

NEWS BRIEFS FROM INDIAN COUNTRY

Warm Springs Tribe agrees to buy island

PORTLAND, OR. (AP) — They may not be able to build a casino there, but the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs said recently they would purchase 30-acre Government Island in Cascade Locks for \$1.9 million.

Gov. John Kitzhaber refused permission for a gambling operation there last November.

Tribal spokesman Rudy Clements said the Tribe hasn't decided what to do with the island, which is connected to the mainland by a causeway in the Columbia River on the edge of the city.

Cascade Locks officials have reserved the island for commercial and

recreational development.

"It has all kinds of opportunities for economic development," Clements said.

The land is part of the 10 million acres the Tribe ceded to the U.S. government in the treaty of 1855, he said.

"We still have a real emotional and spiritual relationship with that property," Clements said, adding that the Tribe has had fishing sites in the area since time immemorial.

Regardless of how the Tribe uses the land; the purchase will be good for Cascade Locks, said Phil Redlock, chairman of the Port of Cascade Locks Commission.

The Tribe's proposal to build a ca-

sino on the island got a warm welcome in Cascade Locks, where residents saw it as a source of much-needed jobs. The Tribe has pledged to share the revenues of the casino with the city, setting aside 6 percent of the casino's net income — an estimated \$800,000 to \$1.2 million a year — to help finance community projects.

Whatever the Tribe decides to do with Government Island, they will work with the people in Cascade Locks, Clements said. "We're thinking of setting up a joint planning board. We're going to be part of that community. We both have to be working together."

After Kitzhaber rejected the Cascade Locks casino, tribal leaders said they would consider other options. On May 28, tribal members will vote in a tribal referendum on whether they want to build a casino on trust land just north of Madras.

The Tribe also own a piece of trust land just east of Hood River where they could build a casino, although access to the hilly land is difficult and area residents have loudly opposed the proposal.

One immediate option for the rocky Government Island, Clements said, is mining its rock, which would provide revenue and also ready it for any development to follow.

Corvallis woman wants to change name of creek

CORVALLIS, OR. (AP) — The name Squaw Creek has bothered Suzanne Stillwaggon for years.

Now she is lobbying to change a word she considers a racial slur invented by French trappers to refer to American Indian women.

Over the years, other efforts to remove the name from popular lexicon have emerged in the Pacific Northwest. In Washington State, the U.S. Army recently changed the name of a creek on its Yakima training center from Squaw to Lmumma.

Squaw Creek flows through southwest Corvallis and is crossed several times by a recreational bike path.

"I've been up and down this creek over and over, and there's not a single sign to be changed, so this doesn't involve anybody's tax money," Still-

waggon said. "As far as I can see there's no reason not to do it."

Stillwaggon plans to include landowners, the Benton County Historical Society and regional Tribes in her effort to change the name. She wants to gauge community support and also generate new potential names that honor the area's cultural heritage.

The Corvallis Environmental Center has already offered support to Stillwaggon's cause and will conduct a survey about the name change.

The more support she has, Stillwaggon said, the easier it will be to convince the state Geographic Names Board that the change is warranted.

The Benton County Board of Commissioners is scheduled to discuss a possible name change.

Indians repeat ancient ceremony

THE DALLES, OR. (AP) — With his hands red with blood, Bobby Begay sliced into the 15-pound chinook he and his crew were preparing for the First Salmon feast at this traditional tribal gathering spot.

Begay, 31, is grandson of the village chief and a ceremonial fisherman and hunter. He and six other men spent a week catching 50 spring chinook, seven deer and two elk.

At the same time, ceremonial gatherers — women who gather roots and berries for the feast — collected baskets brimming with camas, bitterroot and chokeberry.

Some 400 people took part in the feast. Drumming could be heard from inside the longhouse.

No trace remains of Celilo Falls, the sacred fishing spot that disappeared when The Dalles Dam was built in 1957. A First Salmon feast has been held at Celilo since the oral history

of the river Indians began. It will continue, they say, until salmon no longer run in the Columbia River.

The feast once played a crucial role in the lives of the region's Native Americans, known to themselves as the River People.

Few spots in North America were more important before the arrival of Europeans than Celilo Falls.

Situated 94 miles east of Portland, the 15-waterfall site was the best spot on the Columbia to catch salmon.

The tribes stopped commercial fishing for spring Chinook in 1977. But those gathered at the longhouse said the feast retains a crucial role in tribal culture.

The feast began with ceremonial hunters and gatherers putting small portions of the sacred first food — fish, meat, roots and berries — on each of the plates placed on straw mats on the longhouse floor.

Military plane crash takes life of local man

By Brent Merrill

The crash of an experimental military plane in the Arizona desert Saturday night (April 8) hit home here in Grand Ronde. One of the victims of the crash, 24-year-old Keoki Santos, was the son of Christina Mercier of Grand Ronde. Mercier is married to tribal member Dean Mercier.

Santos was a U.S. Marine private first class rifleman stationed at Camp Pendleton, California. Santos was participating in a training exercise near the Marana Northwest Regional Airport 20 miles northwest of Tucson, Arizona when the MV-22 tilt-rotor Osprey crashed killing all 19 military personnel on board.

Crashes and controversy have plagued the Osprey since the military began flying the hybrid plane in late 1999. The plane is the first aircraft designed to take-off and land like a helicopter and then switch mid-flight to normal flight operations.

Top government officials have argued the need for and effectiveness of the Osprey for several years.

Saturday's crash was the third for the plane — a crash in 1992 killed seven military personnel.

According to Marine Lt. General Fred McCorkle, the crash was recorded on infrared tape by an F-18 fighter jet overhead. The tape will be reviewed by military personnel in an effort to better understand the circumstances of the crash.

The military has grounded their four remaining Ospreys until more information about the cause of the crash can be determined.

Santos, who followed his father into the Marines, was living out his lifelong dream of being a Marine. Santos enlisted in the Marines in February of 1999 after living in Grand Ronde with his mother and stepfather.

"He was so beautiful," said an emotional Mercier. "He was a true Marine. He was so proud and we were

so proud of him. He had wanted to be a Marine since he was old enough to walk and talk."

The grieving mother said she talked to her son on the phone at least once a week and visited with him during the holidays when he returned to Grand Ronde on leave.

"He had really grown up a lot and he had changed for the better," said Mercier. "He was really coming into his own. He was very polite and respectful. He was the kind of person that made friends so easily. Everybody that met him liked him."

Mercier said her son played football in high school and was an avid outdoorsman.

"He loved to hunt and fish and spent a lot of time with his friends hiking and hunting," said Mercier.

The family will leave this week for Camp Pendleton to attend a full military funeral service. President Clinton is scheduled to attend the service.

Santos' family plans an additional



Keoki Santos

memorial service at Willamette National Cemetery in Portland.

Santos is survived by his mother and stepfather and sister Janice Marsh of Waldport.