

Tribes seek solutions to green energy demands

(AP) - By 2025, Oregon must get a quarter of its electricity from renewable resources, as required by a law passed last session by the state Legislature. On the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, the tribes are looking at a variety of ways to tap the reservation's resources to generate green energy, in part to meet the state's expected need.

There's a new biomass plant in the permitting stage, studies on the prospects of wind power are under way, and the tribes are even considering geothermal potential on the reservation.

"We're pursuing renewable energy pretty aggressively in terms of looking at what we have," said Jim Manion, general manager of Warm Springs Power & Water Enterprises. "Our charge is to look at what energy resources we have on the reservation, and what can they do to help today's tribal government."

And the new biomass facility, in which the tribes would burn woody debris as a fuel to generate power, is first on its list.

Although Warm Springs already has a biomass plant, it is planning to build a new one that

would produce more than five times the power.

The fuel supply for the facility, which would come from thinning small trees out of overcrowded forests, has been approved by the tribal council, Manion said. Now the facility, which has been designed to generate about 15.8 megawatts - enough power for more than 12,000 homes - is in the middle of the permitting process.

Warm Springs is also working on finalizing a deal with investors for the \$45 million project to fund the new facility, said Cal Mukumoto, manager with the Warm Springs Biomass Project LLC. He said he hoped to have the financing settled in early 2008, at which point construction could go forward.

"Hopefully, toward the end of 2009 we'll be on the grid," Mukumoto said.

Further down the road, the tribes are looking at the possibility of setting up a wind farm on the reservation.

"We've identified that there is enough wind energy on the reservation for some form of a commercial wind development

farm," Manion said.

In the Mutton Mountain area in the northeast corner of the reservation, the tribes have studied both the wind potential and the topography. Even by just looking at the area, though, trees are strong indicators of the wind, he said, and in that part of the reservation they show positive signs.

"We have trees in the Mutton Mountain area that are almost flat on one side," Manion said.

The tribes are now starting a new series of studies that will look at the environmental impacts of a commercial facility, he said. The study will include what roadwork would need to be done to transport the big turbines up to a facility, and what kind of effect it might have on the area's bird population, he said.

"It's to determine if it is viable, not just on a resources basis, but on an environmental basis as well," Manion said.

Warm Springs has also taken a preliminary look at the potential for tapping underground heat and steam as geothermal power, he said.

Deputies reduce substance abuse at Chemewa

SALEM (AP) - Violence, drug use and drinking at Chemewa Indian School have dropped dramatically under an arrangement that has Marion County Sheriff's deputies providing security.

Three full-time deputies have patrolled the school's 400-acre campus north of Salem since the beginning of 2006, Deputy Sheriff Heath Nelson said.

Fights dropped by half during the 2006-07 school year compared with the year

before, and assaults were reduced by 44 percent, according to the school's statistics. Drug and alcohol abuse also continued a yearslong decline.

There were 124 incidents involving drugs or alcohol in the 2006-07 school year, compared with 173 the year before and 423 in 2003-04.

The federal government pays for the three deputies, and a quarter of the salary for a sergeant to oversee them deputies, a total of about \$268,000 per year.

Most Marion County deputies are cross-deputized as U.S. marshals so they can enforce the law on the school property, which is considered federal territory.

"Before now, nobody had jurisdiction over these lands," said Jon Claymore, the supervisor of the Chemewa Indian School for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. "It proved a real problem, no one having responsibility for the safety of staff and students. This has been a long time coming."



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