

Tribal Timber(Cont.)

According the head tribal forester Cliff Adams, the reservation land has one pair of spotted owls at this time. "What we're going to try to do is see if we can't work around the pair of spotted owls," explained Adams. "We think it is important to try and provide the revenue to the Tribe but, in a way that is not detrimental to the owl."

One of the main issues being reviewed by the court is just exactly what kind of environment they need to survive. "The biologists don't have all the answers, they are going with the worst case scenario because they want to err on the side of protection if they are going to err at all," said Adams. The owls on the Grand Ronde reservation are not residing in old growth timber at this time and more and more cases are being documented all the time showing that the owls can survive in trees other than what is currently defined as "old growth". "I think people on both sides of this issue are finding out that the owls can survive and do quite well in a habitat that isn't characteristically old growth," said Adams. "You will find lots of owls in 89 to 100 year old stands."

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Currently, the forestry program is producing an inventory of the reservation to see exactly where the owls are nesting and if there are anymore on the land. "So far the biologist that we hired to do this inventory has not found any at this point," explained Adams. According to Adams, the owl inventory must be done every year. "It has to be done every year because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would like to see three calls (owl inventories) in one year and an additional three calls the second year on all timber sales before the timber is harvested," said Adams.

As far as the issue of old growth is concerned, the tribal timber base should be unaffected. "We don't have any particular area on the reservation that has old growth characteristics. There may be a tree scattered here or there but, the oldest stand of trees we have is 110 years old," said Adams.

Another issue of concern among tribal members is knowing how the forestry program is prepared to handle a forest fire should one break out on the reservation. "I think that we are as ready as we can be for the kind of response needed to react within minutes should a fire start," said general manager Jim Willis. "What we have done is what other private landowners have done and that is build ourselves a small initial action unit so that we can respond as quickly as possible."

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This picture of an adult spotted owl was taken on the Grand Ronde reservation by forester Cliff Adams.

Adams feels as though his program is as prepared to fight a wild fire as they can be. "It would be rare to have any kind of major fire in this area but it has happened before," he said. The Forestry Program currently has two fire trucks ready to go. Adams said that they also

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have a small slip-on tank that fits on to the back of a truck that can be used as well if needed. "Our foam truck isn't quite finished yet but it should be ready this month. So, instead of having just a standard water truck we'll have foam capabilities which actually increases the effectiveness of the water", explained Adams. "The foam makes your water last longer. It sticks right to the source of the flames and helps smother the fire as well as cool it." The program is also going to hire a three person fire crew for the summer.

As we wait for a ruling to be handed down in Seattle that will determine the future of timber lands throughout the entire Northwest, we can feel good that our Forestry Program is on top of these controversial issues.

Part three of this series will focus on the future of the Tribal Forestry Program and the activities we will be involved in.



This is a picture of one of the only old growth trees on the Grand Ronde Reservation. Forester Cliff Adams estimates that the tree could be from 250 to 300 years old. (Photo by Brent Merrill)