

# NRD sets goals, sees outcomes grow

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribal Natural Resources Department is all about the outdoors.

The department provides valuable work experience for Tribal and community youth, organizes Tribal timber sales, consults on Tribal land purchases and stewardship arrangements at important cultural sites, maintains clean and productive waterways on Tribal properties, fights fires both in the community and across the country, and plays a big role in bringing Tribal traditions back to life.

For more than 20 years, says Natural Resources Manager Michael Wilson, the department has filled summer youth crews with about 16 hires. Each summer, the youths work in the program for seven weeks.

In those two decades, Natural Resources has employed more than 300 youths (some of them repeats) plus 50 crew leaders and supervisors.

They build trails through the Reservation forests and keep the trails clear, but just as importantly they

learn about expectations for staff members, interview skills, starting work on time, team building and many other general job skills.

“For many kids,” says Wilson, “it’s their first job.”

Many who have been a part of the summer youth crew program now have successful careers. Included among them is Chris Mercier, former Tribal Council chairman, and for many years a member of Tribal Council. Today, he is attending law school at Michigan State.

The department lays out and sells timber stands every year, Wilson says. Sales managed by the Tribal Forest Enterprise are sold through public auction.

Often, department staff members complete road maintenance and construction before logging to help with access. After logging, the department ensures that the Reservation roads are still in good shape.

In recent years, Tribal foresters have pursued new markets for Tribal timber, including wood for transmission poles and export. All of the work aims “to get the best value from logs that come from the

Reservation,” says Wilson.

Some of the forest timber makes firewood available for powwows.

Natural Resources manages hunting and fishing programs, including work aimed at Tribal members exercising traditional hunting and fishing rights. Tribal member hunting and fishing tags come from the department. It also assists with the management, preservation and distribution of traditional foods hunted and fished by Tribal members for Tribal ceremonies.

Additionally, Natural Resources co-hosts the First Fish and Salmon celebrations. It also creates and displays exhibits to educate Tribal members and the public about the Tribe’s traditional food, the lamprey.

The Fire Enterprise program provides about 30 firefighting jobs in the summer, says Wilson. Tribal and community trained firefighters battles wildland fires, often across the country, Wilson says. They suit up and take Tribal engines to fire sites 15 to 20 times a summer.

“They are a federal resource across the U.S.,” says Wilson. “They join other Tribes that also are doing this, mostly with the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. They are hard-working and highly trained crews, and get a lot of good evaluations from the fire bosses.”

To get a fuller sense and more details about goals and performance for many of the Tribe’s outdoor activities, the department recently completed its 10-year plan for managing the Reservation, Wilson says.

“The plan is based on sustainability and among other details helps to guide staff to collaboratively plan timber sales, build and maintain forest roads, develop recreational

opportunities, preserve wildlife habitat and work with adjoining land owners to ensure resource protection,” he says.

With the management plan, the department has been improving relationships with federal, state and local agencies and the public. Most recently, the department signed an agreement to work with the Willamette National Forest and many other public and private stakeholders to protect and restore the South Santiam Community Forest Corridor, where the Tribe has an interest in the culturally significant areas.

Plans for the future include implementing the 10-year management plan, which covers department work in every area and great detail.

Progress continues toward full implementation of the Tribe’s 2010 Strategic Plan. Requested by Tribal Council, the plan’s implementation is spearheaded by the Executive Office.

The plan covers all Tribal departments and programs: Tribal Court, Housing Authority, Public Affairs, Legal, Executive Office, Audit Services, Finance, Information Systems, Procurement, Economic Development, TERO, Land and Culture, Social Services, Engineering/Public Works/Facilities, Natural Resources, Health and Wellness and Tribal Police.

“The 2010 Strategic Plan may sunset in 2015,” says Planning Director Rick George, “and I anticipate that the Tribe will have fully implemented performance-based budgeting and work planning in the 2015 fiscal year. Performance measures will be tied to budget components, which will link directly to Strategic Plan projects, deliverables and outcomes.” ■

## Recreation Department hosts Walking Club

The Tribal Recreation Department is hosting a Walking Club, which is a competitive and social activity to track steps and miles walked per day.

The club focuses on low-level impact exercise for beginners with the goal of transitioning Walking Club participants into other fitness activities offered by the Recreation Department. Participation levels vary from individual and team steps, as well as individual and team miles. Teams consist of three individuals. The Recreation Department encourages people to sign up since it will be an ongoing activity. Pedometers are available to new participants one week after they sign up. At the end of each month, prizes are awarded.

In addition, Weighted Wednesdays set appropriate weight goals for people to reach a target weight by the end of the month. Participants are encouraged to stop by the Youth Education Building to track their weight and body mass index. Weight is taken privately with only a recreation assistant present and all information is confidential. Like the Walking Club, prizes will be awarded each month to those with the most amount of fat percentage lost.

For more information or to sign up, contact Recreation Assistant Kendra Steele at 503-879-1921 or [Kendra.steele@grandronde.org](mailto:Kendra.steele@grandronde.org). ■



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Saturday Grand Entry 1:00 pm and 7:00 pm  
Saturday Dinner 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm  
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