



# Spilyay Tymoo

P.O. Box 870  
Warm Springs, OR 97761

OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
1230 SW PARK AVE.  
PORTLAND, OR 97205

PRSR STD  
Warm Springs, OR 97761

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## Partial mill closure displaces workers

Tribal Council last week directed the initiation of steps necessary for a conditional closure of the Warm Springs Forest Products Industries lumber mill.

How many jobs will be lost as a result of the closure was not yet clear as of earlier this week. The mill closure is necessary because of sagging timber and lumber prices, and by years of unprofitable operations, tribal officials said.

In the years since 2000, the mill was able to make a profit only at the high point of the lumber market.

Losses at the mill over a recent seven-year period, from 2000-2006, totaled \$9.8 million. Without subsidy

from the Confederated Tribes, the mill would have been forced to close a long time ago, officials said.

"This is not a complete shutdown" said Ron Suppah, chairman of the Tribal Council. "We will keep a reduced crew to carry out chipping operations that are currently profitable along with other opportunities that may arise until we come up with a long range plan. The Tribe has 400,000 acres of forest and we need some time to determine how this valuable resource can be best used for the benefit of tribal members."

"Warm Springs Forest Products has some of the most dedicated employ-

ees in the sawmilling business," said Mark Jackson, mill chief executive officer. "The impact to us, our families and the community will be a heavy blow. Extremely adverse market conditions have made it economically unfeasible to maintain historic mill operations."

The conditions, he said, include a severe downturn in the housing markets expected to extend deep into 2009; eleven months of unsold homes; months of primary and secondary manufacturing inventories, prompting some purchasers to cancel or delay orders; a reduced forest harvest, and steadily declining log size that the mill

was not designed to run.

The current mill, he said, is aging and has production costs that are much higher than competing high volume mills that move logs through at a much faster rate. Due to low or non-existent profits in recent years the mill has not had funds needed to modernize.

The Tribal Council directed the tribal organization to develop measures to mitigate adverse impacts to mill employees and their families and set in motion the tribal appropriations process to make funds available to deal with closure impacts.

"We will also be providing workers

with appropriate severance packages," said Charles Calica, Secretary-Treasurer for the Tribe.

In accordance with a Tribal Council motion, the Finance Department will be posting a proposed supplemental budget of \$2,750,000 to help defray the anticipated costs of the conditional mill closure. The posting will be going up later this week or early next week, and then mailed out to each household. The supplemental process takes a minimum of 90 days and involves asking for community inputs at multiple longhouse meetings which are still to be scheduled.



Gavin Begay and Jake Frank perform at Eagle Watch, held last weekend.

Leslie Mitts/Spilyay

## Hearings on casino study begin next week

By Dave McMechan  
Spilyay Tymoo

A series of five public hearings on the BIA's draft environmental impact study of the Confederated Tribes' gorge casino project begins next week.

The first hearing will be from 6-8:30 p.m. on Monday, March 3 in the Wasco Room at Kah-Nee-Ta Lodge.

Later in the month, the BIA will conduct three hearings at different locations at the gorge, and one in Portland. Tribal members are encouraged to attend the Kah-Nee-Ta hearing, and others if they wish, and to give their comments on the draft EIS.

"It is important that tribal members come forward and have their voices heard," said Ron Suppah, Tribal Council chairman.

As the draft EIS indicates, he said, the casino project is the best long-term way of addressing the tribes' economic future.

As the draft EIS also indicates, the Cascade Locks alternative is the best alternative for the environment, said Suppah.

"The revenues and jobs created by the Cascade Locks casino will best address the Tribe's current dire financial and human needs, while having the least impact on the environment," he said.

"After reviewing the draft EIS, it is hard to understand why anyone would stand in our way. Although we know there are those who oppose us, bolstered by the positive findings of the draft EIS we are proceeding forward with dignity and confidence that we will

succeed."

The draft EIS is an extensive study of various site alternatives, how each alternative might benefit the tribe, and how each might impact the environment.

The draft EIS shows that the Cascade Locks site is the best alternative: The other alternatives either have greater environmental impacts, or do not generate revenue sufficient to address the long-term economic self-sufficiency of the tribes.

The draft EIS can be viewed on the Internet at [www.gorgecasinoeis.com](http://www.gorgecasinoeis.com). Tribal members can also submit their comments from that site, or by mail to the BIA. Comments must be received by May 15. Written comments and oral statements can also be submitted at the public hearings.

Copies of the draft EIS, and access to the Internet are also available at the Tribal Planning Department in the Administration Building, and at the library at the Family Resource Center. Internet access is also available at the Eagle Tech Teepee Deli at the Plaza.

This Friday, Feb. 29, the casino ambassadors team will host an open house from 9 a.m. till 4 p.m. at the Warm Springs Market. On Saturday, March 1, the team will host another information meeting on the draft EIS at Kah-Nee-Ta. This is a chance for people to ask questions of the gorge casino team, and to receive any technical support they might need in preparing their statements.

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## Shitike Creek realignment subject of meetings

Scoping meetings on the proposed re-alignment of Shitike Creek downstream of the Community Center Bridge will be held next week.

Meetings are set for Tuesday, March 4 at the Community Wellness Center from noon to 2 p.m.; and on Thursday, March 6 at Agency Longhouse from 6 to 8 p.m.

All tribal members are invited to attend and offer their comments. Sandwiches and drinks will be provided.

Representatives from the Natural Resources Branch will provide an overview of the proposed project and answer questions from the audience.

They will also record tribal member comments and use them in developing a project assessment, which will establish a framework for

implementation.

The primary objectives of this project are to protect the sewage lagoons from future flooding and to improve fish habitat in Shitike Creek. Funds to move the creek channel will come from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and from the Pelton Round Butte Fund.

Over the years, periodic flooding and development in the floodplain have resulted in the straightening of the stream channel, said habitat biologist Scott Turo.

With the new design, the stream would have more meander bends and follow a path very similar to where it was located in 1938, said Turo. "These kinds of projects involve essentially reconstructing the stream channel," he said.

Work like this has been done

throughout Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, but nothing to this scale has ever been completed on the reservation, said Turo.

To complete the reconstruction, Turo said, Natural Resources will be using wood to build log jams in order to create meanders for the stream to follow.

In these meander bends large engineered logjams would use energy from the stream to create pools for migrating adult fish and juvenile fish to grow. Side channels will also be created to provide additional habitat for juvenile fish, especially during high flows.

Right now the stream flows quickly and is wide and shallow. That doesn't allow for quality fish habitat, Turo said.

## Production company plans to film part of movie on the reservation

An independent film company is planning to shoot part of movie on the reservation.

The film company has applied for land-use permission from the tribes to shoot film on the reservation from March 24-April 4.

The benefits to tribes of this project include jobs for local residents as extras, or minor roles in the production, said Urbana Ross, tribal land services administrator.

Having the film crew on the reservation would also generate significant revenue at Kah-Nee-Ta Resort, she said. The film production crew may reserve up to 100 rooms at the resort during their stay on the reservation, said Ross.

The crew would also increase local sales and service revenues, she said.

The film crew is planning to shoot part of the movie at the Greeley home-site off Highway 3. Charley Canyon and Webster Flat are also on the list of locations. The Webster Flat area would be used during the first part of the filming, in late March. The Charley Canyon site will be used from April 1-April 4, according to the film schedule.

The movie is called *The Heretic*, "a film that posits what would happen if Jesus walked among us today," according to the film synopsis. "The film tells three different stories of three messianic figures." The movie was written by Academy Award winner Tim Robbins (*Shawshank Redemption*). Robbins is also directing the film.

The reservation in the past has been used for movies, including *Tonka* and *Three Warriors*, among others.