

Focus on reservation in 2019 was the water

In the Warm Springs tribal community water is sacred and vital to tribal existence, cultural practices, health and welfare, and economic development. An example of its prominence: The final word of the prayer before a meal is 'chuush.'

In 2019—from spring into summer—the Confederated Tribes experienced a prolonged boil-water requirement. The cause of this crisis was the ageing domestic water infrastructure on the reservation—from the treatment plant on the Deschutes, to the water lines

through the Agency area.

The tribes have been aware of the need for improvements to the system. An issue has been responsibility, as the original water pipes were installed decades ago by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. And for this reason the argument would be that the BIA is responsible, as the original system is theirs.

Complete replacement of the older pipes would cost millions—with a new treatment plant estimated at more than \$20 million. The magnitude of the issue came into focus this year, during the months of the

boil-water condition.

The Twenty-Eighth Tribal Council had just taken office when the water contamination was detected. Working with Management and Utilities, Council declared an emergency and allocated the funds to make the repairs.

For obvious reasons the water crisis was a hardship for the tribes, the residents and households that rely on the system. Yet the crisis has also prompted action at both the state and the federal government levels.

First, the Oregon legislature in July approved \$7.8 million in funding to the

Confederated Tribes for three key water projects on the reservation. Gov. Brown signed the bill into law, with the funds becoming available most likely in 2021.

The \$7.8 million was much more than the tribes had ever received in a state bill of this kind. The revenue will come from the Oregon Lottery.

Oregon Sen. Cliff Bentz and Rep. Daniel Bonham were advocates for the tribes' inclusion in July legislation. The appropriation provides \$7.8 million for three specific projects:

The wastewater plant up-

date (\$1.3 million); the water meter project (\$2.5 million); and the water distribution project (\$4 million).

Then more recently—just last week, in fact—U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley introduced legislation to improve water quality and services for tribal communities in Oregon.

In announcing the legislation the senators cited the Warm Springs crisis in particular.

Native American tribes in Oregon and across the West are suffering from inadequate water infrastructure, the lawmakers said, with aging drink-

ing water treatment and distribution systems subjecting the communities to serious problems such as failed pressure relief valves, burst pipes and unsafe drinking water.

"As the crisis on the Warm Springs Reservation illustrated, Native American communities in Oregon are facing serious water infrastructure challenges," Sen. Merkley said.

"We need to invest in replacing outdated pipe systems, to help ensure that tribal nations have reliable access to safe drinking water for years to come."

The Year in Review ~ 2019 ~

Continued

The following is a review of some of the news that happened in 2019 on the reservation, continued from the previous Spilyay:

June

This month saw the beginning of the 'water crisis' on the reservation, when many households were on the **boil-water notice**.

The nature of the problem was not clear in early to mid-June, though chlorinated water was found to be seeping into Shitike Creek.

The initial indication was that the water line from the east part of Agency to the west had broken beneath the creek. Tribal Council, Utilities and Management were working on a solution, with a 'worst-case scenario' a real possibility.

Later in the month, Tribal Council approved the expenditure of \$300,000 for the emergency repair of the 14-inch water main break under Shitike Creek.

Meanwhile, Warm Springs Emergency Management opened the bottled water center. Elsewhere in June:



Jayson Smith/Spilyay

At the spring 2019 Lil' Miss Warm Springs Pageant, Jessica Bruised Head crowns Senior Lil' Miss Warm Springs Shantelle Henry.

Everyone wants to see **Kah-Nee-Ta** back in operation. Beyond that point, though, the issues are complicated, and the opinions many and diverse. The resort has been closed since last summer.

At Tribal Council in June, Management presented offers from outside entities that have expressed interest

in partnering with the tribes in the management and operation of Kah-Nee-Ta.

Council is now studying the information, and weighing the options. An idea that many have expressed is the opening of just the Village area. And this in June:

The **Madras High School Class of 2019** saw

132 students graduate. Forty-six of the students, roughly 35 percent, were Native American.

This year 100-percent of the students at the high school who were eligible to graduate completed their requirements. The school district Bridges Career and Technical program, directed by Jessica Swagger, helped more than 30 Native students meet the graduation requirements.

The month of June 2019 saw the **50-year milestone of Pi-Ume-Sha Treaty Days**, as the very first Pi-Ume-Sha happened in 1969.

Honoring veterans was one of the reasons for the first Pi-Ume-Sha: In 1969 many young tribal members were serving in the Vietnam War.

The Treaty was signed in 1855, on June 25. The actual anniversary this year was on Tuesday—celebrating 164 years since the signing. And this:

The 1865 Treaty Nullification Act—formally and finally to nullify a fraudulent treaty with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs—in June passed the United States Senate.

Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden were sponsors. The next step is to go to the U.S. House of Representatives, where Rep. Greg Walden supports the bill.

"A black cloud will be lifted by this legislation," said Tribal Council Chairman Raymond Tsumpti. "So future generations will not have to endure it."

Tribal Council, with governmental affairs director Louis Pitt for the past year especially have made the federal 1865 nullification a priority.

2019 Review continues on 7



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Record number of Warm Springs graduates in June, 2019 at Madras High School.

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Summaries of Tribal Council

December 4, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Chairman Raymond Tsumpti. Present at roll call: Chief Delvis Heath, Chief Alfred Smith Jr., Lincoln Jay Suppah, and Chief Joseph Moses. Minnie Yahtin, Recorder.

Tribal attorney update with Karnopp Petersen.

• Executive session, 10:06-11:20 a.m.

• Tribal attorney update with John Ogan.

• Executive session, 11:20-11:55 a.m.

• Update on special circumstance hunts.

Without further discussion the meeting adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

December 5

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Chairman Raymond Tsumpti. Present at roll call: Raymond (Captain) Moody, Lincoln Jay Suppah, Anita Jackson, Chief Delvis Heath, Chief Joseph Moses. Minnie Yahtin, Recorder.

• Human Services Branch update with Caroline Cruz.

• Natural Resources Branch update with Robert Brunoe.

• Presentation of relief check by Coca Cola.

• Personal time off (PTO) donations:

• Ine the tribal Management Plan the Secretary-Treasurer has authority to approve or disapprove these requests for PTO donations.

• Human Resources is updating the Personnel Manual on this area.

• Public Safety Branch update with Carmen Smith and Ron Gregory.

• Public Utilities Branch update with Travis Wells.

• Education Branch Update with Valerie Switzler and Carroll Dick.

Meet and greet with Jon Jenkins and Wakinyan regarding Kah-Nee-Ta.

Tribal Council agenda discussion.

Motion by Jay to adjourn at 5:01 p.m.