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Tribe intensifies
efforts to get Tribal
members counted
— pg. 9

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Tribal Council to OK three fall rounds of virus relief payments

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Adult Tribal members will see another series of three virus relief payments totaling \$1,800 from September through November.

Tribal Council is set to approve a fourth supplemental budget on Wednesday, Sept. 9, that will allocate \$7.5 million that the Tribe received in federal funding to pay for the virus relief payments.

The approximately 4,500 adult Tribal members will each receive \$600 each month.

The funding comes from the Tribe's share of Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act monies. Although the Tribe has not disclosed exactly how much it has received in CARES Act funding, a Harvard study estimated the amount is approximately \$33 million based on the U.S. Treasury's public formula for determining allocations to Tribes.

Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier announced the extension of the Tribe's COVID-19 Payment Relief Program during the Wednesday, Aug. 19, Tribal Council meeting. Using CARES Act funding, the Tribe will have dispersed \$4,400 in relief funding to adult Tribal members since March, which is \$250 less than all of the per capita payments sent out in 2019.

"Every day we are reminded that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered the world we live in," Mercier said. "Tribal Council

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Road to repair

Tribe, Polk County agree to patch up main thoroughfare

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council approved a memorandum of agreement with Polk County on repairing pothole-marked Grand Ronde Road during its Wednesday, Aug. 19, meeting.

Polk County, which has jurisdiction over the roadway, will perform engineering and project management while the Tribe will pay for the estimated \$45,000 in repairs as part of its Long Range Transportation Plan/Tribal Transportation Program.

Public Works Coordinator John Mercier said that since the project will cost less than \$100,000, the Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance will not be invoked. However, he added, Polk County is aware of the Tribe's desire to see Tribal members put to work on local road construction projects and the agreement requires the county to seek bids from Indian-owned businesses.

Polk County Public Works Director Todd Whitaker said the repairs will involve patch paving to fix the potholes and replacing the "alligator" cracking – interconnected cracking of the asphalt – to

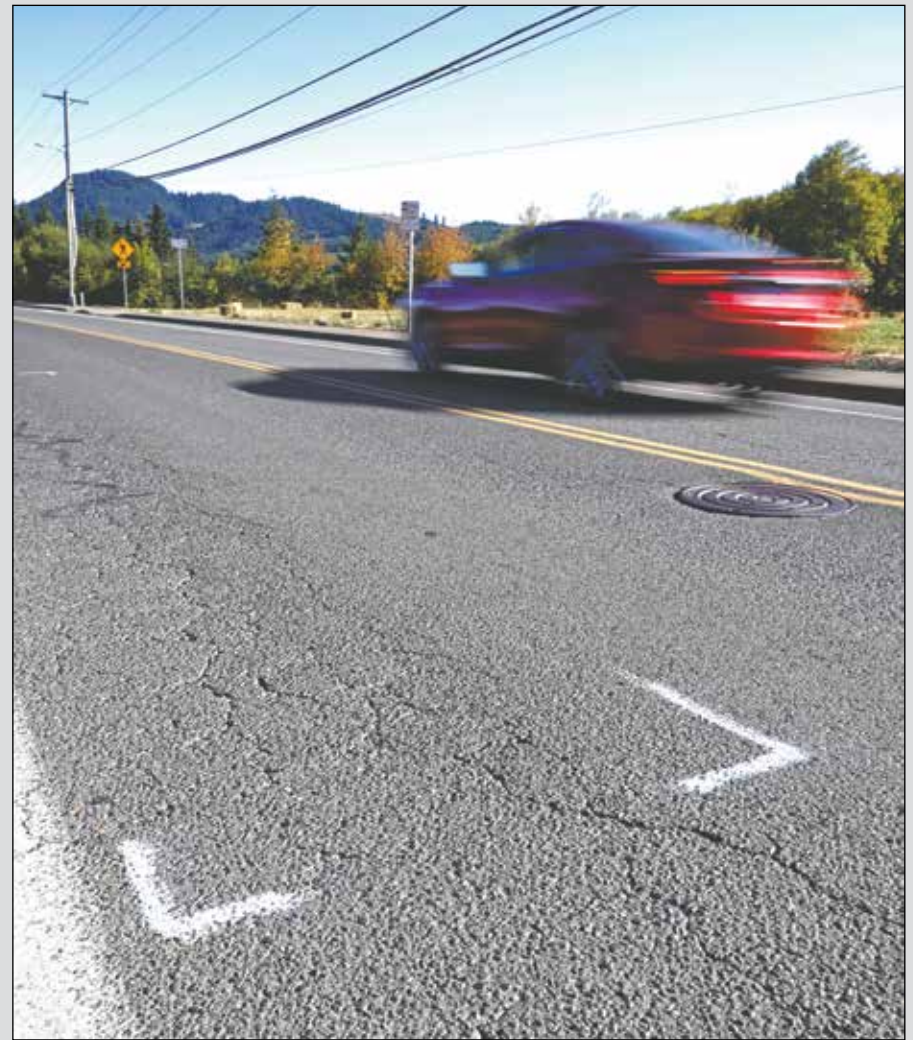


Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Painted lines indicate an area of "alligator cracking" asphalt to be repaired on Grand Ronde Road in September.

help keep the road in shape for a few more years.

Whitaker said road repair work should begin in the second week of September. The memorandum

requires that the work be completed no later than Sept. 30.

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COVID-19 contact tracing shutter convenience store



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

The Grand Ronde Food and Fuel convenience store on Salmon River Highway closed on Thursday, Aug. 27, after COVID-19 contact tracing found connections to the facility.

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribe has shut down the Grand Ronde Food and Fuel Co. convenience store adjacent to Spirit Mountain Casino on Salmon River Highway after contact tracing uncovered positive COVID-19 connections to the facility.

The closure, which took effect at 8 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 27, was announced on the Tribal government's official Facebook page.

"We will take this opportunity to conduct a deep clean of the store while the fuel pumps will remain open for credit card use," the post said. "The Tribe's highest priority is the safety of our staff and community."

The store will remain closed until further notice.

"If I had to make a guess, I would say two weeks," General Manager Tim Jackson said about the closure. "It may be as soon as seven days. We are working with the health professionals to determine the best course of action."

After five months of keeping the coronavirus at bay, the Tribe's Health & Wellness Center has started detecting positive COVID-19 results from individuals connected to the Grand Ronde community.

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