

'Area is of extreme importance to the Tribe'

CEMETERY continued from front page

to move farther east into that bank. "We're having a geotechnical engineer with a hydraulics background look at it. They specialize in soil stability issues in and along rivers and river systems, so I think they are the right people for the job."

White said the report that will result from the engineer's visit of the Tribal Cemetery will be something the Tribe can use to potentially stabilize the riverbank in the future if needed.

"Since it's the cemetery, we need to be proactive," White said of the project's importance.

Tribal General Manager David Fullerton said the area is of extreme importance to the Tribe and that nothing happens at the cemetery without full Tribal Council support and approval.

"To my knowledge I don't think there has ever been any action taken down at the cemetery to reduce that erosion," Fullerton said. "Anytime we are dealing with the cemetery that is a real sensitive area. We don't want people down there and I would stress that as a



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~ Tribal Historic Preservation Manager **Briece Edwards**

staff and as a council we are being proactive and trying to address any issues at the bank and getting ahead of it."

Tribal Historic Preservation Manager Briece Edwards said Cultural Resources Department staff members have been on top of the situation and keeping an eye on it for years.

"The Tribal Historic Preservation Office has been monitoring that steep bank at least for the past five years out of consideration for the erosion because it is one of the most significant spaces owned today," Edwards said. "For me, I approach everything I do with reverence, but if there is a greater reverence it's there."

Edwards said a strong desire to minimize any impact on the sensitive area requires using one of the department's new pieces of equipment – its DJI Phantom 4 Quadcopter drone.

"One of our problems is how do we actually see the problem because our vantage point is limited from above," Edwards said. "We can only do so much by looking at the aerial photography and looking at how much erosion has happened over time. We're in hopes that by using the drone we may be able to confirm that it actually is stable or have enough advance warning that we need to do something. We're using it as a tool."

The first real-world application of the drone will be at the cemetery, said GIS Coordinator Volker Mell, who selected Tribal member and GIS Analyst Alex Drake to be the drone pilot.

"We can use the drone to get a real nice 3-D view," Mell said. "That's the first thing we are going to do. We are going to fly that bank and map it over time."

Mell said that staff will fly the

drone over the bank every year and keep that information to compare and assess the bank's stability in the future.

Edwards said the use of the drone helps accomplish the main goal of not disturbing the land.

"We're trying to be as least intrusive as possible with this technique so we're not having to add more disturbance to the bank," Edwards said. "The idea is to be as hands-off as possible and we can get a lot more information more quickly this way. All of that information allows us to make a better determination and a better evaluation so that we can come up with the most appropriate solution if it needs one."

Tribal Lands Manager Jan Looking Wolf Reibach said the importance of the Tribe's only truly sacred land cannot be emphasized enough.

"Following Termination, the 2.5-acre cemetery was the only Tribal land that the BIA could not sell," Reibach said. "It remained in the care of our members during Termination era. In addition to sacred burial grounds, many strategies and plans were formed there during meetings regarding efforts to restore the Tribe."

Fullerton said Tribal leadership has been aware of the issue at the cemetery for years and that they are asking for people to stay clear of the area in general, but especially now while the situation is assessed.

"Respect the area," Fullerton said. "Respect what it is. Because that is such a sensitive area nothing happens without council's approval." ■

Tribal sponsoring Native American Heritage Day

CORVALLIS – The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Spirit Mountain Casino are sponsoring a Native American Heritage Day on Saturday, May 6, as the Oregon State softball team plays the University of Utah Utes.

"We would like to invite families out to the game as well as get a limited number of free T-shirts," Spirit Mountain Casino Sponsorship Administrator Jocelyn Huffman said.

Junior outfielder Lovie Lopez is a member of the Wintu Tribe in California and has visited the Tribal campus to help teach youth how to become better softball players.

Lopez is majoring in sociology at Oregon State and was named to the third team of the all Pac-12 softball team in her sophomore year after batting .309, hitting four home runs and accounting for 33 RBIs.

"We believe she is a great role model for our Native youth, so we wanted to support her with sponsoring the Native American Heritage Day," Huffman said.

The game vs. Utah begins at 1 p.m. at the Oregon State Softball Complex, 114 Gill Coliseum.

Youth Prevention will be providing bus transportation to the game for the first 35 people who would like to attend. Parents are responsible to accompany and supervise young children. In addition, Youth Prevention will chaperone 10 middle school/high school youth.

Contact Shannon Stanton at 503-879-1489 or shannon.stanton@grandronde.org for permission forms or to sign up for the bus, which will leave the Community Center at 10 a.m. and return about 5 p.m. ■



Lovie Lopez

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