off staff would get first pass at filling these jobs.

The BMCC board was set to meet on Friday, April 16, to approve the administrative restructuring. Following that, the board is scheduled to meet next on May 5, where some staff and students are planning to speak in favor of faculty.