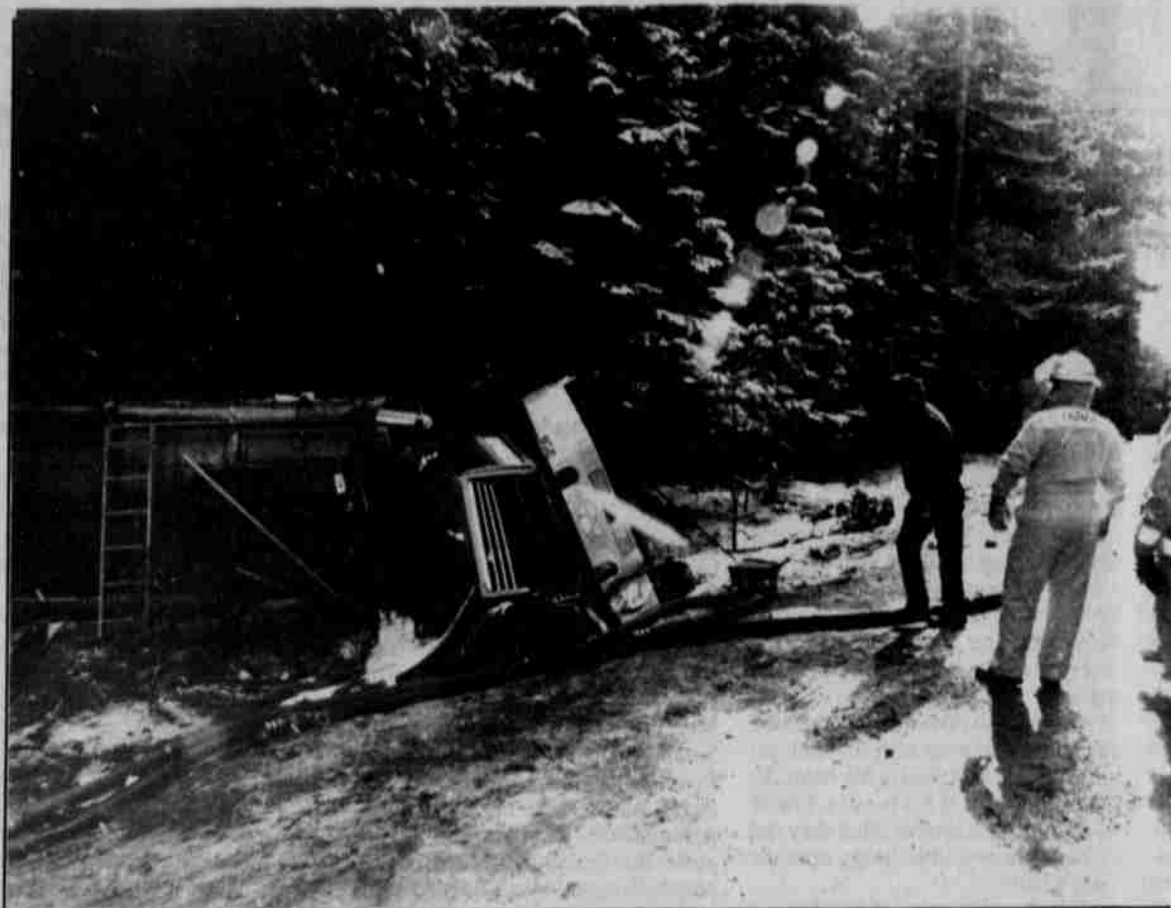


## Gas spill rocks Beaver Creek

### Impact could be felt for years



ATI tanker rests on its side while workers prepare to empty the remaining fuel.

A potential environmental disaster struck in the early morning hours on Thursday, March 4, on Highway 26, near mile post 77, about 26 miles north of Warm Springs. An American Transport Inc. (ATI) tanker truck overturned, spilling approximately 5,000 gallons of gasoline fuel into Beaver Creek, a tributary of the Warm Springs River.

Traffic had to be rerouted in Madras to Highway 97, until Highway 26 could be opened again. Icy road conditions may have contributed to the accident. Don Courtney, public information officer for the Warm Springs Department of Public Safety, said the ATI tanker driver was cited for reckless driving.

Tribal, State, and Federal officials evaluated environmental damage to Beaver Creek over the weekend. The state Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) resources were stretched thin because of the New Carissa spill on the Oregon coast. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the DEQ participated in the clean-up, walking the banks of the creek and assessing damages.

Clay Penhollow, Incident Information Officer for the tribe, said, "By 5 p.m. Saturday evening 3/6/99, approximately 6,700 fish had been found dead

in Beaver and Beaver Butte creeks with more expected to be collected in coming days. About 700 of these are culturally significant species of spring chinook, steelhead and rainbow trout." Other native fish and wildlife species found include dace, numerous sculpin, crayfish, a tail frog and rough skin newts (a relative to the salamander), as well as several water insects which are utilized by other species as a food source."

The spill prompted a mass exodus of fish at the Warm Springs National Fish

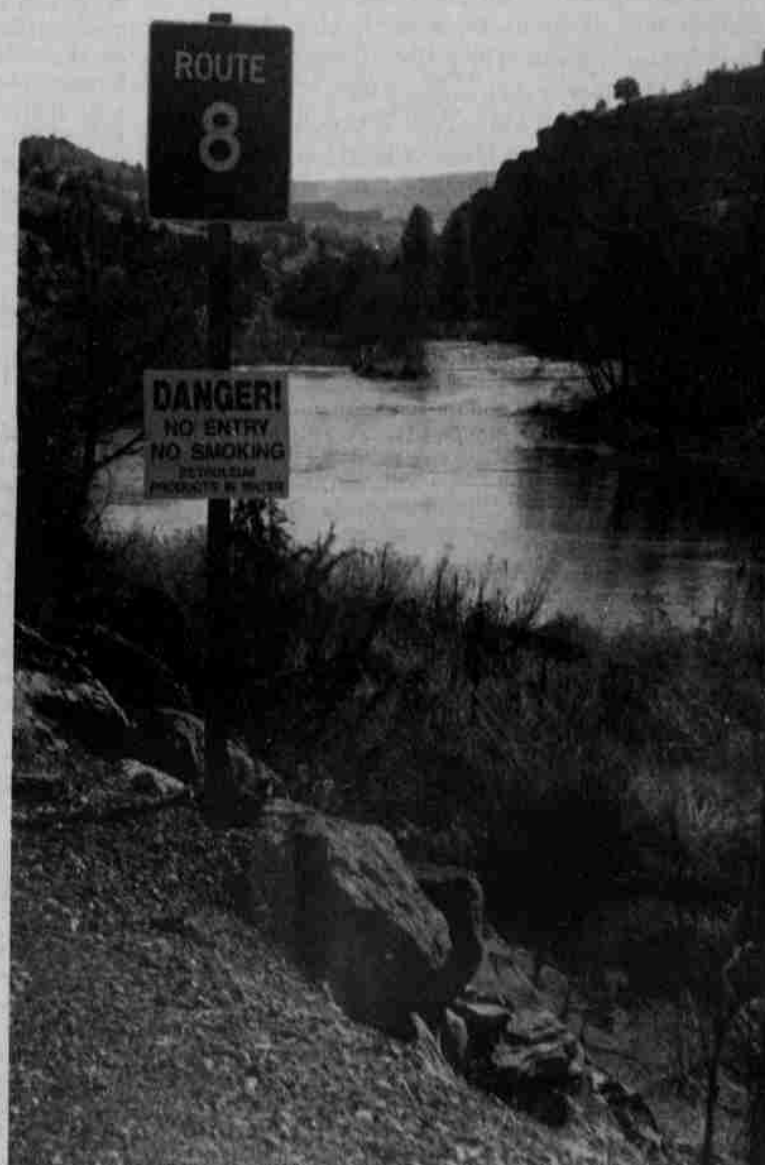
Hatchery. Mike Paiya, Project Leader of the hatchery, said, "We took action by closing the water entrance of the Warm Springs River into the hatchery fish tanks. WE had to release 760,000 smolts into the Warm Springs River." Paiya said the hatchery also moved recently hatched fry to the Round Butte Hatchery because of the concern for effects on chinook salmon. The decision was difficult in balancing the need of the fish with the potential contamination of the hatchery facility. The fry will be returned to the Warm Springs Hatchery when it is deemed safe.

Moving the fry is very stressful and can be deadly. It will be some time before it is known how many fry were lost in the both moves. The spill incident has brought several agencies and organizations together, and exemplifies the good working relationship with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Initial response to the site was by the Warm Springs Police, and by Warm Springs Fire and Safety, Warm Springs Environmental Officer, Oregon State Police, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Redmond Hazardous Materials Team.

The Confederated Tribes effort

included personnel from the Natural Resources Branch, including the departments of Fish and Wildlife, Water and Soil, Forestry, Fire Management, Range and Agriculture, and Resource Planning. Due to the trust relationship and responsibility of the U.S. Government, federal agencies represented included the Interior Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and USFWS, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). State agencies involved or advising were Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), ODFW and ODOT.

ATI, through their insurance company AIG, contracted special and technical services of Portland and Seattle environmental resource companies Secor, Olympus, Polaris Applied Science and North Creek Analytical to assist with resource damage assessment, site cleanup, mitigation and restoration. Soil and water sampling, fish and wildlife collection, cleanup and repairs will continue for a few more days, with future analysis of the habitat to continue for several months.



Warning signs were placed along the Warm Springs River near the Kah-Nee-Ta turn off.



Recently hatched Fry are hauled by truck to the Round Butte Hatchery.



Fire and safety personnel blocked traffic on highway 26 and the Simnasho turn off.