

Tribal fish weir a testament to land management

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The unavailability of Tribal Social Services Manager Dave Fullerton to discuss gang awareness provided Tribal Fish and Wildlife Program Manager Kelly Dirksen an opportunity to discuss Tribal fish restoration successes at the Jan. 10 General Council meeting at the Tribal Community Center.

Dirksen stressed the most striking statistic — although Agency Creek on the Tribe's Reservation represents only 3/1000 of the land in the Willamette River basin, it received 3 percent of the 27,000 returning Coho salmon in 2009.

"I think that is a testament to the Tribe," Dirksen said, "and a compliment to the Tribe's management."

Dirksen briefed approximately 60 Tribal members about the fish population on the Reservation, which includes Coho salmon, cutthroat trout, steelhead trout and Pacific lamprey. Only one — steelhead trout — is federally listed as a protected species.

"Our goal is to eventually create a catchable fishery," Dirksen said.

He said the adult fish weir, located west of the Tribal Rodeo Grounds, provides the Tribe an opportunity to measure, count and identify returning fish.

In 2007, Dirksen said, the Tribe counted 268 returning Coho salmon to Agency Creek. This year, the Coho return burgeoned to 910.

The fish weir operates from Oct. 15 to May 15 annually to count fish that swim 250 miles from the Pacific Ocean to reach Agency Creek.

Fish start returning from mid-October to early November and are, on average, 26.7 inches long. Most are 3 years old.

In addition, the Tribe operates a smolt trap between Feb. 15 and May 31, which gives an indication of how many juvenile fish are leaving



Photo by Dean Rhodes

Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey, who turned 101 on Dec. 2, received a framed letter acknowledging her triple-digit age from President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama at the General Council meeting held Jan. 10 in the Tribal Community Center. Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, right, made the presentation as other Tribal members watched.

Agency Creek for the long swim to the Pacific Ocean.

Dirksen said the Tribe is working hard to improve waterways on the Reservation, from replacing antiquated culverts to adding nutrients by placing salmon carcasses in the streams.

Former Tribal Council member and Tribal Elder Jack Giffen Jr. asked if the nutrient program has had an effect on the Reservation's crawdad population.

Dirksen said he did not have statistics on the crawdad population, but that crawdads now have a food base they did not have before, which can

only be a good thing.

Tribal member Perri McDaniel asked if the fish returning to Tribal lands are the ones used for the Tribe's salmon distribution, and if any testing for toxin levels is done on the fish.

Dirksen said the Tribe's salmon distribution fish come from federal and state hatcheries. In addition, he said, the responsible parties for the Portland Harbor superfund site claim that since salmon develop most of their weight in the ocean, they wouldn't have an opportunity to absorb toxins while swimming through the harbor

so they have avoided testing toxins in adult salmon.

"There is some merit to this argument," Dirksen said after the meeting. "That said, I wouldn't be comfortable saying there is not a problem with the fish without some lab analysis. State and federal authorities have stamped it fit for consumption but strict toxin levels are not known."

McDaniel also asked if the program would be expanded to other Tribal tributaries.

"No," Dirksen said. "We think Agency Creek will be indicative of what is happening on other Tribal streams."

Tribal Council Vice Chair Reyn Leno said that restoration of Tribal streams has been a long-term project and acknowledged former Tribal Councils, as well as Fish and Wildlife and Timber committee members, for guiding the efforts.

In other action:

- Elders elected Cheri Butler, Linda Brandon, Lana Takhar and Margaret Provost to the Elders' Committee.
- Tribal Elder and Cultural Committee member Carol Logan opened the meeting with a traditional prayer while dressed in a cedar hat and traditional blanket.
- Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey was recognized for her recent 101st birthday on Dec. 2, 2009, and presented with a framed letter from President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama by Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy.
- Tribal member Stan Jeffers and Tribal Elders Garry Williams and Susie Lash won the \$50 door prizes and Tribal Elder Diane Giffen won the \$100 door prize.
- The Feb. 7 General Council meeting will be held at the Monarch Hotel in the Pacific Ballroom, 12566 S.E. 93rd Ave., Clackamas, starting at 10 a.m. ■

ATTENTION TRIBAL MEMBERS COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL EVENT BOARD VACANCIES

The following Committees and Special Event Boards have vacant positions. If you are interested, submit a completed application to Dakota Whitecloud, Tribal Council Relations Coordinator, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347.

Rodeo Special Event Board	1 Vacancy
Timber Committee	1 Vacancy
Ceremonial Hunt Board	1 Vacancy
Education Committee	1 Vacancy
Veterans' Special Event Board	1 Vacancy

Please send completed applications to Dakota Whitecloud, Tribal Council Relations Coordinator, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347.

Merkley holding Town Halls

Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley is holding Town Halls in Polk and Yamhill counties this weekend.

He said he will update constituents on his work in Washington, D.C., answer questions and take suggestions about how to tackle the challenges facing Oregon and the United States.

Merkley will be in Polk County at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 16, at the Dallas Civic Center, 945 S.E. Jefferson St., Dallas, and at 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 17, at the Chehalem Armory Center, 620 N. Morton St., Newberg. ■

Transportation to Grand Ronde

The Portland satellite office has a transportation day to Grand Ronde once a month for medical or dental appointments or enrollment cards. A minimum of three people must sign up. Call Lisa at 503-235-4230. You must be an enrolled Grand Ronde Tribal member. The vehicle will leave the Portland office at 8 a.m. Please call in advance for the scheduled monthly date. ■

Volunteers wanted

We are looking for volunteer produce pickers when the fields are ready. A portion of the produce picked goes to the Grand Ronde Community Resource Center in Grand Ronde. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Lynn House, Gleaners of Yamhill/Mac, at 503-376-9222. Your name will be placed on a call-list. ■

GRCRC board members wanted

The Grand Ronde Community Resource Center board is looking for two volunteer board members and more volunteers to work at the Resource Center. Contact Patrice Qualman at 503-879-5731 or at grcrc@hotmail.com for an application. ■

2010 Census jobs

Application and Testing

Tuesday, Jan. 19 — 2 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 25 — 10 a.m.

Thursday, Feb. 4 — 10 a.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 16 — 3 p.m.

Location: Adult Education Room 126

Contact Denise Harvey at 503-879-2112 or call the local Census office at 1-866-861-2010 to sign up for the application and testing. Practice tests are available online at www.2010censusjobs.gov or contact Harvey to pick one up. Anyone that has taken the test before and would like to re-test is welcome to take the test again. ■