

# Grand Ronde area under boil water order

## Tribe purchases bottled water for employees, Elders

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Water samples that tested positive for bacteria forced the Grand Ronde Community Water Association to issue a boil water order for all of its approximately 950 customers, including the Grand Ronde Tribal campus and Tribal housing, on Tuesday, Jan. 24.

Spirit Mountain Casino, which has its own water treatment system, was not affected by the order.

In response, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde purchased bottled water for its employees, Elders and Tribal members.

The water association gets its water from four springs and the water is usually pure enough that it does not require treatment.

However, on Monday, Jan. 23, samples tested positive for coliform bacteria, which are used as an indicator of the possible presence of other microorganisms.

One of the samples also tested positive for E. coli — a fecal coliform bacteria.

"Fecal coliform and E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes," said a Drinking Water Warning issued Jan. 24 by the water association to Grand Ronde residents. "Microbes

in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children and people with severely compromised immune systems."

As a precaution, water used for consumption, food preparation or brushing teeth should be boiled for one minute.

Karl Ekstrom, manager of the water association, said it has not been determined how the bacteria entered the water system. The affected area is Southwest Hebo Road, west of mile post 18.

Recent samples from the springs indicate that the problem is not associated with the springs themselves, but with the pipes and reservoirs used to distribute the water.

"Bacterial contamination can occur when increased runoff enters the drinking water source. For example, following heavy rains. It can also happen due to a break in the distribution system (pipes) or a failure in the water treatment process," the warning says.

The water association is working with the Polk County Health Department and Oregon Health Division to eliminate the bacteria from the water. Water samples are being tested regularly.

The warning said the water association is performing a complete tank cleaning and mainline flushing in addition to increased testing, and predicted it will take approximately two weeks before water is

safe to drink again.

On the Tribal campus, the boil water order prompted the Tribal Executive Office to purchase bottled water for employee consumption. Bottled water was distributed in the Governance Center, Health & Wellness Clinic, Education Building, Tribal Housing Authority, Social Services and Natural Resources.

In addition, said Public Works Director John Mercier, the Tribe contacted Sierra Springs and on Thursday, Jan. 26, 12 water dispensers were located in all Tribal buildings. Also, on Friday, Jan. 27, water containers from Spirit Mountain Casino were distributed.

Mercier said food preparers at the Elders' Activity Center were boiling water to ensure it was safe to consume.

Tribal Housing Authority Director Carina Kistler said her office received more than 150 phone calls as word of the contamination spread. The Housing Authority made bottled water available to Tribal housing residents and created an informational flier that was distributed to residents. It also set up a call line at 503-879-4526 to update residents about the water situation.

In a Tribal-wide e-mail, Dental Director Eric Webster said that water used in the dental operation rooms is distilled and that there also is an anti-bacterial product

in the water lines to prevent contamination.

Tribal Pharmacy Director Julie Davis said that the Tribe's Health & Wellness Center has not seen any patients with illnesses that might be attributed to ingestion of E. coli.

In the Governance Center, Tribal Grants Developer Bob McElderry boiled large pots of water for use by fellow employees while Central Phones Operators used bottled water to make coffee for visitors and Tribal Council meetings.

Spirit Mountain Casino, which does not use water from the Grand Ronde Community Water Association, provided drinking water, which was transported over to the Tribal campus.

"Their environmental team constantly monitors their water quality," said Tribal Executive Officer Chris Leno.

Mercier said he was personally impressed with how the Tribe and community members have responded to this first-ever boil water order for the Grand Ronde area.

"It has been really helpful to us in maintaining and responding to this crisis with the high level of cooperation we have received from the community," Mercier said.

He estimated the additional water purchases will cost the Tribe about \$1,500. ■

## Graves teaching weekly basket weaving class

Tribal Elder Connie Graves teaches a basket weaving class at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Elders' Activity Center.

The class is open to the public.

For more information, contact Tribal Cultural Education Specialist Brian Krehbiel at 503-879-4639 or [brian.krehbiel@grandronde.org](mailto:brian.krehbiel@grandronde.org). ■

### Committee & Special Event Board meeting days and times

Below is the most current information on the meeting days and times for Tribal Committees and Special Event Boards:

- **Ceremonial Hunt Board** meets as needed. Chair: Shonn Leno.
- **Cultural Trust Board** meets at 4 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. Chair: Perri McDaniel.
- **Culture Committee** meets at 1 p.m. the first Wednesday of the month in Modular No. 3. Chair: Kathy Provost.
- **Education Committee** meets at 5:15 p.m. on the first Monday of the month in the Adult Education Building. Chair: Shelby Rogers.
- **Elders' Committee** meets at 10 a.m. the third Wednesday of the month in the Elders' Activity Center. Chair: Gladys Hobbs.
- **Enrollment Committee** meets quarterly in Room 204 of the Governance Building. Acting Chair: Robert Schmid.
- **Fish & Wildlife Committee** meets at 5:30 p.m. the second Tuesday of the month at the Natural Resources Building. Chair: Harold Lyon.
- **Health Committee** meets at 10 a.m. the second Wednesday of the month in the Tribal Wellness Center. Acting Chair: Patti Tom-Martin.
- **Powwow Special Event Board** meets at 5 p.m. the first Thursday of the month at the Tribal Community Center. Chair: Dana Ainam.
- **Rodeo Special Event Board** meets at 6 p.m. the first Thursday of the month at the Tribal Rodeo Office. Acting Chair: Harold Lyon.
- **Social Services Committee** meets at 4 p.m. the second Monday of the month in the Social Services Conference Room. Chair: Jenny Sanchez.
- **Timber Committee** meets at 5 p.m. the second Thursday of the month at the Natural Resources Building. Chair: Bob Mercier.
- **Veterans Special Event Board** meets at 4 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month in the Tribal Community Center. Chair: Dakota Whitecloud.

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For more information or to sign-up call:  
Brian Krehbiel at 503-879-4639  
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