

Tribe aids in developing guide for energy development

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

As the United States continues to search for alternative energy sources, which could include wave and wind energy on the West Coast, the possibility of energy development affecting Tribal cultural and historical resources increases.

That is why the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, along with two other Tribal communities, participated in a four-year process to help the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management create a new guide to help federal agencies and Native American communities identify areas along the West Coast that could be affected by future offshore energy development.

The guide was developed collaboratively by the bureau's Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Regional Office, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the Tribal Historic Preservation offices of the Makah Tribe in Washington state, the Yurok Tribe in California and the Grand Ronde Tribe in Oregon.

"Understanding the types of important archaeological and cultural resources that could be affected is essential to their preservation," said Joan Barminski, Pacific Re-

gional Director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. "The approach outlined in this guide recognizes that places and cultural heritage resources can have different or multiple meanings and levels of significance based on how people from different cultures, times or backgrounds have interacted and continue to engage with the respective landscape."

The bureau says that the potential for important coastal and marine Native American sites being affected will become more likely as interest in offshore renewable energy development increases. The effects could include disturbing archaeological sites and traditional use areas.

The new guide uses a cultural landscape approach that integrates traditional knowledge with environmental science, historical information and archaeological knowledge in an effort to reduce potential conflicts while filling in critical data gaps in ocean planning and resource management.

"The goal is to develop a proactive approach to working with Native American communities to identify



Briecce Edwards

areas of Tribal significance that need to be considered in the planning process," states a bureau flier. "Information from this effort will help facilitate decision-making processes that take into consideration the importance of these locales, and give Tribal communities a more powerful voice during regional energy planning."

Tribal Senior Archaeologist Briecce Edwards said recognition of Tribal voices in the planning process was very important.

"This was a big project and precedent setting for the type of work that it is," Edwards said. "The Tribe helped set the stage for this project as part of the consultative process for the cultural resources. Here was an opportunity to look in-depth at the cultural connections to that area, as well as serving as a lead developing the project and meth-

odology. It also was an opportunity to redefine how a federal agency heard, recognized and integrated Tribal understanding."

Edwards said the guide is a series of recommendations created by Tribes and handed to a federal agency that empower Tribes and reinforces the message that Tribal knowledge, understanding and perspectives are valid and need to be included in the planning process.

"The guide gives standing for the Tribes saying, 'This is important.' You need to hear from us that this is important," Edwards said. "We can now point to this document to demonstrate how Tribal cultural concerns about place fit into existing processes. It's about protecting the Tribe's cultural resources. This is a way that a federal agency listens to the Tribe's concerns for those resources." ■

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