

Work continues on the new building by the Warm Springs Ventures and Construction enterprise at the industrial park.

The new facility will house a part of the Ventures unmanned aerial systems manufacturing program, a partnership business with a drone company based in Portland.

D.McMechan/Spilyay



Winter storms a challenge to enterprise

Changes to prevent future outages

by Warm Springs Telecom

Icy roads, snow and an unusually cold winter played havoc with the residential service for Warm Springs Telecom this year.

The Telecom staff worked overtime to keep the wireless network operational and all customers on line with telephone and broadband service.

However, Mother Nature had other plans as problems with equipment at the Pelton Dam, Sidwalter and Seekseequa towers caused issues throughout the winter.

Staff fixed problems as fast as possible, and put in place plans and new equipment that should prevent such problems from occurring in the future.

Fortunately, service to the business and tribal government customers who are connected with fiber optic cable was unaffected by the weather, and those customers continued to have rock solid service.

At Pelton Dam, freezing fog caused a significant amount of ice to accumulate on the equipment. This caused a piece of equipment called the 'GPS Sync' to malfunction below 20 degrees.

When this happened, an electronic message was sent to the company switch alerting the staff that there was a problem. Crews were immediately sent to the tower to fix the problem.

Unfortunately, the ice was so severe that it was too dangerous to climb the tower to replace the equipment. The inside technical staff was able to electronically move most of those customers affected by the faulty equipment to the Miller Flat tower.

The technical crew could finally fix the rest of the affected customers once the ice melted enough that it became safe to physically replace the bad equipment.

Also due to the weather the Telecom had a battery failure at the Sidwalter site.

This caused the batteries to drain and the generator to run for days. Outside plant supervisor Kevin Gaston used a purpose-built vehicle to haul extra tanks of propane through the snow and up to the tower to keep the system operational.

With conditions being severe, he had to spend long nights out in the snow by the generator.

He and the staff were committed to get everyone back online for their phones and internet service.

Since then, the company has replaced all the batteries at Sidwalter tower site. These are not small type batteries, but large commercial batteries.

In the Seekseequa area, the weather caused a transmission radio failure on the tower. This radio provides the wireless connections between the Seekseequa tower and back to the Telecom headquarters.

As the ice made it ex-

remely dangerous to climb the tower and replace equipment, the Telecom had to wait for a break in the weather for any repairs.

They replaced the problem transmission radio that was the critical interface between the customers and the wireless network.

The Telecom has been working hard to rectify the problems from this winter.

In addition to what was done immediately to solve the problems mentioned above, new equipment that will protect the GPS Sync problem has been purchased and installed by the tower climbers on the Pelton Dam tower.

The Telecom is installing spare radios on all towers so that if one radio fails, the spare radio can be activated without climbing the tower.

Due to the Sidwalter tower site being difficult to reach in the winter months for any maintenance, a mobile backup generator will be placed in this location during that time of the year.

While the problems have all been resolved for this winter, Warm Springs Telecom is being proactive to avoid future service interruptions for residential customers in future winters.

"No one wants to repeat these problems in the coming years," said Jose Matanane, Telecom general manager.

"Our goal is that everyone is always connected all the time. We believe that our customers are number

one, and I'm really proud of our Telecom staff who went the extra mile on behalf of our customers to fix problems during the extreme winter conditions."

Mr. Matanane added, "I would like to thank Warm Springs Construction for clearing the road access for us to get to our tower sites."

To meet the goal of more reliable service, he said, "We need to do two things. First is the continued preventative maintenance that must be done in advance of the bad weather, to ensure that the outages are minimized."

Second: "When we first built the company, we installed state of the art equipment that was appropriate for the needs of the new network and the conditions on the reservation."

Over the years, he said, "the technology changes and equipment ages. Now we must replace some of the older equipment with new products that are both cost effective but will function better than some of the original products. This is our goal."

Matanane added, "We are evaluating and revamping the overall network. This will be a substantial investment, but in the end, necessary to better serve the tribe."

The Warm Springs Telecommunications Company is a tribally owned enterprise whose mission is to bring advanced broadband services to the Warm Springs tribes, including voice, data and video.

Survey asks about W.S. economic development

Tribal economic development coordinator Kahseuss Jackson is conducting a community survey on tribal business and economic development. The results will help in the development of an economic improvement plan for the tribes. Please respond through April 5. A version is available online at the link: www.surveymonkey.com/r/C79XBCB Or contact Kahseuss at: kahseuss.jackson@wstribes.org

The questions are:

1. What is your vision for the Tribes in terms of economic development? (For example: "in five years the tribes will have two new revenue generating enterprises, lower unemployment figures and a growing private sector." Feel free to be specific.)

2. What are some of the strengths of the tribes related to economic development? (For example: capable

work force, current projects, access to markets, others.)

3. What are some of the weaknesses of the tribes related to economic development? (For example: lack of infrastructure, lack of space for small businesses, lack of financial resources to invest, others.)

4. What are some of the opportunities that the tribes may have related to economic development? (For example: recreational offerings, additional small businesses, Highway 26, others.)

5. What are some of the threats that the tribes may have related to economic development? (For example: competition, federal policies, others.)

6. What specific economic projects do you think the Tribes might be able to do? (Feel free to explain why certain projects would work. For example: market opportunity, available resources, tax advantages, others.)

Funding effort for housing at river

Oregon and Washington legislators are lobbying for the remaining \$1.5 million needed to plan a village for Columbia River tribal members at The Dalles Dam.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers allocated \$1.56 million last month to the effort, which would fulfill a promise the federal government made in 1957.

Former Assistant Secretary of the Army Jo-Ellen Darcy also tentatively agreed to add \$1.49 million in the next budget cycle. But leadership of the office changed hands to an acting head.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has promised just over \$3 million to plan for new housing at The Dalles Dam. This is a first step in making good on a 60-year-old promise. Construction could start in 2020, at the earliest.

The current funding bill expires April 28. At that point Congress will have the choice to pass a new bill with new funding levels for government offices or a continuing resolution, which would maintain funding levels at their current level.

Senators from Oregon and Washington, as well as U.S.

Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Oregon, sent a letter this month to Doug Lamont, the senior official acting as head of the Army Corps, and Mick Mulvaney, the director of the Office of Management and Budget. They want to make sure the additional \$1.49 million comes through.

"Conditions at many treaty fishing access sites and in-lieu sites are highly unsafe and unsanitary, and it is finally time for the federal government to fulfill commitments made when the dams were constructed and to honor the treaties signed with the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes," the letter says.

"A strong commitment from the Army Corps and Office of Management and Budget is needed to make progress this year in the interest of public health and safety and upholding treaty rights."

The Army Corps and tribal leaders are considering three sites for the new village. It would be one step toward providing more than 80 homes promised for tribal families who lived along the Columbia River when three dams were built.

Ag youth summit applicants due in April

Applications for the Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit are due April 11.

All food, lodging, instructional materials and field trip costs are provided. Depending on the number of stu-

dents, travel scholarships will also be provided.

If you have questions, contact Emerald Hames on the IFAI staff at ehames@uark.edu.

Or call her at 479-575-5128.

The Veterans and Family Healing Gathering, Honoring the Sixty-Seventh Anniversary of the Korean War, is coming up April 27-30 at the HeHe Longhouse. The weekend includes healing ceremonies, speakers, talking circles, men/women's sweat lodges, games and kids' activities. There is no charge to participate. Contributions of food, volunteer time and raffle items are greatly appreciated. For information call Larsen Kalama at 541-553-3093.

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