

## Conservative comedy



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Comedian Dennis Miller performs at Spirit Mountain Casino's Events and Entertainment Center on Friday, Sept. 12. Miller, who has performed on TV ("Saturday Night Live"), in films ("Bordello of Blood") and on radio, was the headliner for two straight nights at the casino.

## Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority



### Alternative Energy System

Proposals due 3 p.m., Friday Oct. 24, 2008

Request for Qualifications with Proposals.

GRTHA is seeking proposals from qualified alternative energy consultants. The project is to provide sufficient alternative energy to balance the yearly needs of the GRTHA Office Complex.

Parties wishing to apply can request a **bid packet** by calling 503-879-2401. A project walk through will be held on Wed, Oct. 8 at 10 a.m.. Address for walk through, mailing and hand delivery of proposals is GRTHA, 28450 Tyee Road, Grand Ronde, OR. 97347.

The GRTHA must receive bids before 3 p.m. on Oct. 24, 2008. An oral interview may be held with the two leading candidates at a time to be designated. Proposals will be evaluated only on the criteria stated in the RFP and proposal most advantageous to GRTHA will be selected. This project will be governed by a Tribally determined Wage Rate. GRTHA reserves the right to refuse any and all proposals.

The GRTHA recognizes a Native American preference.

For questions, please call Don Coon at 503-879-2405 or email at don.coon@grandronde.org.

# Tribe conducting a three-year study on lamprey

LAMPREY continued  
from front page

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's Natural Resources Department is currently conducting a three-year study to compile much-needed information on the lamprey by determining the timing of migrations and areas the fish use in the Willamette River system.

Two grants fund the study — \$129,000 from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and \$206,000 from the Administration for Native Americans.

This August, Dirksen, Biological Technician Rebecca McCoun and an Oregon State University intern implanted tiny transmitters in 118 lamprey caught at Willamette Falls.

The lamprey, in return for the impromptu surgery, were then released above the falls. Ten telemetry stations from Willamette Falls to McKenzie south of Eugene track the tagged lamprey as they swim up the river and its tributaries.

So far, Dirksen said, tagged lamprey have swam south of McKenzie and been detected on the Santiam River.

In 2009, 160 more lampreys will be fitted with transmitters as part of the study and, in 2010, the study will concentrate on analyzing the data, which hopefully will give biologists a better idea of when lamprey migrations occur and which areas of the river are most used.

Identifying high-use areas can aid in habitat protection, enhancement and restoration, Dirksen says.

Currently, Willamette Falls is the only place in Oregon where Tribes and Tribal members can legally harvest lamprey, which was a staple of Tribal diets before contact with white explorers and settlers. Besides Grand Ronde, the Umatilla, Warm Springs, Yakama and Siletz Tribes visit the falls to harvest lamprey in June and July. Grand Ronde's Natural Resources Department harvested 200 lampreys this summer.

"There isn't anywhere lamprey



Photo courtesy of Natural Resources Department

**Tribal Natural Resources employees inserted transmitters into lamprey at Willamette Falls in August in an effort to determine the fish's migration patterns and areas of use in the basin. The effort will help in determining if lamprey, a Native American food staple, are an endangered species.**

congregate like at Willamette Falls," Dirksen says.

Determining the number of lamprey remaining faces many hurdles, not the least of which is public relations, says Tribal Ceded Lands Coordinator Michael Karnosh.

"They are not a popular species," Karnosh says, "so people aren't as motivated to learn about them, which makes it hard to decide what we need to do. There is still a lot to be learned."

The lowly lamprey, which has been around for about 280 million years, isn't as warm and fuzzy, or as profitable, as the salmon, a Northwest icon.

Lampreys have a vampire-like way of staying alive. They spend their adult lives as parasites, using their suction-cup mouth lined with teeth to suck blood from other fish. Plus, Karnosh points out, they don't generate revenue.

But they are important, not only as a traditional Native staple, but as a buffer species because they are an easy-to-catch food option for sea lions and seals, which prey on salmon in greater numbers when lamprey populations are low.

In addition, like salmon, lamprey die after spawning and through decomposition introduce nutrients for aquatic plants and insects that are in turn a crucial food source for resident and rearing fish in the Willamette.

In 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received a petition to list the Pacific lamprey, along with three other lamprey species in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and California, as endangered. The service basically said that not enough information was available on which to base a decision and encouraged additional research, including determining the lamprey's population status.

Karnosh says that nobody knows from sure why lamprey numbers have declined, but he attributes part of the reason to why salmon numbers are lower — structures, such as dams, blocking migration routes; modification of habitat; and the decline of salmon, on which lamprey feed.

Karnosh also points to lamprey juveniles being bottom feeders, burrowing into the Willamette River's mud and sand to feed on tiny microorganisms for four to six years before metamorphosing into adults.

In the Willamette, Karnosh says, chemical contaminants, such as PCPs and DDT, bond with the sediment and may affect young lamprey by accumulating in their fat stores.

An Environmental Protection Agency study found that lamprey had the highest concentration of pesticides among migratory fish in the Columbia River.

"If it is not killing them, it might be altering their behavior," Karnosh says.

Besides conducting the current studies, the Tribe is working with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative, which is just starting the process of writing a conservation plan to save the lamprey. An important two-day conference is scheduled for October in Vancouver, Wash.

Karnosh says he suspects efforts to save lamprey will mirror those to save salmon.

"I think the same sort of things we do for salmon, just more tailored to lamprey," Karnosh said.

Efforts could include restoring habitats for juvenile lampreys, cleaning up water and sediment beds in the Willamette and removing migration impediments, such as dams.

Ultimately, obtaining a firm estimate on the number of lamprey remaining in the Willamette and Columbia rivers will help biologists determine how endangered they are. The Tribe has applied for an Administration for Native Americans grant to conduct a population count and is awaiting word on whether it is the recipient.

But, Dirksen said, getting a lamprey population count will be a difficult, time-consuming effort.

"The Willamette is not a closed system," Dirksen says, "but it's the information we want to know."

"The studies are aimed at the best ways to manage the species for its long-term survival," Karnosh says. "If we know population numbers, then you know what a reasonable harvest is." ■