

Development continues: Tribal growth maintains its steady pace

The Tribe has accomplished so many things this year and it looks as if its growth won't slow down in 1997, either. What will the Tribe do next? Here's a look at some of the projects currently in the works.

By Tracy Dugan

MANUFACTURED HOUSING PARK

As you may be aware, last year the Tribe purchased 11 acres of land in Grand Ronde, directly across from the tribal cemetery. It was determined by Tribal Council and members of the Public Works division that this land would be used to establish housing for tribal members wishing to move to Grand Ronde. The Tribe is currently in the process of developing the land for the purpose of building a manufactured housing park. The park will contain 37 housing lots. The Tribe plans to lease the lots to tribal members, who will purchase their own manufactured homes and place them in the park.

Developing housing and other projects create complex issues which need attention before the Tribe can begin construction. For example, to comply with the Tribe's Environmental Ordinance, the Tribe is required to investigate how its developments will affect the environmental surroundings. During the environmental investigation, wetlands were discovered on the site. In order to build on a wetland area, the Tribe must apply to the Army Corps of Engineers for a permit. The permit would allow the Tribe to build on only a portion of the wetlands. The wetland area covers about 1.3 acres within the 11 acre development site. Other investigations were also conducted. It was determined that there would be no significant effects to any of the threatened or endangered species populations in the area, and there were no archeological findings in that area.

After the wetlands mitigation is complete, it is estimated that it will take 90 days to complete the park. Construction on Grand Ronde and McPherson roads are scheduled to begin soon after the Pow-wow, as well as improvements to the tribal cemetery. Cemetery improvements include road work and additional parking.

SPIRIT MOUNTAIN CASINO RV PARK

Since the completion of the Casino's new restaurant and recreation area for kids last June, many would probably assume that the Casino is through with any new additions for a while. But already there is another project in the works.

The Casino is in the process of developing plans to construct a 150-unit RV park, which will be located on the west side of the Casino's parking area.

Like the tribal manufactured home park construction, the proposed location of the RV park is directly in the middle of a protected wetland area. Therefore, the Casino must also negotiate with the Army Corps of Engineers for a permit to build on the site.

David Harjo, Vice President of Development, said that the Casino has hired a hydrologist to study the area, and work with the RV park architect to determine what areas are suitable for construction, and what areas would be damaged by construction.

"We're also working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department to determine if there will be any impacts to the Checkermallow habitat in that particular area," said David. The Nelson's Checkermallow plant is an endangered species of plant the Tribe discovered growing in the area. Before casino construction was to begin in 1994, the Tribe transplanted many of the plants to isolated areas on the reservation, where they continue to thrive. However, the Casino would like to keep those plants growing next to the Casino undisturbed.

Once the environmental precautions are taken, construction of the RV park can begin. Although it will only take a couple of months to build, it is necessary to avoid the rainy season, so it has yet to be determined whether the Casino will begin building this year or in the spring.

Plans for the RV park include two buildings for showers and washrooms, a small registration office, and laundry facilities. It is estimated that users will be able to stay for six or seven days at a time.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER

As reported in *Smoke Signals*, a full-service health and wellness center is scheduled to be built in Grand Ronde. Targeted for completion in Fall of 1997, it is estimated that construction will begin in September.

A groundbreaking ceremony will be held on August 16, at 10 a.m.

Gene Kompkoff, Project Manager for the center, said it should take about 13 months to complete the 29,000 square-foot facility.

The center's facilities and services will be available to anyone in the community.

Gene has spent a good portion of this year working with the Human Services staff and the architect on the design of the center, and finalizing the construction plans. A graduate of the University of Washington, he holds a degree in civil engineering and this is the third tribal clinic he has been a part of developing.

