

Natural Resources keeping busy

Wilson briefs General Council on myriad projects

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal member Michael Wilson, manager of the Tribe's Natural Resources Division, gave Tribal members a fast-paced tour through his department's happenings in 2010 during the Oct. 3 General Council meeting held in the Tribal Community Center.

"We have a fantastic staff that does a ton of work on great projects," Wilson said as he explained how Natural Resources balloons from 18 full-time staff members in the winter to about 90 in the summer with the hiring of firefighting and youth crews.

Wilson said the market for reservation timber has been down for several years although there was a slight rebound in 2009 and '10.

"We saw some improvement, but it hasn't sustained itself," he said.

The Tribe's Timber Committee is investigating the pole market to take advantage of the Reservation being a good site to grow timber for poles, as well as a local pole yard located nearby in Sheridan.

"It's a specialty market," Wilson said. "It is working out well and we are getting that higher price."

Wilson said Natural Resources is gearing up for the end of the current 10-year wildlife management plan, which ends in 2012, and will require the writing of a new plan.

This year was a slow year for firefighting, Wilson said, and the acquisition of federal stimulus funds allowed the Youth Crew to expand to 32 youths, four leaders and one supervisor.



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Michael Wilson, Natural Resources Division manager and Tribal member, gives an update on what has happened in the department during 2010 at the General Council meeting in the Tribal Community Center on Sunday, Oct. 3.

"Youth crew is the first job for many youth," Wilson said.

Wilson reported that the Tribal fish weir near Uyxat Powwow Grounds has yet to see any returning Coho, but they are expected as soon as heavy rains return to the coast range.

"It's the fourth highest year so far over Willamette Falls," Wilson said. "So we're looking at another busy year."

Natural Resources staff continue to tag lamprey at Willamette Falls as part of a study that includes 13 tracking stations in the Willamette River Basin.

"We're trying to be a leader in lamprey research," Wilson said.

The department's Ceded Lands staff continues working on placing

informational signs throughout the traditional homelands of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, educating residents and visitors alike about the Native peoples who lived here before the arrival of European settlers.

And the department's Recreation program, including Big Buck Campground, a hiking trail system on the Reservation, archery shoots, etc., continues to grow.

The Natural Resources Department also handles the Tribal salmon distribution, issuance of hunting tags and firewood collection permits and maintenance of Reservation roadways, such as Yoncalla Creek and Agency Creek roads.

Tribal Elder Val Grout asked if the Tribe is experiencing any issues with drinking or drug use at the

campground.

Wilson said the Tribe has had issues, but increased patrols by Prostar Security, the Yamhill County Sheriff's Office and Tribal Forest Patrol Officer Jake McKnight have helped quell any growing problems.

"I think we've seen a lot of improvement this last summer," Wilson said.

The General Council meeting opened with a performance of the "Lord's Prayer" by Tribal Royalty Makenzie Aaron, Iyana Holmes, Madison Aaron and Amelia Mooney.

Tribal Council member Jack Giffen Jr. reported on a recent trip to Washington, D.C., by himself, Tribal Council Vice Chair Reyn Leno and Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. to push for passage of House Resolution 6070, which would streamline the process of taking former reservation land back into trust for the Tribe.

Giffen said they met with most of Oregon's congressional delegation, as well as staff for Larry Echohawk, head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"I think we did some good work on behalf of the Tribe," Giffen said.

Leno added that he thinks the federal government's pledge for better consultation with Native Tribes under the Obama administration is starting to take hold.

Tribal Elder Marcella Selwyn won the \$100 door prize while her husband, Tony, Tribal Elder Violet Folden and Tribal member Wendell Olson received the \$50 door prizes.

The next General Council meeting will be held 11 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 7, in the Tribal Community Center. ■

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Palmer relatives visit



Photo by Dean Rhodes

Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg gave descendants of Oregon Territory Superintendent of Indian Affairs Joel Palmer a tour of the Governance Center on Friday, Oct. 1. Cyndie Kosky, right, of Netarts brought "Journal of Travels Over the Rocky Mountains" written by her great-great-great-grandfather along with her. In the 19th century book, Palmer listed translations of English words into Chinuk jargon to help future travelers to the then Oregon Territory. Also taking the tour were Kosky's niece, Madaline Doherty of Kalama, and her 1-year-old son, Preston.