

# Snowplow drivers keep the reservation running

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Cleaning up heavy snow fall on reservation roads is a lot like fighting a wildfire—12 hours shifts on, 12 hour shifts off—until the situation is under control.

During school days, two shifts start at 4 a.m. to clear the school bus routes and two more start during the regular working hours to clear the rest of the roads.

"We're kind of short staffed when you get a really, really big storm like this one has been," says Tom Shuman, BIA roads engineer.

Twelve hour shifts are mandated to give snow plow operators some time to rest and recover from the stress and tension of their job. It's important to keep the driver's safe and alert when they're moving that kind of heavy equipment around snow covered highways.

"Twice we've had to turn down calls at about 10 p.m. because the people just aren't rested and aren't capable of operating the equipment safely at the time," Shuman says.

Sure it's upsetting to the per-



Snowplow clears roadway at highways 26 and 3.

Dave McMechan/Spilyay

son who can't move around that night, but it'd probably be more upsetting if the driver was so tired he made a mistake and hurt himself or someone else.

According to Shuman, one of the most wearing parts of driving a plow is the level of concentration that has to be maintained: "It's really tough to

be driving a snowplow and have that big cloud of [powder] snow come up in front of you and then...Where's the road at and how do you make contact?...so they're constantly looking for little roadside markers telling them where to keep the plow in the road. In a winter storm it's really, really tough to see where

you're going out there."

It's not all short hours and pushing snow around on reservation roads—there's some maintenance involved.

"Last night we stayed about an hour late and changed the cutting edges on the snowplows," Shuman says, "so they have nice fresh edges and they're

ready to go [in the morning]."

The bottom edge of the snowplow is about a one inch thick piece of rubber that keeps it from gouging into the pavement and causing damage to the surface.

The rubber wears out after hours of use and needs to be changed. When this happens, 11 bolts holding the rubber to the bottom edge of the plow are removed, the rubber is turned over and tightened back down once more.

When the sanding trucks have been refilled. They are gassed up and parked in the shop for the night. The shop has a heated floor so all the snow and ice falls off and the truck is ready to go first thing in the morning.

It wasn't just the plow drivers running around on the snow covered roads. Several people from the Engineering Department have been running fuel back and forth to the plows to keep them on the road as much as possible.

The Road Department has three snowplows/sanders, two road graders and a backhoe covering about two hundred miles of school bus routes. That is

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their responsibility. That's all they're equipped for.

Driveways are a different matter. They're handled by the Utilities Department under Herb Graybael, 553-3246.

"It's terrible because we're watching someone shovel out his driveway and we drive by with a snowplow and drop a load right in the middle of his driveway," Shuman says, "but it's all we have time to do. Then other people come along behind us with other equipment and clean out the driveway."

So don't call the Road Department when you're driveway is full of snow. It wastes everybody's time. Give the Utilities Department a call and then 'hang on,' they'll be there as soon as they can.

## Top news: government agreements, council changes

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Most importantly, The Oregonian articles have prompted tribal officials to look closely at the programs on the reservation that serve the local youth.

Early this month, Tribal Council is to hear recommendations from staff regarding possible changes to the child welfare system of the reservation.

### Third

On a brighter note the tribes did experience some good financial news during 2003.

Through the Confederated Tribes, Warm Springs Power Enterprises conducted a \$50 million bond issuance that will pay for the purchase of the tribes' share of the Pelton hydroelectric project.

The bond issuance helps to stabilize Power Enterprises' revenue to the Confederated Tribes general fund.

There were some delays in issuing the bonds, due to the volatile energy market, and other factors beyond the tribes' control.

But the transaction happened in the fall. Having a more stable revenue stream from Power Enterprises is important because, of the tribal enterprises, Power Enterprises is by far the largest contributor to the tribes' general fund. And the general fund is responsible for the day to day operation of the tribal government.

The bond issuance will repay the money the tribes borrowed in early 2001 from Pelton co-owner Portland General Electric (PGE).

The \$50 million in bonds will be repaid over a 30-year term.

And the interest rate is excellent. This is the first tribal bond issuance on the Pelton project.

### Fourth

During 2003, the Confederated Tribes finalized wide- and long-ranging agreements with a number of federal and state agencies. The agreements cover the management of land and water resources.

#### Boater permits

Probably the most contentious of these agreements was in regard to the adoption of a permit system for boaters on the Lower Deschutes.

In November of last year the tribes reached a tentative agreement on this issue with the BLM and Oregon State Parks.

The agreement calls for implementation of a permit system starting in 2005.

The agreement, to be finalized by the U.S. Department of Justice, would limit the number of boaters floating a section of river from Warm Springs to Harpham Flat, beginning July 1 of 2005.

The agreement concludes a lawsuit filed by a private citizen, that the tribes had become party to. The suit was filed by Tualatin resident Mark Shuholm, who alleged that state and federal agencies had ignored portions of the Lower Deschutes River Management Plan, mandating a limited-entry permit system when target levels are repeatedly exceeded.

The tribes intervened on Shuholm's behalf.

When the permit system is implemented, according to the agreement among the tribes and the state and federal agencies,

permits would be allocated through a common pool, meaning the general public and commercial outfitters and guides would compete for permits on an equal basis. River guides and local governments along the river had expressed their opposition to a permit system.

#### Ceded lands

During 2003, the Confederated Tribes finalized a written management agreement with seven national forests and the BLM. The land these agencies manage is within the traditional, lands of the tribes.

The tribes' traditional, or ceded lands include a large area well beyond the borders of the reservation. By the Treaty of 1855 the tribes gave up some interest in this area, but the treaty also guarantees to tribal members certain rights and interests on the ceded lands.

The ceded lands can be defined in general terms as north Central Oregon. The tribes have many cultural interests within this area. Interests include water, fish and wildlife, roots, berries and other plants, and cultural sites.

The federal government manages part of the ceded lands, through the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The forest service and BLM make decisions that can affect tribal interests in the land.

For this reason it is important that the tribes and the federal agencies work together to protect these interests.

In the past the Confederated Tribes had a written agreement—a memorandum of understanding, or MOU—with the Ochoco National Forest. In

2003 the tribes concluded an agreement with the national forests and BLM districts that encompass all the ceded lands.

#### Water rights

Early in 2003 tribal officials gathered in a courtroom at the Deschutes County Courthouse. It was a rare if not unique scene: tribal leaders singing traditional songs in the courtroom.

The ceremony concluded a court hearing that marked the conclusion of more than 20 years of government negotiation. The court proceeding was in regard to the Confederated Tribes' water rights agreement.

At the hearing the judge signed the order making the terms of the agreement binding on all water rights holders in the Deschutes River basin.

The Confederated Tribes hold the oldest water right in the Deschutes basin, as provided in the Treaty of 1855.

A problem has been establishing a quantity in regard to the right.

The water rights agreement provides the tribes with both in-stream and consumptive water rights. The quantity of water is large, reflecting the fact that tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation are fishing tribes.

### Fifth

The current year is a Tribal Council election year, but 2003 saw some changes in membership of the council.

First, former Tribal Council Chair Olney Patt Jr. resigned to take the job of executive director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC). Garland Brunoe was then appointed Council chair, and Councilman Ron Suppah became vice chair.

The vacancy on the Council was filled by Earl Squemphen, who was first runner-up in the previous election.

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