

Pine trees sacred to Washoe die in Nevada

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — For thousands of years, American Indians carefully tended stands of pinon pines in Nevada. The Washoe people would gather nuts in the Pine Nut Mountains and use them throughout the year to toast and make powder, stews and salves. Surviving climate changes, stands of the odd-looking trees with twisting branches and stiff needles spread through the West. But a recent phenomenon

has scientists concerned. A few years ago, researchers in several Western states started noticing shorter needles on the pines and black-powdery substances around them. Then the trees started dying. "When you see those start dying, they're beyond just dry," said Kelly Redmond, climatologist with the Western Regional Climate Center in Reno. "They belong here. They're adapted to dry conditions. When

they start showing stress, they're telling you there's more stress than usual." Tree experts are trying to determine what is killing off hundreds of pinons, the state tree of Nevada. "People are starting to very much watch these patterns of mortality," said Connie Millar, research geneticist at the Institute of Forest Genetics for the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station.

"We're looking at a regionwide phenomenon." In one grove south of Gardnerville along U.S. 395, as many as 20 percent of the trees have died in the past few years. Scientists investigating the tree deaths are focusing on the effects of a four-year drought that has gripped northern Nevada and neighboring states. With a decent snowpack and recent wet storms, the area could finally see some relief this

year, experts say. "We're off to a good start here," said Douglas LeComte, drought specialist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association Climate Prediction Center in Washington, D.C. "If it continues, it will make a significant difference." Snow-water-content readings in the mountains around the Carson-Walker watersheds are showing 125 percent to 150 percent of normal, LeComte said. The area could still take a turn and end up like the past four years, though, with warmer weather and below-normal precipitation predicted for the next few weeks.

Ideal climate conditions of summer moisture and warmer winters allowed the climate-sensitive pinons to flourish in the dry, rocky soils of the northern parts of the state for 200 years. Eighty-five percent of the trees in this area began growing from 1825 to 1850, researchers in Reno estimate. Scientists with the US Forest Service in Reno will monitor pinons south of Gardnerville to determine the long-term effects of changes in climate on tree mortality of both single-needle pinon and Utah junipers.

Tribe endorses presidential candidate

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Democratic presidential hopeful Wesley Clark won the endorsement Monday of an American Indian tribe based in rival Howard Dean's home state.

The Abenaki Nation at Missisquoi, which has never endorsed a presidential candidate, has about 4,000 members in Vermont, about 2,000 in New Hampshire and smaller numbers in Maine, Massachusetts and Quebec.

Leaders acknowledged their decision was as much a statement against their former governor as for Clark.

"It's a give-and-take. We need General Clark to get our message out," said tribal historian Frederick Wiseman.

As governor, Dean opposed state and federal recognition for the Abenaki, saying it could lead to extensive legal battles over land claims and might allow Abenaki to build casinos in Vermont.

But Chief April Rushlow said the tribe is seeking recognition for other benefits, including

scholarships to Vermont schools. "He didn't do anything for our native people," she said of Dean. "I hear him talk about education, but our children can't apply for scholarships earmarked for Native Americans."

A spokesman for Dean said no other governor worked as closely with the Abenaki descendants as Dean did to promote their economic progress, education and cultural development.

"The state of Vermont has differed with Abenaki descendants based on concerns about the prospect of bringing casino style gambling to Vermont," Matthew Gardner said. "Governor Dean is personally opposed to introducing gaming in his home state, believing that it would change the culture of Vermont, but he respects and will uphold the right of federally recognized tribes to engage in gaming where it is legal."

Clark, who joined the Abenaki leaders at the Museum of New Hampshire History, promised to help protect histori-

cal Indian sites, promote inclusiveness and provide more federal help to tribes like the Abenaki.

"Native Americans are the first Americans," he said. "I will not let you down."

Dean has been endorsed by former Cherokee Chief Wilma Mankiller — who leads his Native American Advisory Council — and by the chief executive of Stonyfield Farm, the yogurt company Clark visited earlier Monday.

Focusing on working women, Clark told employees he would increase penalties for gender-based discrimination, raise the minimum wage and support families through a variety of proposals.

Clark also proposes raising the minimum wage to \$7 an hour over seven years, expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act to smaller companies and increasing funding for child care.

Clark spoke to the workers after touring the yogurt company, which started as a two-

man, five cow business in 1983 and has become the nation's third-largest yogurt brand with annual sales of approximately \$150 million.

During his visit he suggested the company look into creating a shelf-stable yogurt that could be served to soldiers and tried the company's newest product, "Moo-la-la," a premium organic yogurt.

"It doesn't make me want to put crumbly things in it," he said after polishing off a carton of White Chocolate Raspberry. "I like yogurt the way it is."

Fort Hall officials reach MOA to bolster economic development

FORT HALL, Idaho (AP) — Power County and Shoshone-Bannock tribal officials have signed a memorandum, agreeing they will work together for economic development.

The two government entities will meet quarterly to discuss issues including economic opportunities and planning and

zoning. The FMC Corp. site, an idled phosphorus plant west of Pocatello, is on the docket, tribal officials said.

The site, which employed a significant number of tribal members, is both in Power County and on the Fort Hall Indian reservation.

The agreement is not the first

between Power County and the tribes.

Two years ago, the groups signed a memorandum of understanding concerning law enforcement jurisdiction for traffic offenses on the reservation. That agreement was renewed this year.

Kucinich vows to heal wounds

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Dennis Kucinich presented the spiritual leader of the Lakota tribe with a ceremonial blanket Sunday, saying that as president he would work to heal wounds between the government and American Indians.

Kucinich, one of nine candidates seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, met with Arvol Looking Horse during a diversity celebration at a downtown hotel, blocks from where a Democratic debate was to be held later in the evening.

"I pledge to you a presidency that embraces the spirit of be-

ing of America long before it was established as the United States, but an America which connects with the values of Native Americans to the Mother Earth," Kucinich told Looking Horse.

The Ohio congressman said he would work to heal the breach that exists between the government and American Indians.

"There is much so healing to do," he said, noting their long suffering at the hands of the U.S. government.

Looking Horse, who gave a blessing in his native language,

said America needs a president who will honor the original intent of the Constitution.

"We need a person who can make a difference and bring peace and honor back to Mother Earth," he said.

Looking Horse, of the Eagle Butte, S.D.-based Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, is the 19th Generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Pipe of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota nations.

A diverse crowd of about 100 people, spanning all ages and ethnic groups, crowded into the hotel meeting room.

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