

Feds move to protect Native American sacred sites

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Two actions by the federal government on Thursday, Dec. 6, will hopefully bolster protection of Native American sacred sites.

Four federal agencies — Agriculture, Defense, Energy and Interior — signed a memorandum of agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that calls for improving Tribal access to sacred sites that are on federal land.

"We have a special, shared responsibility to respect and foster American Indian and Alaska Native cultural and religious heritage, and today's agreement recognizes that important role," said Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in a statement.

The four federal agencies plan to work during the next five years to raise awareness about sacred sites, including development of a Web site, a training program for federal employees and guidance for managing sacred sites.

In addition, officials at the Department of Agriculture and Forest Service also announced the findings of a report on sacred sites that includes a list of recommendations for working more closely with Tribes in the protection, interpretation and access to sacred sites on public lands.

"American Indian and Alaska Native values and culture have made our nation rich in spirit and deserve to be honored and respected," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in a statement. "By honoring and protecting sacred sites on national forests and grasslands, we foster improved Tribal relationships and a better understanding of Native people's deep reverence for natural resources and contributions to society."

The report recommends:

- Conferring with traditional practitioners and communities with knowledge and interests in sacred sites and protection;
- Updating agency policy to ensure consultation on sacred sites is conducted pursuant to existing law;
- Developing a joint Tribal-agency partnership guide;
- Providing Tribes consistent advance notice of nationwide consultation opportunities;
- Using provisions of the agency's new planning rule to ensure protection of sacred sites is considered in forest and grassland management;
- And promoting cooperative law enforcement agreements with Tribal police and conservation departments to enforce cultural laws, such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of public lands.

"I am worried about federal officials defining sacred," said Tribal Cultural Protection Coordinator Eirik Thorsgard. "I have commented on these proposals and other similar ones. We are always seeking ways to ensure that traditional ceremonial practices are continued and that people who need access to sites can have that in a respectful way that allows them to conduct their ceremonies." ■

Includes material from The Associated Press.



Merry Christmas from sunny Arizona!
Laura, Jyn, Larry, Judy and Brody

Tribal member wins writing contest

Tribal third-grader Talia Marrufo won first place in Willamina Elementary School's November writing contest.

Her essay on things she is thankful for read: "I am thankful for the people on Earth, like doctors and construction workers. Without them we wouldn't have medicine or a place to work, live and learn. I am also thankful for teachers because they help us learn. Without the police we wouldn't be safe. That's what I am thankful for!"

She is the daughter of John and Kateri Marrufo. ■

Certificate obtained



Submitted photo

Tribal Cultural Protection Specialist David Harrelson (front row, second from left) was one of three students to complete the course work to obtain a Cultural Resources Management Certificate with Emphasis on Archaeology from South Puget Sound Community College during a Nisqually luncheon held Wednesday, Dec. 5. To complete the vocationally oriented certification, students had to successfully complete eight courses and average an A to B+ average in each of the five-credit college courses. Also obtaining certificates were Jacqueline Wall, Nisqually Cultural Activities coordinator, and Kareem Gannie, Nisqually Archives Collection technician. Also pictured are, front row from left, Stephanie Scott, Nisqually Tribal treasurer, and Joyce McCloud, Nisqually Council member; (back row, from left) Eirik Thorsgard, Grand Ronde Tribal Historic Preservation Officer; Joseph Kalama, Nisqually Archives manager; Dale Croes, South Puget Sound Community College professor; and Willie Frank, Nisqually vice chair. Croes said the three were the "top students in all of these training classes and demonstrated outstanding skills in the Cultural Resources Management field — true role models."

Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority



Applications being accepted Jan. 2 for grandfamily housing

A grandfamily is defined as: A family, whose head or spouse is Elder, containing minor children in the legal long-term custody or guardianship of the Elder. A grandfamily shall not include any other adults under the age of 55 (including the parent(s) of the minor children).

If your family fits this definition, qualifies as low income and you are interested in moving into our new grandfamily units, which are part of Elders' Housing Phase II, we will start accepting applications on Jan. 2.

You can pick up your application at the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority offices at 28450 Tyee Road, Grand Ronde, Ore., 97347. If you cannot come into the offices to pick up your application you may call the front desk at 503-879-2401 and an application will be mailed to you.

Make sure you specifically request the application for "grandfamily housing."

Applications will be handled on a first-come, first-serve basis starting Jan. 2. It is important that applicants provide all requested documentation at the time they submit the application.

If you have any questions, you may contact Leon Ramos or Deborah Kroeker at Grand Ronde Tribal Housing, 503-879-2401. We look forward to working with you.