

Final phase of WSFPI mill liquidation

Work crews are in the process of dismantling the Warm Springs Forest Products mill.

The goal is for the work to be completed by the end of the month, said Ed Hostmann, receiver in the tribal court WSFPI receivership process. The winter weather caused a delay in the removal of mill equipment and buildings.

In the end the mill site will be reduced to the foundation pads. Some of the buildings were sold, and are being removed for relocation. Some parts are being scrapped.

Composite Products, located by the mill site, will remain in its current building, and now has its own power and water sources.

At some point an environmental study will be needed at the former WSFPI site, owned by the tribes, as the mill had been in operation there for several decades.

The tribes owned and operated the mill for about 50 years, the membership having voted to purchase the facility in 1966.

WSFPI was very profitable for many years, but a few years ago began to face challenges in competing in a changing lumber market.

Then early last year it became clear the operation was no longer sustainable with just on-reservation timber. So the mill closed, with the loss of 85 jobs.



Dave McMechan/Spilyay

Work crews are in the process of dismantling the buildings at the mill site, eventually reducing the structures down to the foundation.

The Confederated Tribes continue to operate a timber enterprise, the Warm Springs Timber Co.

But milling on the reservation is not part of the enterprise. So removal of the mill buildings ends a chapter that began about 80 years ago:

It was around the time of the adoption of the Tribal Constitution of 1938, following the construction by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers of the Bonneville Dam, and the flooding of the Cascade Rapids.

First reservation mill

The World Forestry Center published a brief biogra-

phy of one Ray Wilson, born in 1883 in Michigan, whose family was well-established in the timber business.

Wilson later lived in the Northwest with his wife and two sons. He came here with the idea of starting his own lumber business.

The opportunity presented itself in the late 1930s, after his sons had graduated from college.

The following is an excerpt from the account as told by in the World Forestry Center report:

Wilson took great care in searching out the best deal and location possible for the new business, and finally

settled on a large (500 million board feet) block of timber on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Ironically, he bought the timber on January 5, 1942, one month after Pearl Harbor and by that time both sons were on active duty in the U.S. Navy.

In this purchase, Wilson initiated the first development of the extensive timber on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, and he had a contract with the Indians to fulfill. It would have been difficult enough with his sons helping him—and suddenly he had to create the Warm Springs Lumber Company alone.

Timber Co. in first full year of operation

He had to build a power plant, housing, sawmills—everything from scratch. Because of the War, it was impossible to buy turbines for power or new sawmill machinery, so he bought a mill at West Fork, Washington, on the Colville Indian Reservation. He operated it during the summer of 1942, then moved it to Warm Springs, and sawed the first log in late summer, 1943.

The mill operated steadily after 1943, and when the War was over, Wilson was able at long last to implement his original plan, teaching his sons to manage and operate the mill.

In 1950 his son Robert took it over entirely and the Warm Springs Lumber Company stayed in the family until it was sold to Sam Johnson of Redmond in 1965. It was sold to Johnson with the understanding that the mill would be resold, over a period of years, to the Warm Springs Indian Tribe....

Wilson had tremendous talent in scouting out new areas of possible business in lumber. In 1954, he formed a joint venture with Phil Dahl, Sam Johnson and Harold Barclay at Madras.

They built the first plywood plant east of the Cascades. It began operation in 1956 under the name Jefferson Plywood Company. It was sold to Sam Johnson in 1965, at the same time as the sale of the Warm Springs Lumber Company....

The Warm Springs Timber Co. is finishing up with the sales that had been originally planned for 2016. As the enterprise did not have a full year of operation last year, some of the sales were set over to the current year.

The enterprise, operating out of the former Warm Springs Forest Products Industries office, should then be on schedule to begin the 2017 sales, said Cal Mukumoto, manager of the Timber Co.

The Timber Co. operates through an agreement with the Branch of Natural Resources Forestry Department, as approved late last year by Tribal Council.

The enterprise will exist in current form at least through 2017; Tribal Council later this year will consider how to proceed after that. The timber resource, as a trust asset, is the source of funds for the Senior Pension, and was factored in during the 2017 budget process.

Hiring Mr. Mukumoto as manager of the timber enterprise, through this year, was a decision based on the best interest of the tribal finances. This arrangement avoids the need for a consultant contract and fees that would otherwise cost the tribes, said Michele Stacona, Secretary-Treasurer.

Youth Council, veterans hear from Sen. Wyden

Senator Ron Wyden held a town hall in Madras last week at the high school Performing Arts Center.

Several hundred people were in attendance, including a full section of Madras High School students.

Student participation included representatives of the Warm Springs Youth Council. Question topics included:

The Affordable Care Act, representation for Native Americans, immigration issues, the spotted frog, LGBT rights, public lands, Russian influence, and public safety needs for this summer's solar eclipse.

Sen. Wyden concluded by saying the meeting was one of the very best: "We have just seen representative democracy in action," he said. "I don't think there was a bad question in the house. No one insulted



anyone else in the audience. Questions came from a wide variety of participants with a cross section of views."



Text and photos by Sue Matters/KWSO

Participating in Sen. Wyden's town hall were veterans (above), and the Youth Council (left).

Those participants included the high school students, farmers, veterans, the mother of an LGBT youth, citizens with specific concerns, as well as general concerns about the future

of America. Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley will be in Madras on Saturday, March 18 at 9:30 a.m. to hold a town meeting, also at the Performing Arts Center.

Senior Day Committee seeking contributions

The Twenty-Seventh Annual Honor Senior Day is coming up in May.

The idea for this day originated nearly three decades ago, with a small group of local tribal elders who wanted an event especially for the elders.

Through the years this has grown into a major community event, with average attendance from 700 to 1,200 elders and locals who attend the daylong activities and meals.

The event showcases the local area, such as Kah-Nee-Ta, the Museum at Warm Springs, Indian Head Casino, and

enterprises like Composite Products, the Telecom, Ventures and Power & Water.

A shuttle service is provided all points of interest, as courtesy during the day.

The Honor Senior Day Committee is requesting door prizes and gift items, or any type of donation. Any contribution is greatly appreciated.

For additional information contact the Senior Program at 541-553-3313, or 553-3520.

Sincerely,
The Honor Senior Day Committee.

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