

Jamboree Day

Water was a main theme at the Family Jamboree Day. The goal was to keep cool while having fun. At right, the Octopus water tunnel; and below, the water slide. The day was hosted by Warm Springs Recreation.



Dave McMechan/Spilyay



Water: ideas to reduce waste

(Continued from page 1)

There are a number of aspects to this problem.

First, the treatment plant is getting old. Replacement parts are now difficult, or impossible to come by. Some of the monitoring equipment is not working; so the workers have to check the system manually, the way they did some years.

Courtney says the tribes really need a new water plant, based on the current usage. Meanwhile, the population continues to grow, and new housing will be coming on line next year.

The tribes spend close to \$1 million each year from the general fund on the water system. This funding mainly goes toward operation. Capital improvements—even replacing essential parts—is next to impossible with this budget, said Roy Spino, tribal water/wastewater engineer.

Clearly, something should be done, and sooner rather than later.

A recent report—the Strategic Infrastructure Improvement Plan—evaluates the condition of the infrastructure on the reservation: the water and wastewater plants, roads, solid waste facilities, power and communications.

Among the different utilities, “Water is the single most troubled when it comes to financing capital improvements due mainly to excessive water usage,” the report says.

Another observation in the report: “If the Confederated Tribes eliminated most of the wasted water usage by all customers, it could save millions of dollars in capital improvements.”

Most of the residences in the Warm Springs area have

no water meters. Some houses do have meters, such as at Greeley Heights, but no one reads these meters, because there is no reason to.

Except for businesses, enterprises and the new school, customers of the water system pay no fee. So there is no incentive to conserve.

A comparison will give an idea of the amount of waste in the Warm Springs water system:

The Deschutes Valley Water District serves about 12,000 people. The most water ever delivered by that district in one day was 8.1 million gallons.

The Warm Springs system, serving about 3,600 people, delivered almost 4.3 million gallons in one day. That is more than half the Deschutes Valley Water District number, while Warm Springs is serving less than one-third the number of people.

The amount of delivered water unaccounted for in the Deschutes Valley system is about 8 percent. Based on the above comparison, the percentage must be much higher for Warm Springs.

The question, then, is what could be done to correct this situation? The Strategic Infrastructure Improvement Plan makes the observation:

“The most universal and proven method of controlling waste is to impose water rates on all customers, which would not only produce revenue, but also would affect the behavior of users. Water conservation would be rewarded with a lower water bill.”

The specific recommendation in the plan is as follows: “Impose water rates on all customers, meter all customers, including housing units on water systems. Initiate a billing procedure and set up an enforcement procedure for delinquent accounts.”

This would be a major change, and customers would understandably be against seeing another monthly bill, especially in these economic times on the reservation.

But there are options. There could be exemptions for those who truly cannot afford another bill. There could be a rate of zero or close to zero for households that are using an average amount of water.

An actual charge would only apply to households that are using much more than the average amount of water. Tribal Council was planning to meet with tribal planner Lonny Macy, Spino and others this week on the matter.

Beware of disruptive email virus

The Warm Springs Office of Information Systems reminds computer users to beware any email from a sender that you do not recognize.

If it comes from an address that you are not familiar with, or a subject line that refers to something you don't know about, do not open the email.

A recent bout with computer viruses has been going around, and can really disrupt computer use. If you have any questions, call 541-553-3275.

Around Indian Country

Yakama casino expansion

The Yakama Nation hopes a \$90 million expansion will draw more visitors to its casino in Washington.

The centerpiece of the project is a 200-room, six-story hotel. Executives believe it will help turn the Yakama Legends Casino into a destination to its region of the state, where no other tribal facilities are located.

“We want to go from local gaming venue to a regional resort,” said assistant general manager Kristin Lumley.

“We want to add to the tourism draw of the region.” After a series of delays,

the tribe finally started construction on the project. It's expected to be finished by the end of 2016.

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