

Water Quality top environmental priority

By Tracy Dugan

Kathleen Feehan, the Tribe's Environmental Protection Specialist, is in the process of working on a Water Quality project that would provide funding for the Tribe to manage and monitor the water on the reservation and in parts of the Grand Ronde Community.

"Right now we have no real baseline information about the water quality in the area," said Feehan. "We have hired a Water Quality Specialist, Sean Darcy, who is preparing to conduct different types of assessments of the water."

Feehan said there are many types of forces that can affect the quality of water. Logging, construction, and the weather are all factors. "We need to look at the chemical characteristics of the water," she said. "The temperature of the water is very

important for the life of the salmon, steelhead, and other fish in the rivers. Flow regimes can also affect the water's biological communities. Our goal is to get in place six permanent monitoring sites."

Feehan works closely with Kelly Doerkson, the Tribe's Fish and Wildlife Coordinator, in creating some of these projects. Currently, they are both working on a project to identify wetlands in the community in order to learn about the areas the Tribe is interested in building on.

"Kelly just received approval to begin work on a fish habitat enhancement project," said Feehan. "We will be replacing two old undersized culverts with larger bottomless culverts to allow for the natural passage of fish. It will mean an extra seven miles of migratory habitat for our fish. We are all very excited about this."

New conservation program for private landowners

PORTLAND, OR — Private landowners in Oregon will be able to take advantage of a voluntary USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) cost-share program called the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that will provide \$4.2 million this year for implementing conservation practices. This is an increase in Oregon from \$3.9 million last year.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is a flexible, voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers who face serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resource concerns.

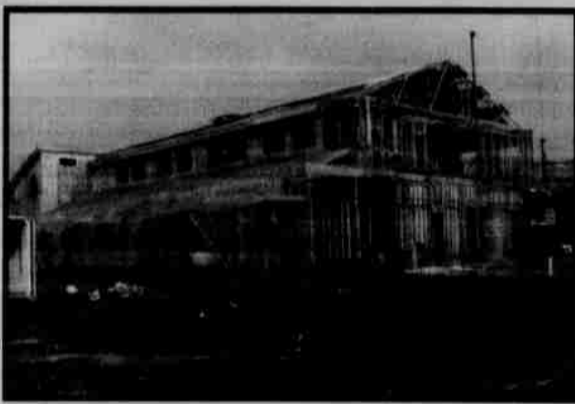
Under the provisions of this program producers will work with a local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) representative to develop a conservation farm or ranch plan that addresses all natural resource concerns over a 5 to 10-year period. Under the EQIP, USDA Farm Services Agency can provide cost-share assistance up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation protection practices, such as grassed waterways,

filter strips, animal waste management facilities, capping abandon wells, and wildlife habitat enhancement. USDA may also provide incentive payments to encourage producers to apply such land management practices as nutrient, manure, irrigation water, wildlife and integrated pest management. EQIP will be delivered primarily to identified priority areas. Under EQIP, priority areas are watersheds, or geographic regions with special environmental sensitivity or significant soil, water or related natural resource concerns. In addition to priority areas, Oregon has several statewide issues which landowners may also receive funding. They include salmon habitat, watershed health and the Mid-Columbia Plateau.

The sign up period closes soon. To find out if you are eligible for EQIP funding, contact USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service at (503) 414-3236; or the Polk Conservation District at (503) 623-5534; or the Farm Service Agency at (503) 623-2396.

Administration Building, *continued from front page*

ing, Policy and Planning will be situated in the center of the building. Policy and Planning includes Grants Development and Community Planning. To the west is the Human Resources Department. To the east will be the Public Relations Department with *Smoke Signals* newspaper, and the Tribe's Cultural Resources Department.



Supplementary areas on the second floor include more conference rooms, a reception area, a break room, an exercise room, mechanical and storage rooms, and a classroom.

Although the Tribe strives to create facilities that are intended to provide improved services for our clients, the Tribe is growing at a remarkable rate and this growth does not happen without growing pains. We are continually challenged with how our growth in facilities impacts our tribal lands, local community, and infrastructure.

The Administration Building is situated close to the Pow-wow grounds. The building site takes away some area that, in past years, was designated for Pow-wow parking. This situation will require major work on the Pow-wow grounds. This work not only involves where to put the Pow-wow park-

ing, but involves new strategies for access, vendors, camping, and coordination of Pow-wow events. As we see our community grow building by building, we must stop and think about the immeasurable amounts of work that go into these buildings. The Tribe commits valuable resources into

a building. The most valuable resource is people. For every building we see going up, we cannot count the amount of people associated with the development of that building. The people involved range from the Tribal Council, Tribal Staff, Grand Ronde Community members, Grand Ronde Water Association, Grand Ronde Sewer District, professional consultants, contractors, the electric company, the telephone company, county workers, and many other people. The building we see as a final product represents the hard work and teamwork of these valuable and often unknown people. As we continue to develop, we will endeavor to create facilities that show beauty, functionality, durability, and a continued pursuit of tribal goals and visions. Most of all we hope that we can create a tribal community that instills a sense of pride for our tribal membership.

Yes, the Casino really paid out \$900 million in 1997

The February 1 issue of *Smoke Signals* ran an article about a recent dispute between Spirit Mountain Casino and a patron over a slot machine jackpot. The article stated that Spirit Mountain's customers had won more than \$900 million in jackpots last year. That was **not** a misprint, but it sure did surprise a lot of folks.

Here's why the number is so big: the Casino makes a little money from each of a whole lot of people. In other words, it's a low margin, high volume business. Most of the money the Casino patrons put into a slot machine is paid out to that patron and other patrons in jackpots — some small and some large. Most customers put the money back into the machine so they can play longer. For example, a player may start out with \$20. During a few hours of gaming, he both wins and loses. He may win a total of \$200 during the evening and lose a similar amount. He goes home with \$20 (more or less) and the Casino would have paid him \$200 in jackpots that evening. Some patrons go home with more than what they brought, and a few more go home with less. That's how the Casino makes a profit.

With nearly three million visitors in 1997 (making Spirit Mountain the most popular tourist attraction the state), the total for jackpots is very large. Let's hope it'll be even larger in 1998.

It might be tempting to think that we could increase our profits, (and therefore the amount that goes into badly needed tribal programs and benefits) by reducing the percentage we pay out with our slot machines. However, if the Casino "tightens" the slots, our customers will perceive this as unfair and they will go elsewhere. We would soon be out of business.

The truth is, the machines were set to a fair payout when Spirit Mountain opened (about the same as Las Vegas or Reno) and they have been left that way ever since. That is the winning formula for both the Casino and its customers.

ATNI meets at Chinook Winds Gaming and Convention Center

The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) met at Chinook Winds Gaming and Convention Center on February 16-19 to discuss current tribal and political issues. Representatives from tribes in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho were there, including Grand Ronde Tribal Council and some staff members.

ATNI typically consists of one day of open discussion on national issues affecting tribes and tribal sovereignty, followed by a day of committee reports and meetings, and presentations of policy resolutions. On February 18 a special luncheon was hosted by the Siletz Tribe to honor Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse for her support of tribal issues and restoration during her political and professional careers.

Rep. Furse will not be seeking another term in Congress, and the luncheon was a special forum for Northwest tribes to publicly thank her for her diligence and hard work in support of tribes.

Other topics at ATNI included election strategies for 1998, discussion of a 1999 action plan for the 105th Congress, and planning for 1999 National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) convention.

Most of the tribal delegates will attend NCAI and report to the national Native leaders about the topics discussed and issues affecting tribes throughout the northwestern United States.