State heritage award honors Tribe

By Ron Karten
Smoke Signals staff writer

The Owl Ridge Trails Project will receive an Oregon Heritage Excellence Award from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

The project took a multi-disciplinary approach to "increasing knowledge and understanding of the prehistory and history of the South Santiam and Blue River headwaters," according to the award letter from the Parks Department's Heritage Programs division.

The project was funded principally by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the effort was conducted by staff members at Cultural Resources and other Tribal departments.

The project provided history and geography from the Santiam and Molalla Tribes. It named rivers, creeks, peaks and other landmarks and destinations, as well as showed the primary trail network in the area and seasonal use patterns. It described cultural plant use and management, fish and game products, and included a discussion with hypotheses and recommendations.

"Owl Ridge is a key feature of an ancient 250,000-acre or larger camas prairie, berry patch, beargrass meadow, old-growth conifer, summer home, hunting grounds, campground, wetland, beaver marsh fishing hole and ridgeline trail complex that dates back millennia before white discovery and occupation," according to the executive summary of the final report.

"The well-defined patterns of land use, management and occupation were likely maintained by Santiam Molalla, Santiam Kalapuya, Calapooia Kalapuya, Klamath, Wasco, Paiute and Cayuse families and communities and their predecessors, ancestors, friends and neighbors for perhaps 2,000 to 3,500 years, or even longer."

In addition to the Grand Ronde Tribe, other contributors to the project included Oregon Websites and Watersheds Project Inc., N.W. Maps Co., U.S. Forest Service's Sweet Home Ranger District, Cascade Timber Consulting Inc., Phoenix Reforestation Inc. and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In addition, many Grand Ronde Tribal members and Elders were cited for their contributions: Tribal Elder and former Culture Committee member Pat Allen; Tribal Elder Bob Tom; Tribal member and Cultural Resources Department Manager David Lewis; Tribal Elder and Cultural Resources Site Protection Specialist Don Day; Tribal member and Cultural Resources Cultural Protection Coordinator Eirik Thorsgard; Volker Mell, Tribal GIS specialist; Kim Rogers, Tribal Planning and Grants manager; Tribal member and Tribal Director of Program Operations John Mercier; Tribal member and Tribal Executive Officer Chris Leno; Tribal member and former Cultural Resources staff member Khani Schultz; and former Tribal Executive Officer Greg Archuleta.

Tribal members from the Eugene, Salem and Portland area communities took part in day hikes into the project area.

The day hikes principally took place in Gordon Meadows, a vast meadow situated at 4,000-foot elevation. Gordon Meadows contains a diversity of food plants like huckleberries and camas, and opportunities to hunt game, including elk, that make it a central gathering place for Santiam Molalla peoples in the area.

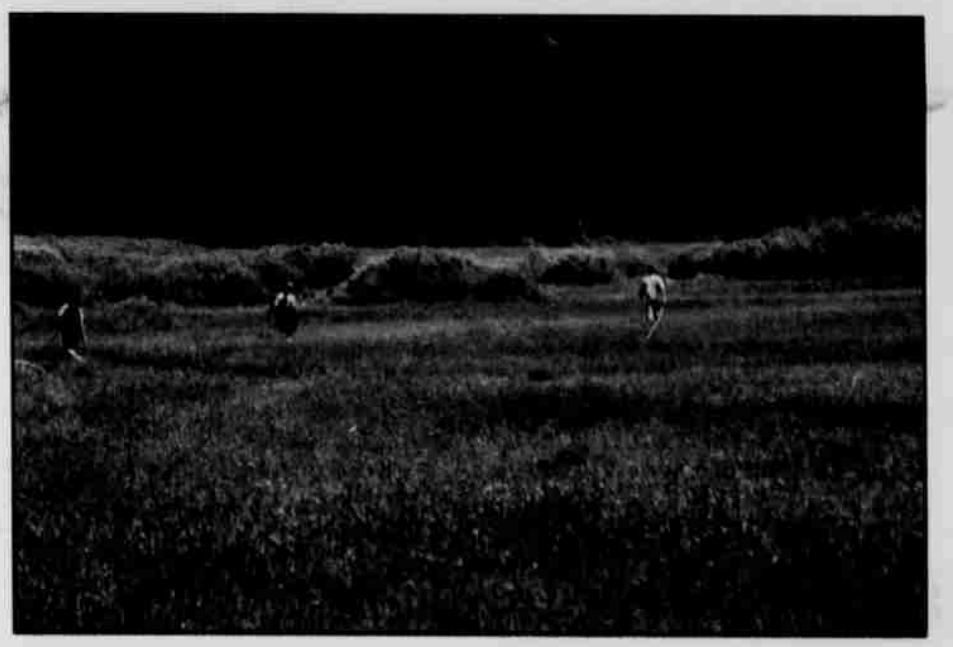
Project area mountains and watersheds contain the possibility of a diverse network of trail systems capable of providing easy travel throughout the region to other resource areas.

"The database produced from this project will help the Tribe in the future to plan and organize additional landscape restoration projects in collaboration with the Sweet Home Ranger District, the federal manager of this area of the Willamette National Forest," said David Lewis.

"The Cultural Resources and Natural Resources departments are working now with the Sweet Home District ranger and staff to restore additional areas of the wilderness and bring back annual cultural use patterns for Tribal members.

"This long-term project intersects well with previous and ongoing collaborations between the Tribe and Sweet Home Ranger District to restore camas at Camas Meadows, and to restore huckleberries at Cougar Rock.

"The Tribe now has a multitude of projects above Sweet Home that attract Tribal members every year to harvest traditional cultural resources the way their ancestors did." ■



Photos by Greg Archuleta

Above, visitors check out the Gordon Meadows area of the Owl Ridge Trails Project last summer. The project, which was funded principally by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, will receive an Oregon Heritage Excellence Award from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. At left, Tribal members from the Eugene, Salem and Portland area communities take part in a day hike in Owl Ridge Trails Project area.

2009 Tribal Marketplace dates

- **May 2-3**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- **May 8-9**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; **May 10**, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- **June 6-7**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- **July 3-4**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; **July 5**, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Aug. 1-2**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Sept. 4-5**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Oct. 2-3**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Nov. 6-7**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Dec. 4-5**, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Dates subject to change due to conflicting Tribal or SMC events. Located across from Cedar Plank Buffet. For more information, call Gladys Hobbs at 971-241-8486.