

Tribal managers consult with forest reps

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The atmosphere could not have been more respectful at the Thursday, Jan. 30, consultation between Tribal staff and managers of the Siuslaw National Forest.

Forest Supervisor Jerry Ingersoll said it is “a deep honor to be working with the Tribe. The forest is being managed with recognition of its long history. We’re stewarding on behalf of that history.”

Tribal Cultural Protection Program Manager Eirik Thorsgard said that communication has been excellent between the Tribe and Forest Archaeologist and Tribal Liaison Kevin Bruce.

The meeting, held at the Governance Building, was another federal-Tribe consultation, demonstrating a successful partnership though no memorandum of understanding to do so exists.

The consultation design allowed time for federal and Tribal staffs to describe their work, their histories and the value these exchanges have for both groups.

Land and Culture Manager Jan Looking Wolf Reibach described one historical value for the Tribe, closely related to the history of the forest.

The Tribe, he said, chose the name Chachalu (place of the burnt timbers) for the Tribal Museum and Cultural Center because that was what the Tualatin and South Yamhill Kalapuya referred to when parts of the Grand Ronde Valley were devastated by a large fire in 1845.

“Just like the forest has healed from that fire, our Tribe is healing from Termination. Our culture is found in the land. What you do,” Reibach said, referring to forest staff, “is part of our culture.”



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Eirik Thorsgard, Tribal Cultural Protection Program manager, right, speaks during a meeting with Siuslaw National Forest representatives held in the Governance Center on Thursday, Jan. 30. Also attending the meeting was Jordan Mercier, Tribal Compliance technician, middle, and Lawrence Schwabe, Tribal Hydrosystems Compliance specialist.

Ingersoll said the Forest Service was looking to the Tribe as staff recruiting grounds. An organizational chart of Siuslaw National Forest staff showed many vacancies in many different areas for the federal agency.

Handouts included a full list of the National Forest’s 100 to 150 employees with their jobs, departments and contact information. Tribal staffers may need these contacts for different consultation matters.

Siuslaw National Forest managers also provided a list of some 36 projects that Tribal staff may have an interest in and input for. Tribal managers responded with interest in some of them.

Michael Wilson, manager of the Tribe’s Natural Resources Department, described areas where the Tribe and forest staff have worked together, and where opportunities still exist to profitably work

together in the future.

A few of those projects include fire suppression, where Tribal and federal departments already work together; timber sales include some projects where the agencies work together; and recreation trails and fish and wildlife work where the two might benefit from working together in the future.

Lawrence Schwabe, Tribal Hydrosystems Compliance specialist, said that Natural Resources focuses on federal laws for the effect they have on federal, state and Tribal priorities.

The Tribe wants to “give context” through consultation and interpretive signage to projects the two groups have in common, said Thorsgard.

He said that the Tribe was looking toward huckleberry enhancement at the mouth of the Salmon River, where in the 1860s or 1870s the Grand Ronde Indian Agent established a fishery where it was easy for Tribal members to access, and so that they would not go to Willamette Falls or the Columbia River to fish.

The January consultation is only the latest example of the ongoing relationship between the Grand Ronde Tribe and the Forest Service over the years.

“We have been working together for decades,” said Michael Karnosh, the Tribe’s Ceded Lands Program manager and lead for the day’s consultation.

“We want to steward with humility and honor for those who came before us,” said Ingersoll, “to sup-

port the Tribe and its interests, to honor your culture, and to learn how we can best help.”

The 633,000-acre forest stretches across the lands of three Oregon Tribes – the Grand Ronde, Siletz and Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw.

Ingersoll proposed a consultation among the Forest Service and all three Tribes; this in addition to the existing meetings the Siuslaw National Forest has with individual Tribes. The Tribe’s immediate response was positive.

The Tribe is also moving forward with MOU relationships for the benefit of Oregon Tribes and the staffs of three national forests in Oregon – called the 3 Forest MOU.

The national forests include Willamette, Siuslaw and Mt. Hood, all in the Grand Ronde Tribe’s ceded lands.

The proposal, originally made by the Forest Service, has been signed by the Tribe and the Forest Service’s signatures are expected at a national forests regional meeting later this month. The MOU calls for cooperation among all parties in the management of the forests.

“This is a landmark moment,” said Karnosh. “This is a launching point for things to happen.”

Tribal Council Secretary Toby McClary and Tribal Council member Ed Pearsall attended.

“We appreciate you being here,” said McClary. “It means a lot to the Tribe. We share this interest in the forest and want to continue to build on this relationship.” ■

Grand Ronde Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

The Grand Ronde Tribe is operating its own Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to assist Grand Ronde Tribal member households with energy payments (utility bills, firewood, etc.), energy emergencies and weatherization (e.g. furnace repairs). Income eligible households within Polk, Yamhill, Marion, Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties with a Grand Ronde Tribal member are eligible to apply. CTGR members in these counties need to contact Grand Ronde to receive assistance instead of from the community action agency in their area. Grand Ronde’s program enables more CTGR members to be served than would otherwise have been possible.

If you are interested in obtaining services contact Social Services at 1-800-242-8196 for energy assistance and the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority at 503-879-2405 for weatherization. The Tribe’s LIHEAP program also serves all income eligible Indians on Grand Ronde Reservation or trust land.



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