

Stimulus funds putting members back to work

Lei Calica has learned to operate heavy machinery during work on the Charlie Canyon Project.

"We went back to work this month," Calica said. "It was my first time running that thing, and I can't tell you how great it feels to be back at work!"

"Right now, they're putting culverts into that section," Leslie Davis, accounting manager for Warm Springs Ventures, said. "When that's done, they'll reroad part of that road."

Funding for the project came from stimulus funds through the BIA. Construction received three large contracts and have until September of this year to use those funds.

Up to 12 men are employed on the project, which will take another four weeks. Crews will then move to the Trout Lake Road and West Hills Projects.

— by Duran Bobb



Lei Calica (right) and co-worker at Charley Canyon Project site.

New bus for Seniors



Yvonne Iverson/Spilyay

Margaret Buckland (right) and Elvis Frank Sr. (left) are among the first to ride on the new upgraded Senior Bus. Staff will assess the bus route as unpaved roads could cause damage to the undercarriage of the lower bus.

Court checks to be on schedule

Starting this month, Warm Springs Tribal Court will be on a check authorization schedule. Authorization will take place on the second Thursday of each month, with the checks to be mailed out the next day when possible.

Tentative authorization days are June 10, July 15, August 12, September 9, October 14, and December 9 2011.

Tribal court will not release checks for personal pick-up. All checks must be mailed out.

Court hearing on Columbia River dam plan

(AP) — In what is likely the final major hearing before a federal judge decides what must be done to make Columbia River dams safe for salmon, lawyers argued last week over just how many salmon have to come back and whether that satisfies the Endangered Species Act.

The answer is difficult, because the numbers fluctuate widely from year to year based on how much food is available in the ocean, no matter how many billions of dollars are spent making dams less lethal to fish.

The hearing in an overflowing Portland courtroom was perhaps the final argument in a fight that has raged since 2001 over what is called a biological opinion—a formal review required by the Endangered Species Act as part of the effort to reduce the harm federal projects such as dams cause protected wildlife such as salmon.

U.S. District Court Judge James Redden previously shot down two Bush administration plans for restoring salmon runs and is now considering whether

minor improvements offered by the Obama administration giving biologists more flexibility to react to problems are enough to make the plan work.

The battle comes down to a choice between cheap and abundant power provided by hydroelectric dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, and the many salmon the dams kill as the young fish migrate to the ocean and swim upstream as adults to spawn.

The more water that goes through the dam turbines, the cheaper the electricity to farmers and electric ratepayers. When more water is allowed to spill over the tops of the dams, more salmon survive.

The central argument by conservationists is that the current plan sets too low a bar for salmon survival.

"The government tries to work its way around the problem," said attorney Todd True of the conservation group Earthjustice. "But there is a fatal disconnect in the argument"

that growing salmon population numbers equals recovery.

Government attorneys countered that the plan is enough to assure salmon survive, and conservationists are missing the point.

The numbers of salmon fluctuate year to year, said U.S. Justice Department lawyer Colby Howell, and it's impossible to know whether the numbers the court is using represent a valid picture of what salmon populations should look like. He said ocean conditions and river management play a large role in salmon runs.

The plaintiffs are "playing a game of back-and-forth where they're making up the rules," Howell said.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration deputy regional administrator Barry Thom said outside court that the government might never make the conservationists happy.

"I'm not sure we can," Thom said. "They're willing to do anything to push for dam breaching. That seems to be the heart

of their argument."

Conservation groups and some Indian tribes have long argued that restoring a free-flowing Snake River by breaking through four dams in Eastern Washington is the only way to bring struggling salmon runs back to thriving instead of just surviving.

One biological opinion by the Clinton administration put that prospect on the table, but the Bush administration took it off. The Obama administration has said it might study dam breaching as a last resort if other steps fail.

Conservationists argue the government's projections for improving salmon populations have failed before. Habitat improvements planned from 2007 to 2009 were often delayed or proved infeasible, and there was no effort to relate the habitat improvements that were made to increased salmon survival.

Salmon advocates say the latest revised plan from the Obama administration is little different than the Bush administration's 2008 plan and has little scientific evidence to back it up. "If the fish are not replacing themselves, there's only one thing they can do," True said. "And that's go extinct."

Big horn spotting



Yvonne Iverson/Spilyay

These two big horn sheep ewes live near the Warm Springs Reservation, and are often seen on the Highway 26 grade toward the Agency Plane. They are not part of the tribes' big horn sheep recovery project, based in the Mutton Mountains, but instead these two arrived to the region on their own, said Doug Calvin, of tribal Natural Resources.

Fresh Produce at Commodities

The Commodities Food Program is now offering new fresh produce items such as baby carrots, cauliflower, celery, romaine lettuce, granny

smith apples, and northwest pears.

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PUC endorses removal of Klamath dams

(AP) — The California Public Utilities Commission this month endorsed removing four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River to help salmon.

Meeting in San Francisco, the commission also granted Portland-based dam-owner PacifiCorp a 2 percent rate increase for its 45,000 customers in California to help pay for removing the dams in Southern Oregon and Northern California.

The \$13.8 million raised by the surcharge during the next nine years goes into trust funds

to be used if federal authorities approve the removal.

The decision followed the recommendation of an administrative law judge. PacifiCorp had argued it was better to take out the dams than face the uncertain costs of upgrading to meet environmental standards for clean water and fish passage.

Projected to begin in 2020, removal of the dams is part of a landmark agreement to help salmon, give farmers better assurances of irrigation, and restore the ecology of the Klamath basin.

Glen Spain of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations said the action caps potential costs for ratepayers, saving them from the uncertainties of having to pay for future lawsuits and dam upgrades.

He added that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission estimated the upgrades would reduce power output by more than a quarter, causing the dams to operate at a net loss of \$20 million a year.

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