

Saving the grand ole osprey

Tribe helps PGE, BPA move bird's nest to safe location

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

For some things it takes a village, but to raise an osprey, it looks like a concerned citizen and a Tribal Natural Resources staff member with a good contact at Bonneville Power Administration can handle the job.

In Grand Ronde recently, that concerned citizen was Tresa Mercier, a Tribal member who works in the business office of the Tribal Health Clinic. Her contact was Kelly Dirksen, coordinator of Fish and Wildlife in the Tribe's Natural Resources Department.

The issue? Osprey were building a nest on high voltage wires at the Portland General Electric substation next door to the former Wilamina Middle School building.

Dirksen contacted PGE and BPA to see how they handle this kind of situation. The osprey started building their nest and the electric companies then, coincidentally, shut off power to inspect the poles. With the power off, the birds built out over the wires and ceramic insulators that would be live when the power came back on. The question was: How to handle the birds and the nest before turning the

power back on?

"We watched them all week," said Ben Tilley, a BPA Natural Resource specialist. "On Wednesday (June 15), we decided on a plan of action."

In conjunction with Dirksen, BPA planned to plant a new pole in the substation. Osprey favor the highest post, so a new one, taller than the 80-foot posts that currently hold the wires, was recruited from a BPA storage yard and planted on Friday, June 17.

Nearly 100 feet up, BPA linemen on the "live line crew" took a bucket up to the nest, slid it onto a sheet of plywood and held it on the bucket. They moved the bucket over to the new post, where the nest was tucked into place on cross beams and exposed bolts around which, Tilley was fairly certain, the osprey would tidy things up and generally make sure the nest was secure.

The poles with the live wires were fitted with deterrents to keep the osprey from moving back there.

Still undetermined, said Dirksen, is whether the birds will take to the nest after this human interference.

"There is a very good chance that the pair will abandon the nest after the crew tries to relocate it," Dirksen wrote to Mercier in an e-mail. "If they abandon it this year there

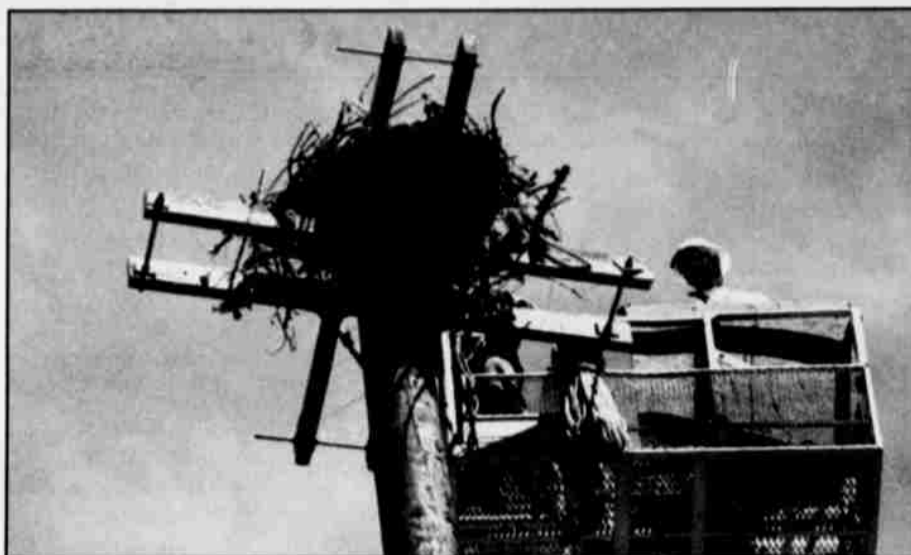


Photo by Ron Karten

Bonneville Power Administration linemen from the "live line crew" place a new osprey nest (one room, river view) on its new pole, highest in the area, creating a safer neighborhood for raising the little ones.

is a very good chance they will come back next year at the new site."

Of course, the local school next door is also now empty, but osprey move into neighborhoods for more than just good schools.

Osprey live almost entirely on a diet of live fish, Dirksen said, so their presence in the area "is a reasonable indicator (of the health) of this arm of the South Yamhill River."

"I think it's neat," he added, "that Tresa reaches out with an e-mail and in the end there is a new and safer home for birds. It was hard to imagine at the start that in the end BPA and PGE would install an expensive 100-foot pole and platform that will provide a better and safer nest for the future. I'm thankful things worked out this well, (but) hoping she doesn't call me about some beached whale." ■

State adopts more stringent fish consumption rate

Tribes worked to increase rate to protect members

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

A highest-in-the-nation fish consumption rate should eventually translate into cleaner Oregon waterways after the state Environmental Quality Commission adopted a Tribally endorsed 175 grams per day benchmark at its June 16 meeting in Pendleton.

Since 2004, Oregon Tribes, including the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, have worked to increase the state's fish consumption rate. The rate affects Oregon water quality because the higher the fish consumption rate, the cleaner any discharge being put in state waterways must be.

"I consider it a major victory for the Tribe, and all Oregon Tribes," said Tribal Ceded Lands Manager Mike Karnosh. "Tribal Council has played a very active role in supporting this increase in the fish consumption rate."

Karnosh said Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, Tribal Council member Jack Giffen Jr. and former Tribal Council member June Sell-Sherer all testified before the Environmental Quality Commission in support of the higher rate through the four- to five-year process.

Karnosh also cited Tribal member Michael Wilson, who is manager of the Natural Resources Division, Tribal Environmental Resource Specialist Brandy Humphreys and Tribal member Kathleen Feehan-George, who worked for the Uma-

tilla Tribe, for their work getting the rate approved.

In 2004, the state adopted the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended fish consumption rate of 17.5 grams per day — about a cracker's worth in size. However, Oregon Tribal leaders objected to that criteria because it did not protect Tribal members who traditionally eat greater amounts of fish.

The Grand Ronde Tribe originally asked for a safe level of 389 grams per day while other Tribes asked for levels ranging from 175 to 300 grams per day. A compromise was reached at 175 grams per day, specifying that that level would keep 95 percent of fish eaters safe.

In 2005, the state Department of Environmental Quality started the process for reconsidering the fish consumption rate and in October 2008 recommended the use of 175 grams of fish per day as the rate. At that time, the commission instructed the department to pursue rule revisions to implement the higher rate.

After almost three years of study about the environmental and economic effects of the 175 grams rate, the Environmental Quality Commission approved it on a 4-1 vote.

The new rule of 175 grams per day is equal to 23 eight-ounce fish servings per month.

The changes tighten human health criteria for more than 100 pollutants being placed in Oregon waterways, including mercury, flame retardants, PCBs, dioxins and pesticides.

"People with permits to discharge contaminants into Oregon water-

ways will basically have to comply with the higher standard of cleanliness," Karnosh said. "It's not a silver bullet ... there are issues it will not address, but it is an important benchmark that says, 'This is how clean the water has to be.'"

Karnosh said an important decision in the process occurred when the Environmental Protection Agency ruled that salmon and other anadromous fish would be included in the fish consumption rate.

"That was a bold landmark deci-

sion," Karnosh said.

The new fish consumption rate will take effect upon EPA approval, expected in the fall or early in 2012.

The commission is a five-member citizen panel appointed by the governor for four-year terms to serve as the Department of Environmental Quality's policy and rulemaking board. ■

Includes information from The Oregonian.

**Grand Ronde
Avenue of Flags**

The Grand Ronde Avenue of Flags is an opportunity to honor the Tribal veterans in your family.

A donation of \$100 will go toward the purchase of an American flag. A rawhide feather, with the name of your veteran, will be attached to the flag.

The flags will be proudly displayed on Veterans Day and Memorial Day and at the Marcellus "Marce" Norwest Veterans Memorial Powwow each year. It is an opportunity to honor your family veteran.

To purchase a flag and feather please complete the application form and submit it, with your check, to the CTGR Public Affairs Dept. Please make checks payable to CTGR Avenue of Flags Project.

Name of Tribal Veteran: _____

Branch of the Service and Date of Service _____

Your Name: _____

Your contact information: (For office use only)

Address _____

Phone _____

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A special tribute to our Tribal Veterans