

Montana tribe wants to exploit coal

CROW AGENCY, Montana (AP)—They tried casinos on the Crow Indian reservation. The one designed to bring in the biggest crowds, Res-a-Vegas, went broke within a year and has been converted to a fireworks stand.

But now the Crow are convinced a really big jackpot lies below the surface: coal.

With energy prices soaring, the poverty-stricken Crow want to tap the vast deposits underneath their 2 million acres (810,000 hectares) of land. The tribe estimates the ground contains 9 billion tons (8.16 billion metric tons) of extractable coal, or enough to meet the nation's needs for almost a decade.

"We're not just trying to help ourselves today," said Joanie Rowland, who directs the 12,000-member tribe's nascent energy program. "We want to set up the reservation so that it will prosper and help the future generations."

Federal red tape, turbulent tribal politics that can scare off big business, and environmen-

tal worries have prevented some of the West's tribes from fully exploiting their oil, gas and coal deposits. But now, rising demand for energy—along with new federal laws giving Indians more say over their mineral resources—could help the Crow and other tribes get their way.

"There's a misconception about Indian tribes that they all have big gaming revenues. We don't have that," said tribal Chairman Carl Venne. "But we do have vast resources." He added: "The window of opportunity is open."

The Crow reservation lies about 60 miles (100 kilometers) from the nearest city of any consequence, Billings. It is on the remote northern edge of the Powder River Basin, which produces nearly half the nation's coal and hundreds of billions of cubic feet (cubic meters) of natural gas annually.

Life on the reservation, however, is defined by a different set of numbers: 47 percent unemployment; a per capita income of just \$7,400 (one-third the

national average); and federal health care subsidies that run dry six months into the year.

Much of the land on the reservation is used to grow wheat and sugar beets and to raise cattle.

The tribe is looking to extract the coal and build a multibillion-dollar, coal-to-liquids plant that would process the rock into diesel and other fuels. Tribal leaders say if they could tap their underground riches, they could expand their clinic and upgrade the reservation's aging roads and water system.

Not all the tribe's coal remains buried. An outside company has been extracting coal since 1974 from a mine just off the reservation. Since the tribe owns the mineral rights, it has been receiving royalties—about \$10 million last year alone.

But tribal leaders say that is not enough to relieve the reservation's poverty. And rather than just leasing land and collecting royalties, they want to become an actual partner in

such projects.

The reservation also has natural gas and oil deposits, and the tribe is working to exploit those, too, but the coal is believed to hold a much bigger potential.

Around the country, at least a dozen Indian tribes are pushing for agreements with the government that would help them exploit their oil, gas and coal, said Robert Middleton, director of the Interior Department's Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development.

Nationwide, energy royalties paid to tribes have doubled over the past five years, to \$475 million in 2007, according to the government's Minerals Management Service. The increase was driven primarily by rising oil and gas prices, not by new projects. Actual production remained flat.

Two million acres of tribal land have so far been developed for oil, gas and coal, according to the government. Estimates show an additional 15 million acres have the same potential.

Effort to save Indian burial mound hits snag

DULAC, La. (AP)—An American Indian tribe lost a \$45,800 grant that members had hoped would aid their efforts to buy Dulac land that's home to a large earthen mound built centuries ago by their ancestors.

The Terrebonne Parish Council decided in a 7-2 vote this month to redirect the state-government grant to improvements at a hurricane-supply warehouse in Houma.

Council members Alvin Tillman and Teri Cavalier voted against the move, saying they want the grant to remain dedicated to purchasing the Indian mound.

But now that one door is closed, another could open for the United Houma Nation, whose members say they may be eligible for other grants and programs.

"To be honest, it's almost a blessing," said Michael Billiot, a tribal member and attorney. "We may be able to find a grant that doesn't require the (local) government's involvement." For several months,

Houma tribal members had talked with the property's owners but the two sides could not agree on a price for the Shrimpers Row lot. Questions also surfaced about how to use the grant, which required that the land was owned by a public body.

At a June 5 meeting between parish officials, tribal leaders and one of the property owners, developer and landowner S.P. LaRussa, announced the property was being taken off the market. LaRussa said he did not want to work with parish government any longer.

Considering these developments, Council Chairman Clayton Voisin, whose district includes Dulac, said he began looking for other uses for the grant money. The Council on Aging had asked council members for help with its new warehouse, he said.

The grant now will be used to ramp up security at the one-story building, which also needs more dirt on the property, said Diana Edmonson, Council on Aging director.

Choctaws negotiating sale of Blue Ribbon Downs

SALLISAW, Okla. (AP)—The sale of Oklahoma's first pari-mutuel horse racing track appears imminent, although the potential buyer of Blue Ribbon Downs has not been publicly revealed.

The Choctaw Nation, which bought the track in 2003 for \$4.25 million, has been trying to sell Blue Ribbon Downs, tribal spokeswoman Judy Allen said. As of Wednesday, no deal to sell the track 21/2 miles west of Sallisaw had been completed.

Allen said the American

Indian tribe wants to focus on other gaming and business enterprises.

Blaine Story, the track's general manager of operation, asked the Oklahoma Horse Racing Commission in May for an extension for a racing license for 2009, citing negotiations between the Choctaw Nation and a prospective buyer.

Story said in a letter to the commission that he thought "an executed agreement will be presented for OHRC approval in the very near future."

The deadline to apply for a racing license was June 1, but

the commission approved the extension and will consider the matter at its meeting on Aug. 14, said Constantin Rieger, the commission's executive director.

Rieger said if the track is sold, the new owner would have to apply for a racing license.

"Whoever the new suitor is would have to go through the same scrutiny and vetting as anybody else does," Rieger said.

Allen said if the sale is not negotiated before Aug. 14, the tribe is "prepared to do the petitions for race days next year."

The track gained pari-mutuel status in 1984. It is one of four

horse racing tracks in Oklahoma, along with Remington Park in Oklahoma City, Fair Meadows in Tulsa and Will Rogers Downs in Claremore.

Before Blue Ribbon Downs was bought by the Choctaw Nation, it was scheduled to be put up for sale at a sheriff's auction. The track's previous owner, Race Horses Inc., filed for bankruptcy in 1997 and the Sallisaw Municipal Authority was foreclosing on the track because the company had failed to pay on a \$2.5 million loan from the city.

Tribe celebrates woman's 108th birthday

OKMULGEE, Okla. (AP)—The Muscogee (Creek) Nation is celebrating the upcoming 108th birthday of Martha Berryhill, the last of the tribe's original allottees and one of the oldest people in the state.

More than a century ago, Berryhill was one of 18,712 tribal citizens to be listed as a Creek Indian on the Dawes Commission Rolls. She turns 108 on Saturday.

As the last original allottee, she is the only remaining human connection to the tribe's pre-statehood and tribal membership roots. The Creek Nation bases tribal membership on the 1906 Final Dawes Rolls, and each current citizen is descended

from at least one person on those rolls.

To celebrate her birthday, more than 100 people attended a party for Berryhill on Thursday, where children sang "Happy Birthday" to her in Creek and presented her with gifts and cards.

"I will see you at the 109th birthday," said Muscogee (Creek) Nation Speaker of the House Thomas Yahola.

Ruby Mauk, Berryhill's 87-year-old daughter, said Berryhill loves to shop, and does so whenever possible. In her younger days, Berryhill used to bring her elders food and clothing, Mauk said.

A church group also sang Creek hymns to mark the oc-

casation.

Before the last song, the Rev. Newman Frank told Berryhill the group planned to sing the Creek hymn, "Hallelujah," to thank God for Berryhill's long life.

"That's why we came here to sing today, to celebrate, to thank God for the life of Sister Martha and the longevity he's given her," Frank said. "That's the greatest blessing the Lord can give us is a new day."

As the song came to an end, each of the singers, still maintaining the tune, passed Berryhill, shaking her hand and offering well wishes.

In a small voice, Berryhill began to sing along.

Park complex honors Code Talkers

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP)—A sports complex planned for Mission will honor the Lakota Code Talkers of World War II, university and Rosebud Sioux tribal officials say.

Plans for Code Talkers Memorial Park call for a baseball field, playgrounds and picnic areas.

Also, the complex could offer summer recreation and wellness programs through an agreement between the tribe and South Dakota State University, according to Russell Stubbles, an SDSU professor in the Department of Horticulture, Forestry, Landscape and

Parks.

The project is an example of "upstream thinking" in a society that too often reacts to problems with jail or punishment, Stubbles said.

The idea began in 2006 when tribal officials asked SDSU to help provide recreation and parks development and programs for the reservation.

"The secret is not to build the prisons, but to build and promote social wellness programs," Stubbles said. "Our total package with the Reservation Recreation Project recognizes this. We aim to bring recreation programs to the youth out in the

little communities all summer long. That is where the hope will have to be planted."

The park is named for a little-known piece of American Indian history. Code talkers used American Indian languages to baffle the Japanese and help win the war in the Pacific.

The park is to contain a grove made up of trees taken from the various reservation communities of the 11 men who served the U.S. Army as Lakota Code Talkers during World War II.

The project could cost \$1 million and take three years to complete.

Thank you for supporting the businesses you see in the Spilyay Tymoo.

Glam Night

7pm
July 18th, 19th

- ⊗ Games
- ⊗ Drawings
- ⊗ Bring 3 or more guests & earn Hostess Credit
- ⊗ Enter in a drawing to win a product basket worth \$100
- ⊗ Earn a free lipstick or lipgloss~ask me how
- ⊗ Snacks & Drinks will be available

Spaces will fill up fast, so reserve your spot by Thursday, July 17th.

Glowingstar 325-3218 or Kimberly 325-6429

MILLER FORD-NISSAN

Collision Center

36 S.E. 6th, Madras, OR 97741

Inter-Industry Conference On Auto Collision Repair (I-CAR) Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Certified

COME SEE US FIRST

We repair all makes and models!

Let us help negotiate your vehicle damage claim

We honor all insurance company estimates. Factory trained technicians, factory quality repairs & craftsmanship, frame straightening rack, with laser precision body alignment.

No matter what happens to your car, you can count on the Autobody Repair specialists at Miller Ford Nissan collision center to take care of it from the smallest scratch to the biggest dent.

24-Hour Towing Service, Rental cars available

541-475-6153