

Ferguson joins Salem Health Board of Trustees

SALEM — Rodney Ferguson, chief executive officer of Spirit Mountain Casino, has been appointed to the Salem Health Board of Trustees.

"Rodney's leadership skills as the chief executive officer of Spirit Mountain Casino will add value to the board, as well as his technical skills as a CPA, and his former positions as a chief financial officer and an auditor of hospitals," said Salem Health Board Chair Kenneth Sherman Jr. "His experience will complement that of the other members of the board."

Ferguson, who lives in McMinnville, is a member of the board of directors for Boys and Girls Club of Salem, Marion and Polk Counties and the McMinnville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Spirit Mountain Casino is a business enterprise of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon.

"I believe that serving on boards

and assisting other organizations in achieving their goals is an important role for CEOs," said Ferguson.

"As CEO of Spirit Mountain Casino, the largest employer in Polk County, I feel compelled to assist Salem Health wherever I can add value to the organization that services the community in which I work.

"I know many people who have experienced exceptional service from Salem Health. My goal is to do whatever I can to assist in ensuring continued quality of service on a consistent basis and help meet the needs of Salem Health."

Ferguson joined Spirit Mountain Casino as its chief executive officer in October 2008. Previously, he held executive management roles



Rodney Ferguson

with Isleta Casino and Resort, Hyatt Gaming and Trump Casino Resorts.

In 2003, Ferguson joined Isleta Casino and Resort in Albuquerque, N.M., as chief financial officer until he was promoted to the position of general manager in 2005. During his more than five years at Isleta, he helped transform a stand-alone casino into a full-service resort that included a 27-hole golf course, family entertainment center with a bowling alley, music park and campground facility, as well as a recently opened four-diamond-level hotel and convention center, which won the 2008 Hospo Award for Best Boutique Hotel and Best Hotel Lobby.

Originally from Williamsburg, Va., Ferguson began his career in 1978 in Philadelphia, Pa., as an auditor for Coopers & Lybrand. In 1983, he entered the gaming industry in Atlantic City, N.J., and held various positions in financial management for Harrah's, the Golden

Nugget and Trump Plaza before starting an accounting practice in 1991.

In 1994, he returned to gaming in New Orleans as chief financial officer for River City Casino and from 1995 to 1999 he was chief financial officer for Trump Casino and Hyatt's Grand Victoria Casino & Resort, both in Indiana.

From 1999 to 2003, he provided financial and accounting services for Jefferson Wells International in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Philadelphia. He also served as a sole practitioner in Newport News, Va.

Ferguson received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Virginia State University in 1978.

Members of the Salem Health Board of Trustees are volunteers who serve three-year terms. The board provides overall policy setting for the health system, and is ultimately responsible for the quality of care and the financial well-being of the organization. ■

Group submits cleanup scenarios for Portland Harbor

Tribe will review plan, concentrate on environmental, human health components

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

PORTLAND — The Lower Willamette Group, a coalition of companies and government agencies that will in large part be paying to clean up the Portland Harbor Superfund site, submitted a 500-page draft feasibility study with 15,000 pages of supporting material on March 30 to the Environmental Protection Agency that included 10 possible ways to clean up a 10-mile stretch of the lower Willamette River from Sauvie Island to the Broadway Bridge.

The group has spent almost \$100 million over 12 years studying the complex river system that rests in the ceded homelands of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

The cleanup proposals include some combination of dredging, capping, treating and monitoring of the most toxic areas. Countless years of monitoring are recommended for sites that are not completely dredged. The recommendations suggest that natural processes alone will heal some areas.

The group's 10 cleanup proposals range in cost from \$169 million to \$1.72 billion, and all call for reduction of the worst toxins to EPA standards. For PCBs, the worst of the toxic threats, the EPA requires no more than 1 part per million.

Five of the proposals focus on dredging, suggesting that as much as 80 percent to 90 percent of the area, or more than 300 acres, is dredged. Five of the proposals propose less of the area be dredged in combination with the other cleanup options. The lowest cost option proposes 23 acres be dredged. The more dredging required, the more expensive the cleanup option will be.

During the next two years, EPA will evaluate the 10 proposals, ac-

cept public comment and issue a Record of Decision that will describe who pays, how much they pay and what they have to get done.

Grand Ronde Tribal Staff Attorney Ryan Sudbury said the EPA is likely to strike deals with most of the potentially responsible parties before issuing its decision.

"This is difficult to do without a cooperative party," said Chip Humphrey, project manager of the Portland Superfund site for the EPA, at an April 11 public meeting held at the St. John's Community Center to discuss the proposals.

The Tribe's response will emerge from the work of Natural Resource's Ceded Lands Program Manager Mike Karnosh, Environmental Resource Specialist Brandy Humphries, Sudbury and the Tribe's Boulder, Colo.-based technical adviser, Stratus Consulting.

"As a general philosophy," said Karnosh, "the Tribe doesn't want to limit any cleanup proposal or restoration proposal by saying, 'Here's the number of what we want.'"

What the Tribe does want, Karnosh said, is to see a level of cleanup that is protective of the environment and human health so Tribal members can use the area as they traditionally have.

Over the next 60 to 90 days, the Tribe will prepare comments on the report, as well as recommendations for the final cleanup decision, said Sudbury.

Stratus will do the first level of review and that will go to Tribal staffers, Sudbury added.

"Stratus will report what it believes the Tribe can support and ways to improve the document; they'll point out questions that need to be clarified, assumptions that we don't agree with or need more information about," Sudbury said.

There also will be an overarching legal review.

The Superfund law, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, enacted in 1980 "is one of the most

complicated environmental laws in the country, by a wide margin," said Sudbury.

EPA in Washington, D.C., says that the Portland Harbor Superfund site is "one of the most comprehensive and extensive efforts ever in the Superfund program's 32-year history."

In addition to some 150 potentially responsible parties, the cleanup involves six Tribal governments, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and federal and state fish and wildlife agencies.

"At the same time, the Grand Ronde Tribe continues to work as a Natural Resources Trustee to advance projects that will help restore the species and ecological services affected by the toxic releases," Sudbury said.

Oregon's congressional delegation took a tour of Portland Harbor last year and wrote to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson afterward.

The letter, signed by Congressmen Kurt Schrader and Earl Blumenauer and Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, said: "As EPA performs its evaluation, it is imperative to consider the economic impacts of EPA's decision on our community. In this time of limited resources and budget constraints, it is particularly important that we focus resources on cleanup measures that provide the greatest public health and environmental benefit.

"Indeed, President Obama has focused efforts on reviewing regulations that are of questionable merit and on outcomes and results. We applaud those efforts and believe the Portland Harbor conversation about cleanup options should be focused on where this point of diminishing returns lies."

At the April 11 public meeting, Blumenauer said that he was looking for federal funds to fill in for funding that used to be provided by a fee on the petrochemical industry.

A Republican Congress allowed that fee to lapse in 1995.

"The federal government is missing in action on this," he said.

Industry has long held that environmental regulations hurt jobs and the economy. Karnosh said that the cleanup efforts can produce jobs as it improves the environment.

The EPA agrees. According to the Public Affairs office in Washington, D.C., "Industry often claims that environmental protection activities cost jobs. However, our experience shows that Superfund has positive economic impacts including cleanup-related job creation and job creation attributable to the subsequent redevelopment of a former site."

Last year, Tribes worked in concert to convince the EPA to improve Oregon's water quality standards, which are now the toughest in the country by fivefold, Karnosh said. The new standards use new human health criteria based on an increased fish consumption rate to better protect Native Americans and others who eat more fish than the general population.

The difference means that Oregon permits allowing toxic releases will have limits that keep waterways cleaner.

"Oregon has taken a lead in saying we need to protect our people from fish-borne toxic chemicals," said Karnosh. "It's a huge, good start."

But even bigger changes potentially lie ahead.

With public comment on industry proposals still ahead, Tribal people know that salmon and steelhead spend part of their young lives among the toxic environment down at the Willamette River's bottom before making their way up the South Yamhill River to Agency Creek, home to the Grand Ronde people, and many other Willamette River tributaries in the Tribe's ceded lands.

The EPA's Record of Decision is currently expected late in 2014. ■