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Fire agencies begin new burn program

Warm Springs Fire Management and the BIA this week began a program to conduct controlled burns with the use of a helicopter. The aerial ignition burns were scheduled to start this week on the Metolius Bench area of the reservation, said Brad Donahue, of Fire Management fuels.

The aerial ignition program includes a class that is conducted at Fire Management, providing certification for firefighters interested in taking part in the aerial ignition program.

Firefighters were on hand from California, Arizona, Washington and other areas, plus from Warm Springs.

Fire Management has not used aerial ignition of controlled burns since 1989. Then last year,



The program involves helicopter aerial-controlled burn ignition.

national BIA fire officials were in Warm Springs on other business, and suggested holding a training here this year. Fire Management agreed.

The plan is to control burn about 4,000 acres at the Metolius Bench,

which would help reduce the threat of a major wildfire later in the year, Donahue said.

Fire Management has had a controlled burn program for several years, with the ignition done by hand

on the ground.

For a 4,000-acre project, this can take two to three weeks, whereas aerial ignition can accomplish this in a day or so, Donahue said.

Fire Management-BIA is using a helicopter and pilot from Bend. Crew members carry out the aerial ignition with the use of what are nick-named "ping pong balls."

These are small plastic spheres filled with potassium permanganate. When the helicopter is over the area to be burned, the balls are injected with ethylene glycol and immediately jettisoned.

VDOS Global, working with Ventures - Eagle Tech was possibly going to use a drone to record the process.

Honor Seniors on Friday

The Twenty-Sixth Annual Honor Seniors Day is this Friday, May 13.

Honor Seniors Day is hosted by the Warm Springs Senior Program. The popular event will see hundreds of guests from around the region visiting the reservation.

Volunteers of all kinds are needed. If you would like to help, contact the Senior Program at 553-3313.

Graduation ceremonies coming up

The Madras High School graduation will be on Saturday, June 4, starting at 2 p.m. Graduation is held at the football stadium.

The eighth-graders in June will be graduating from the Warm Springs Academy. A date was not yet available as of earlier this week.

The Early Childhood Education graduation is set for June 10, starting at 10 a.m. at the community center.

Some other dates to keep in mind during this graduation time:

The Warm Springs Graduation Banquet for the Class of 2016 is scheduled for the evening of Friday, June 10, at the Agency Longhouse.

High school grads, for information call Carroll at 541-553-3311. For higher education graduates, contact Becky Picard at the Tribal Council office.

The Simnasho Grads' Night Out Powwow is set for Wednesday, May 25 at the Simnasho Longhouse. Potluck dinner at 6, and the powwow at 7.

Challenges, opportunities for new Council

The new Tribal Council took office this month, during a time of great opportunity, as well as serious challenges for the Confederated Tribes.

The tribal budget will be a critical point of focus, not only looking to 2017, but for the current year as well.

On the bright side, the Twenty-Seventh Tribal Council is taking office just as the cannabis enterprise is beginning the greenhouse construction phase. In time, this project could generate millions in needed new revenue.

Another positive development: The tribes and Natural Resources Branch are developing a new enterprise to realize value from the reservation forest products.

There are logs at the mill, and others in the forest that can be sold



Council members Lee Tom, Raymond Tsumpti, Carina Miller, Val Switzler, Ron Suppah, Jody Calica and Austin Greene (from left) take the oath of office at the start of the Twenty-Seventh Tribal Council.

at market value, bringing in trust revenue. The forest products situation, though, has two significant down sides:

First, about 80 tribal members lost their jobs this year, when Warm

Springs Forest Products Industries shut down.

And second: Last year the previous Tribal Council, finance and management developed the current year budget on an assumption that

the mill would be contributing to the general fund. That is no longer the case, as WSFPI is in receivership.

Another challenge became apparent just recently:

Last fall, Warm Springs Power and Water Enterprises projected a dividend of \$2 million for the current year budget.

However, an announcement this week is that the Power and Water dividend will be \$1 million—leaving another \$1 million short for the present year. (An explanation of this situation is on page 5.)

Clearly, the new Council is dealing with serious challenges. But fortunately there are some new opportunities on the horizon.

Grow enterprise begins construction phase

Construction is scheduled to start soon on the grow facility that will house the tribes' cannabis enterprise.

The construction phase will take four to five months, with Ventures estimating a completion time around October.

Meanwhile, the building phase is generating new construction jobs, said Don Sampson, Ventures executive director.

The ground-breaking ceremony for the project proved to be a popular event. On hand were many community members, plus the tribes' partners in the project, and federal and state officials.

Stan Speaks, BIA Northwest regional director, mentioned how the tribes and Ventures have handled a unique and potentially complicated business idea.



Drummers take part at the greenhouse ground-breaking.

"They have been very careful and very cautious," Mr. Speaks said of the tribes. "They are certainly going to be a model."

An economic study has projected significant revenue, possibly more than \$20 million a year when in full operation, from the cannabis enterprise. "But this is bigger than dollars and cents," said Pit-ta Pitt, project coordinator.

"This is not a quick fix," he said. "This is about a group of people trying to find a way to educate, clothe and house themselves."

The greenhouse and the tribes' retail shops will create about 80 new jobs, according to the study developed last year.

For the shops, Ventures has been looking at sites in Portland, Bend, Hood River, Eugene, Salem and



Helping with the ground-breaking were Ellen Grover, Chris Hardiman, Mark McNeely, Don Sampson, Pi-Ta Pitt, Shawn Phillips, Roy Sampsel and Erin Phillips (from left).

Government Camp.

The greenhouse itself, on Lower Dry Creek Road, will be 36,000 square feet.

Ventures is planning to host job fairs in the community in June or July.

The cannabis project is coming on-line as the tribes are looking to new sources of general fund rev-

enue.

Forest products, and power generation from the hydroelectric dams once were the financial basis for the tribes.

These industries, though, can no longer provide the same kind of economic foundation.



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