

Proclamation Honors Tribe's Stewardship

PROCLAMATION continued
from front page

the atrium of the Tribal Governance building, before Kulongoski, members of the state's Fish and Wildlife Commission, the Tribal Council and about 50 Tribal members seated in the downstairs hearing room opened to the atrium for the occasion.

"Hunting and fishing have been an integral part of the lives of our Tribal members for decades," Mercier continued, and the ceremony took the latest step in returning the management of this cultural practice to the Grand Rondes.

"I can't commend the governor enough for helping us make this happen," Mercier said later about the Proclamation. "I really feel he put forth a very sincere effort. If this isn't a perfect example of why it's important and beneficial to have a healthy relationship with the sitting governor of our state, then I don't know what is."

The purpose of the Proclamation is twofold, Tribal Council member Reyn Leno said.

First, it recognizes the Tribe's right to take game for its ceremonies from April to August. (The Tribe already has special hunting tags for other hunting seasons.) Just as important, Leno said, "it is a recognition of our (professional quality) stewardship of our reservation."

Specifically, the Proclamation commits the state and Tribe to work together to fill in the details of "a conceptual plan by which the Tribe's need for additional game animals for ceremonial purposes and additional stewardship responsibilities could be satisfied."

As part of that effort, Tribal Natural Resources Manager Mike Wilson, Tribal Fish and Wildlife Coordinator Kelly Dirksen and Tribal Forester Mike Karnosh led the group on a tour of reservation forest lands for a show and tell about Tribal stewardship after the Proclamation signing ceremony.

"The value of the reservation for Tribal members can never be put into words," Dirksen told the group. "We're

very passionate about these lands."

With charts and maps erected by Natural Resources Summer Youth Crew members for the occasion at selected sites within reservation lands, Dirksen described the Tribe's 10,000 acres as "one of the most productive forests in Oregon." He cited the Tribe's 10-year plan starting in 2003 that guides the stewardship.

Karnosh described "the stages of forest succession" for the group in front of charts at the West Fork Unit, which was logged in 2005 and has since been replanted.

"We want to maintain all stages on the reservation," he said, and pointing to a small number of mature trees left to continue growing, he said, "and be particularly contiguous with the late stages."

While many foresters use herbicides to eliminate undergrowth and maximize tree growth, the Tribe allows undergrowth to provide continuing habitat for forest animals.

"We want this to be as representative of the original forest as possible," Karnosh said.

"It's a philosophical difference," Dirksen said. "Keeping the forest for the seventh generation. If we can get more people to embrace that philosophy, state forests would be in better shape."

"Everyone is so insanely proud of what we've accomplished out here that it's just good to be able to share it."

The group also toured the Tribe's fish weir, built last year on Agency Creek to count the number of steelhead and coho coming up the waterway.

"A lot of what we've got going today started with Cliff Adams as our (Natural Resources) manager back in the 1990s," Leno said.

Leno, along with Tribal Council Secretary Jack Giffen Jr. and other Tribal leaders, has been traveling to Washington, D.C., for half a dozen years to make this day a reality, though in truth, it still only brings the Tribe part of the way home.

"This is an interim agreement," Leno said. "We hope to open up the (Consent) Decree and take over total management of reservation



Tribal Fish and Wildlife Coordinator Kelly Dirksen, left, describes the Tribe's forestry efforts to Gov. Ted Kulongoski.

Photo by Ron Katten

forests like other Tribes."

To achieve Restoration, the Tribe had to agree to abide by state regulations for hunting, fishing and gathering, and forgo some traditional cultural practices.

"I was thinking the issue went back a few years," said Leno, "but when I talked to (Tribal Council member) Cheryle (Kennedy), she said it goes all the way back to Termination, and she's right."

Starting with Termination in 1954, the Confederated Tribes' 69,000-acre land base was all but eliminated, leaving just the seven-acre cemetery over which the Grand Rondes still exercised management control.

Following Restoration in 1983, almost 10,000 acres were restored to the Tribe, but in most respects the Grand Rondes remained subservient to the state Fish and Wildlife agency when it came to hunting and fishing rights, as well as management of the reservation.

"A lot of Tribal members felt that the Restoration agreement required the Tribe to give up its aboriginal hunting and fishing rights or not get recognized," Leno said.

Even for ceremonies, long a cherished cultural practice that involved Tribal members hunting and fishing for fresh food, the Grand Rondes have been denied the practice outside of state-regulated seasons. The Tribe has bowed to state rules governing when and where hunting and fishing are allowed, and generally resorted to frozen wildlife, caught during state-sanctioned seasons, for ceremonies.

Fish and Wildlife Commission Chair Marla Rae heralded "the strong partnership" between state and Tribe.

Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Skip Klarquist of Portland said that the group came "to support what we're doing here."

"We're going to be great partners in preserving this landscape," Kulongoski said.

"Whether a Tribal member is a hunter or fisherman or going to cut wood in the forest, I think all Tribal members need to recognize this as a piece of sovereignty regained," Leno said.

"And that's not done in Indian Country too often." ■

Ceremony Features Traditional Gifts, Honors

The signing of the Proclamation brought with it a flurry of traditional gifts and honors, songs and speeches, and Grand Ronde's Public Affairs director had high hopes.

"We're on government time," said Siobhan Taylor. "In fact, we're on two governments' times, and I think the best we can hope for is that this be brief and beautiful."

An Honor song by Warner and Debarah Austin of Keizer, the participation of the Grand Ronde Color Guard, the speeches by Tribal Council Chair Chris Mercier, Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Chair Marla Rae boiled down to the words of former Tribal

Elder Ila Doud: *lush san ukuk*. "It is a good day."

Mercier presented Kulongoski with a medicine bag to help with his recent neck operation. Tribal Elder Linda Olson made beaded necklaces for all guests, with five special beads representing the five major Tribes from which the Grand Rondes emerged. And Public Affairs Office personnel made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Kulongoski, who is known to be partial to them.

Spirit Mountain Casino's Executive Chef Richard Burr and Food and Beverage Manager Toby TenEyck had been weeks in preparing a picnic in the woods for the group. Among the offerings were "house-smoked salmon and chicken Caesar wraps both gar-



Tribal Elder Linda Olson gave out beaded necklaces for guests at the proclamation ceremony.

Photo by Summer Youth Employee Erika Merrill

nished with a brunois of plum tomatoes and fresh sliced avocado, finished with cream cheese and a savory blend of spices," in Burr's words.

On the side were potato salads and fruit cocktail with tiny Gewurztraminer champagne grapes and apple pie, all so enticing that you could only feel sorry for Kulongoski with his PB&Js.

Tribal Elder and basket weaver Sam Henny, who made a basket for Kulongoski on his last visit but was unable to attend, had a chance to meet with the governor and enjoy a photo opportunity.

Tribal Elder and Veteran June Sell-Sherer announced that the veterans were honoring the governor by having his name inscribed on the West Valley Veterans' Memorial.

And on a day when everything seemed possible, Taylor said at the end of the opening ceremony that "this could have been the fastest government-to-government meeting in history, and also one of the most moving and most helpful." ■