



Spilyay Tymoo

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Columbia fish accords Landmark agreement ends years of contention

By Dave McMechan
Spilyay Tymoo

Decades of divisiveness over salmon recovery in the Columbia River basin ended last week for tribes and federal agencies.

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, along with three other tribes, federal agencies and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, signed the historic agreement on Friday, May 2, at Columbia Hills State Park.

"These fish accords respect the sovereignty of the tribes," said Ron Suppah, Tribal Council Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. "They break from the history of federal agencies developing a plan themselves, then telling the tribes what they would or could provide for salmon."

The earlier approach did not work, said Suppah: "Misunderstandings, hard feelings and litigation are what we produced."

The foundation of the new agreement, he said, is respect among sovereigns, and respect for the expertise and authority of the tribes.

"Working with tribes as sovereigns allowed us to put our hearts and minds to looking for opportunity and solutions for the rivers and the salmon," said Suppah. "We have a lot of work to do to restore salmon, lamprey and steelhead."



Dave McMechan/Spilyay

Ron Suppah, chairman of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, signs the Accords parchment during the ceremony last week at Horsethief Park.

The Columbia River Basin Fish Accords are a 10-year agreement, focusing tribal and federal resources on improving fish habitat instead of on costly and prolonged litigation.

The agreement commits federal

agencies to provide tribes with \$900 million over ten years to spend toward salmon recovery. In exchange, the tribes are dropping out of a lawsuit challenging dam operations.

Idaho also signed an agreement with

federal regulators worth \$65 million, and Montana agreed to terms for \$15.5 million. Washington state also supports the accords.

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Casino study comment deadline approaching

Tribal Members have until Thursday, May 15 to comment on the tribes' gorge casino draft Environmental Impact Statement.

All tribal members are encouraged to provide their comments about the specifics of the draft EIS, said Margie Tuckta of the casino ambassadors and outreach team.

E-mail statements are most easily processed and recorded, said Tuckta.

Comment by e-mail by going to gorgecasinoeis.com, and select "Comment Opportunities." Type your comment on the form and send it. Each comment will need your name and address, and will become part of the public comment on the project.

A final casino information open house will be held at the Warm Springs Market on Tuesday, May 13. The casino outreach team will be collecting written comments and hand delivering them to Stanley Speakes at the Portland Bureau of Indian Affairs office in before the deadline.

Written letters and comments can be submitted to the gaming expansion office at Kah-Nee-Ta or to any gaming expansion team member. The team members are Tuckta, Lena Ike and Floyd Calica.

A final Environmental Impact Statement will be published in the early winter. If you have any questions, please contact Tuckta at 553-4883.

New program aims to improve student attendance

By Leslie Mitts
Spilyay Tymoo

Middle school and high school students with a history of repeated absences might have seen a surprise in their driveway recently: a school bus.

It's part of a new attendance program that aims to stop the problem of repeated absences by sending liaisons to the houses of students who show up on the absent list too often.

According to school liaison Lana Leonard, the program began after Jefferson County Middle School Principal Ken Clark decided to take action against the declining attendance rate.

The State of Oregon's attendance goal is 92 percent. Currently the Native American attendance is 87 percent, according to Leonard.

According to Clark, he decided to begin the program in part because the middle school has lower numbers than Warm Springs Elementary in terms of attendance.

"I believe our Native students can attend better than they are," Clark said. "There seems to be a drop at the middle school and I wanted to address that."

At the start of the school day, both Madras High School and Jefferson County Middle School send attendance reports to the liaisons who then evaluate the list and go door to door in attempt to take students into school.

The liaisons visit with the parents and students to find out why they weren't in school that morning; then bring the student to school.

Typically they knock on anywhere from 15-25 doors each time they complete a late bus run, Leonard said.

While the students don't arrive to



Leslie Mitts/Spilyay

School liaisons Butch David (at left) and Lana Leonard travel to students' homes along with bus driver Jerry Huff in what they call the "yellow limo."

school for the first part of the day, Leonard said, it helps that they are there for most of the day.

"They're late, but they're still there," she explained.

So far they have steadily taken in several students each time, she added. The most they have taken in at one time is five students, Leonard added, but in her opinion it isn't so much the number that matters but the effect they're having on students.

"To me being successful is taking one student back in," she said.

In fact, some parents are grateful

to the late bus program for the assistance it provides.

"We had a couple parents who appreciated it because they couldn't take their kids in," Leonard said.

They plan to continue the late bus program through the end of the year at least, and will do late bus runs two to three times per week—but even the liaisons don't know when they're going to do the surprise bus visits.

"It's random," Leonard explained. "We don't know when we're going to do it."

Clark agreed, and said, "This is a

very random bus. It's not the same days and it's not even the same names."

The reason for that, Clark said, is that they can't go to every absent student's home every time they are on the list.

Instead, he explained, the liaisons are responsible for deciding which students and parents to visit.

Frequently a representative from Tribal Court also goes to the students' homes with the school liaisons to discuss the legal issues that parents could face if their child's attendance continues to be a program.

According to Anson Begay, the tribal code features a section regarding compulsory school attendance.

Section 360.500 of the tribal code reads, "All juveniles between the ages of seven (7) and eighteen (18) years who have not completed the twelfth grade are required to attend school full-time. Full-time attendance means attendance each school day unless excused from attendance for that day by the school authorities or by mutual agreement of the school authorities and the Warm Springs Tribe."

Because of that, Begay said, the judges have agreed that they will take whatever steps possible to get students to attend school and to make parents more accountable.

That could potentially involve citing parents—in some cases the parents could even receive as many as 10 days in jail while the child would be sent to a correctional facility, Begay said.

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Honor Seniors Day is Friday

The Eighteenth Annual Honor Seniors Day will kick off this Friday morning, May 9.

All seniors are invited to attend the event at the Agency Longhouse.

Each year the Senior Services program hosts the event for local elders as well as elders who travel to Warm Springs for Honor Seniors Day.

Honor Seniors Day is one of the most popular events of the year.

The event features a powwow with children from Early Childhood Education, who also give away crafts they have made for the elders attending the event.

A Seniors Day king and queen are crowned, and receive the honor of sitting in special thrones reserved for them.

Seniors will have games to play, and each year the event features a specific theme.

Awards are given to the seniors who have travelled the farthest to attend the event.

Seniors from throughout the region and a variety of states travel each year to Warm Springs Honor Seniors Day to join local elders participating in the event.

Lodging for seniors from out of town is available at Kah-Nee-Ta High Desert Resort and Casino.

For more information, contact the Senior Services Program at 553-3313, 553-3520 or 553-3390.

The program can also be reached by e-mail at lschuster@wstribes.org, lsquiemphen@wstribes.org, or pautewewa@yahoo.com.