

Hatfield Fellow Mary Bodine briefs Tribal Council

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Current Hatfield Fellow Mary Bodine was back in Oregon to take a tour of the district her boss, U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, represents in the House of Representatives.

The Fourth Congressional District in Oregon covers 17,171 square miles in the southwestern part of the state from the California border to north of Corvallis.

"It has been very tiring," Bodine said during her visit with Tribal Council on Friday, Feb. 20. "It is a large district, but I got to sit in on constituent phone calls with Representative DeFazio and met with the Tribe in Coos Bay (Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw)."

Bodine has been Spirit Mountain Community Fund's Hatfield Fellow since November. As the fellow, she took a one-month orientation with the American Political Science Association in Washington, D.C., before being placed in DeFazio's congressional office.

"I was a bit nervous the first two weeks," she said. "There was so much shuffling going on with the election."

Originally, Bodine expected to be assigned to work with the House Committee on Natural Resources on which DeFazio was the ranking minority member. But with the November election giving Republicans an even larger majority in the House, DeFazio was elected to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

"It all changed," Bodine said. "But after answering phones, they've given me everything and I am now



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Mary Bodine, middle, the current Spirit Mountain Community Fund Hatfield Fellow, talks with Tribal Council members Denise Harvey, left, and Cheryle A. Kennedy, right, Community Fund Director Kathleen George, back left, and Louis King, Community Fund program coordinator, during a visit with Tribal Council on Friday, Feb. 20.

a legislative assistant. I'll get a memo on something and be expected to brief the congressman two hours later."

Bodine is a Warm Springs Tribal member. She grew up in Portland and was valedictorian of her senior class at David Douglas High School, where she also played three sports – softball, basketball and cross country.

She graduated from Lewis and Clark College at the age of 20 in 2009 and enrolled at law school there. She received her juris doctorate degree in 2013 with an Environmental Law certificate.

While working in Washington,

D.C., as the Hatfield Fellow, she is on leave from her job with the Bonneville Power Administration as the corporate fish and wildlife paralegal/project manager in Portland.

"I like the work," Bodine said about working in Congress. "But I grew up in Oregon with the trees and the mountains. I don't see living there permanently."

Bodine said DeFazio and his staff are thankful for her legal knowledge. She recently passed the Oregon State Bar exam.

"They are already saying, 'We don't know what we'll do when we lose you in five months.' I am glad they feel that I am an asset to them. I work 10-, 11-hour days and stay until everyone else leaves."

Although she is working long days that provide little opportunity for anything else but sleeping, she has had a few highlights while living in Washington, D.C., which included attending the State of the Union address.

The Hatfield Fellowship was created in 1998 by the Grand Ronde

Tribe to honor the late Sen. Mark Hatfield's public service to Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. Grand Ronde Tribal member Peter Wakeland was the first Hatfield Fellow.

"I was the first Hatfield loser," Tribal Council member Chris Mercier joked. "I lost to Pete. That year there were only two applicants."

Spirit Mountain Community Fund Director Kathleen George said this is the first time DeFazio has permitted a fellow of any kind to work in his congressional office. Bodine said he might have changed his perspective on that policy.

"I think he will now," Bodine said. "He likes me."

Community Fund Program Manager Louis King said the quality of recent Hatfield Fellows, such as Bodine and Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Martin, bodes well for continued success with the program.

George said that with the caliber of fellows the program is attracting, the Community Fund receives affirmative answers from members of Oregon's congressional delegation quickly when approached about placement. Next year's fellow will work in the office of Sen. Jeff Merkley.

Applications for next year's Hatfield Fellow placement open March 16, King said. Tribal members in Oregon, Washington and Idaho who have a minimum of a bachelor's degree can apply.

"Thank you for providing me a life-changing experience," Bodine added.

Tribal Council members who attended Bodine's briefing included Mercier, Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. and Ed Pearsall, Cheryle A. Kennedy and Denise Harvey. ■

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