

'Squaw' names being replaced in Clackamas County

Tribe supports using Clackamas word 'tumala' as replacement in National Forest

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Efforts supported by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are erasing the word "squaw" from place and road names in Clackamas County.

In December, the Oregon Board of Geographic Names and the U.S. Board of Geographic Names approved substituting the Chinook Wawa word "Tumala" for Squaw Creek, Lakes, Meadow and Mountain in the Mount Hood National Forest east of Estacada.

On Jan. 22, Clackamas County commissioners said they also want to rename Squaw Mountain Road, which they said is the last place on county maps using the word "squaw," a reference to Native American women that is considered derogatory.

"Tumala" suggests a spiritual sense of the future or eternal life, according to the Oregon Geographic Names Board.

"Its origin is in the historic interaction between English-speaking fur trappers and the indigenous people of the Columbia River Basin," according to a letter sent to Clackamas County by the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde.

Mollala resident Champ Vaughan, president of the Oregon Geographic Names Board, said that the state Legislature mandated in 2001 that state and local governments eliminate the word "squaw" from public properties and asked that the federal government and state Names Board remove it from geographic names.

In 1996, Oregon had 172 geographic names with the word "squaw," more than any other state, Vaughan said.

"Most of these were named in the 19th century simply because they were put on maps," he said via e-mail. "Replacement names must be processed and approved before existing 'squaw' names can be eliminated, and our board must rely on the general public and the Oregon Tribes to come up with replacement names."

Vaughan said that 50 of the squaw-named geographic features have been renamed.

Since Clackamas County was the traditional Tribal lands of the Clackamas Tribe, one of the 27 Tribes that became the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the state Names Board contacted David Lewis, Tribal Cultural Resources manager, to see if the Tribe would be the official sponsor or proponent for the name changes.

"Mr. Lewis agreed and was very helpful by providing us with all of the justification and background information we needed," Vaughan said.

The state Names Board and Clackamas County Board of Commissioners approved the word "tumala" because of its historical connection to the Clackamas Tribe.

On Dec. 13, the U.S. Board of Geo-



Graphic created by George Valdez

graphic Names voted unanimously to approve changing the four names to Tumala Lakes, Meadow, Mountain and Creek.

The word "squaw" derives from the Algonquian language, in which it meant "woman." However, its use became more controversial in the early 1990s when Native American poet, writer and lecturer Suzan Harjo (Hodulgee Moscovice Creek/Cheyenne) said on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" that the word often referred to female reproductive organs when spoken by European settlers.

"That'll give you an idea what the French and British fur trappers were calling all Indian women, and I hope no one ever uses that term again," Harjo said.

The Oregon Board of Geographic Names is responsible for supervising

the naming of all geographic features in the state to standardize geographic nomenclature, prevent confusions and duplication in names, and correct previous naming errors. Its recommendations are sent to the U.S. board for final action.

Vaughan noted that the state Names Board does not deal with names for roads, reservoirs or wildlife areas.

The board meets twice annually. It was established in 1908 by then-Gov. George Chamberlain and was recognized by the U.S. Board of Geographic Names in 1911. Responsibility for managing the board was transferred from the state to the Oregon Historical Society in 1959.

The board has 25 members who serve three-year terms, which can be renewed. ■

Tribe not alone in opposing more casinos

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Tribal projections say the earliest the Cowlitz could open a casino in La Center would be December 2012, and the earliest the Warm Springs could open a casino in Cascade Locks is December 2013.

Martin also discussed how much money the Grand Ronde Tribe has spent to oppose off-reservation gaming in Oregon and Washington, noting that in 2006, for example, the Tribe spent \$1 to save more than \$45 in Tribal dividend.

"This is part of our preventive philosophy," he said. "Who wouldn't spend a \$1 to save \$45?"

Martin said that the Grand Ronde Tribe is not alone in opposing off-reservation gaming, showing a slide that listed 15 organizations, including the Oregon Restaurant Association and Oregon Family Council, that also oppose off-reservation gaming, particularly in the Gorge.

Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. asked Martin about the

Warm Springs argument that there are already seven off-reservation casinos in Oregon. The Warm Springs contend Spirit Mountain Casino is "off-reservation" because it is not sited within the reservation outlined in the 1988 Grand Ronde Reservation Act.

"We and the six other terminated Tribes take offense at that," Martin said. "We elected to put our casino in the heart of our aboriginal territories. It's a very sad attempt ... and they're not making a difference between terminated and non-terminated Tribes."

Tribal Attorney Rob Greene added that Spirit Mountain Casino is on the Tribe's historical and restored lands.

Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom asked why the state of Oregon would support allowing a private casino, considering the detrimental effect it could have on Oregon Lottery revenues.

Martin said that if the November initiative is OK'd by voters, there would likely be "mad expansion" of alternative gambling options in Or-

egon and then it would ultimately subsidize.

"Gambling in the United States is very cyclical," he said.

Tom said that the Grand Ronde Tribe gives its gambling revenues back to Tribal members in the form of myriad benefits, community through Spirit Mountain Community Fund and state, while a private casino would send its revenues into the hands of investors who probably live outside of Oregon.

Tribal Council member Jack Giffen Jr., in response to a question from Tribal member Patsy Pullin, added that the Tribe is not attacking Gov. Kulongoski, but is disagreeing with his support of a policy change that would allow off-reservation gaming by the Warm Springs.

"The Grand Ronde Tribe is not attacking fellow Tribes," Tribal Council member Val Sheker added. "The Grand Ronde Tribe is against changing a policy that was fair for all Tribes. If need was the reason for the governor to change his stance, why didn't he turn to

the Burns Paiute first? They're hurting. ... It's a bad policy and a bad change."

"It's not a war," Tribal Vice Chairman Reyn Leno said about the Tribe's relationship with the Warm Springs. "It's about people trying to take care of people. It's not hostile. They have a strategy and we have a strategy."

Martin held out hope that the likelihood of "the big one" — the Wood Village private casino — occurring is unlikely, at least in 2008.

Martin said three of the four mayors of cities near the Wood Village site are opposed to the casino proposal and, even if the November statewide initiative passes, Wood Village voters would then vote on whether they want the casino within their city.

Despite all those hurdles, Martin advised being proactive in fighting the private casino initiative.

"Let's beat them handily so they don't keep coming back in 2010, 2012 ... election cycle after election cycle," Martin said. ■