

This week marks anniversary of Falls flooding

Sixty-three years ago this week saw the heart-breaking disappearance of the mighty Celilo Falls. And now with each passing year there are fewer and fewer living people who still remember the falls, though the site retains great cultural importance to the tribes.

The Native language names of the area—Wy-am is an example—of the falls refers to “echo of falling water” or “sound of water upon the rocks.”

On the south side of the falls was the Wasco community of Wyam; and on the north side the Wishram community of Nix-luidix, a site now under the water of The Dalles dam. The area was the longest continually inhabited site in North America. The tribes traded with visitors who visited from as far away as modern day Alaska to the north, California to the south, and the Rocky Mountains to the east.

The main waterfall consisted of three sections: a cataract, called Horseshoe Falls or Tumwater Falls; a deep eddy, the Cul-de-Sac; and the main channel.[3] These features—stretching for more than nine miles—were formed by the Columbia River’s relentless push through basalt narrows on a final leg of its journey to the



Native fishermen at Celilo Falls; and, below, salmon drying at Celilo Village.

Pacific Ocean.

The migrating fish had difficulty passing the falls, providing for the best fishing in the region. A famous feature was the series of wooden scaffolds built out over the river, fished with long-handled dip nets. They caught the variety of salmon, lamprey and sturgeon.

As more white settlers arrived in the area, during the 1930s and ‘40s, the government leaders advocated for the construction of hydroelectric dams on the Columbia River. The completion of The Dalles dam happened in 1957, with the



flooding event covering the falls on March 10 of that year.

Sonar imaging shows that

the rock formations of the falls remain below the reservoir of the dam.

Remembering the Falls

In those days, during spring flooding, ten times more water passed over Celilo Falls than passes over Niagara Falls today...

The record of human habitation proves Wy-am to be one of the longest occupied sites on the continent. For thousands of years, Wy-am was one of history’s great market places. A half-dozen tribes had permanent villages between the falls and where the city of The Dalles now stands. As many as 5,000 people would gather to trade, feast, and participate in games and religious ceremonies.

Elders and chiefs regulated the fishing, permitting none until after the First Salmon ceremony. Each day, fishing started and ended at the sound of a whistle. There was no night fishing. And when a fisher was pulled into the water—most who fell perished in the roiling water—all fishing ceased for the day. In later years, each fisher was required to tie a rope around his waist, with the other end fastened to the shore.

Elders and others without family members able to fish could take what they needed from the catches. Visiting tribes were given what they could transport to their homes. The rest belonged to the fishers and their families.

All this changed on the morning of March 10, 1957, when the massive steel and concrete gates of The Dalles Dam closed and choked back the downstream surge of the Columbia River. Four and a half hours later and eight miles upstream, Celilo Falls, the spectacular natural wonder and the age-old Indian salmon fishery associated with it was under water.

That was 63 years ago. But the spirit of Wy-am—which some say means “echo of falling water”—still lives in the traditions and religions, indeed in the very soul of Columbia River Indian people.

When the United States government submerged Celilo Falls in 1957, it attempted to compensate the tribes for flooding their fishing sites, though this was an invaluable part of the tribal economy. The government did not, however, purchase their fishing rights. Those rights, as set forth in the 1855 treaties, were not affected, and exist to this day.

Article by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Summaries of Tribal Council

March 2, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by Chairman Tsumpti. Roll call: Lincoln Jay Suppah, Chief Alfred Smith Jr., Vice Chairwoman Brigette McConville, Anita Jackson, Glendon Smith, Wilson Wewa Jr., Chief Delvis Heath, and Chief Joseph Moses. Minnie Yahtin, Recorder.

Bureau of Indian Affairs update with Floy Lori Anderson, Superintendent.

Arlington Landfill update with Louie Pitt, Governmental Affairs:

- Louie will contact The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla and Department of Energy for a meeting.

Realty items with James Halliday, Land Services administrator:

- Motion by Brigette adopting Resolution No. 12,672 approving a grazing lease in the Schoolie Flat area for George Williams, with noted corrections. Second by Wilson. Question: 7/0/1, Delvis/abstain, Chairman not voting. Motion carried.

- Reviewed lease cancellation letter.

- Wilson then gave an update on the Coronavirus phone call.

- Portland Harbor update with Ellen Grover and Robert Brunoe:

- Executive session, 11:13-12:30.

Federal and state legislative update calls with Matt Hill and Michael Mason.

Tribal attorney update with Ellen Grover:

- Reviewed current and ongoing issues.
- Executive Session, 2:38-2:55.

Tribal attorney update with John Ogan.

2020 Salmon Camp:

- Motion by Anita approving \$5,000 donation for the 2020 Salmon Camp, to be held in Warm Springs. Secretary-Treasurer to determine which budget to use. Second by Jay. Question: 5/0/0, Vice Chair not voting. Motion carried.

Motion by Anita to adjourn at 4:46 p.m.

March 3

The meeting was called to order at 9:14 a.m. by Vice Chairwoman Brigette

McConville. Roll call: Raymond Captain Moody, Lincoln Jay Suppah, Chief Alfred Smith Jr., Chief Delvis Heath, Glendon Smith, Chief Joseph Moses, Anita Jackson. Minnie Yahtin, Recorder.

COVID-19 update with Danny Martinez, Tribal Emergency manger; Hyllis Dauphinais, Indian Health Service CEO; and Russell Graham, tribal Sanitation:

- Katie Russell will be back-up to Louie Pitt as point of contact.

Cannabis Board appointments with Michele Stacona, Secretary-Treasurer:

- Motion by Glendon adopting Resolution No. 12,673 appointing the directors of Warm Springs Economic Development Corporation, dba Warm Springs Ventures, to the Board of Directors of CP Enterprise. Second by Captain. Question: 6/0/0, Vice Chair not voting. Motion carried.

United States Fish & Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, and Bureau of Reclamation government-to-government consultation with Tribal Council regarding the Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan.

Kah-Nee-Ta discussion with Wakinyan, introducing Kevin Mass, FFKR architecture firm principal.

HUD 184 discussion with Howard Arnett, tribal attorney:

- Motion by Glendon adopting Resolution No. 12,674 hereby approving HUD and Bureau of Indian Affairs form ‘Residential Lease of Tribal Owned Land’ (attached as Exhibit A) for use in leasing tribal land on the Warm Springs Reservation for residential housing to be financed in whole or in part through the Section 184 program. The Secretary-Treasurer/CEO of the tribe is authorized to execute any further documents as may be needed to qualify the Tribe and the Warm

Springs Reservation for participation in the Section 184 program, including submitting Resolution No. 12,639, and Resolution 12,639A, and this Resolution to HUD staff for their review and certification of the Tribe and Warm Springs Reservation as eligible for participation in the Section 184 program. Second by Anita. Question: 3/2/1, Captain/No, Jay/No, Alfred/Abstain, Vice Chair not voting. Motion carried.

- Anita gave an update on the Columbia River Housing meeting.

- Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History Native American Repatriation Review Committee vacancy:

- Motion by Captain nominating Brigette to submit a statement of interest for the vacancy. Second by Jay. Question: 6/0/0, Vice Chair not voting. Motion carried.

Motion by Captain to adjourn at 2:28 p.m.

Internships with U.S. Senator Merkley

Oregon’s U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley is offering internship scholarships, allowing current and recent students to gain experience in the senator’s Washington, D.C. and Portland offices.

A deadline for the summer program is coming up on March 30. Here are some details:

Sen. Merkley’s office has a limited number of Otto and Verdell Ruhterfod scholarships, and We the People scholarships.

The scholarships are available for full-time or part-time internships that last between ten to 14 weeks during the summer, fall, and winter/spring terms.

You can find full details, and apply, at the Senator’s website. Go to: merkley.senate.gov/

scholarships

They are recruiting now for the summer and fall, with the summer session deadline coming up at midnight on March 30.

Scholarships are available for those who could not otherwise afford the educational opportunity to intern in Washington, D.C., or Portland.

Full-time D.C. scholarship interns receive approximately \$6,000 pre-tax for a full-time commitment lasting a minimum of 10 weeks.

Part-time D.C. scholarship interns receive roughly \$3,750 pre-tax for a part-time internship lasting a minimum of 10 weeks. There may be a travel subsidy for those relocating to Washington, D.C.

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