

Tribal Council OKs contracts to restore conservation properties

By Dean Rhodes and Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writers

Tribal Council approved the Natural Resources Department entering into two contracts that will restore oak and upland prairie habitat, respectively, on two of the Tribe's six conservation properties during its Wednesday, March 24, meeting.

The agreements with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program involve sharing costs in which the conservation service contributes funds toward implementation of conservation practices and the Tribe provides any remaining resources necessary to complete the projects.

The first contract would help restore oak habitat on 41 acres of the Rattlesnake Butte conservation property northwest of Junction City in Lane County. The Tribe obtained three separate parcels at Rattlesnake Butte in 2012 and 2015 totaling a combined 269.5 acres.

The work at Rattlesnake Butte would improve the forest stand, treat woody residue, and manage brush and plant for wildlife habitat. The cost-share amount would not exceed \$72,000.

The second contract would help restore upland prairie habitat at Noble Oaks, a 667.5-acre conservation property in Polk County obtained by the Tribe in 2019.

The work over 40 acres would include mowing, weed control and conservation cover. The cost-share would not exceed \$25,000.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved applying to the Nation-

al Congress of American Indians for a one-year, \$84,053 grant that would fund a domestic violence client advocate who would work for the Social Services Department;

- Approved applying to the U.S. Department of Justice for two \$500,000 grants. The first grant would purchase a replacement police vehicle and fund an additional police officer for five years at the Tribal Police Department. The second grant would fund a Tribal Youth Enhancement & Prevention coordinator in the Social Services Department who would operate a five-year program;
- Extended the maturity date on the permanent loan to Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. to reflect the seven months that loan payments were suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic. The new maturity date would be Aug. 15, 2025;
- Approved extending the sunset date of the COVID-19-related coverage in the Workers' Compensation Ordinance from March 31 to end on the date that the Tribally declared state of emergency expires;
- And approved one voluntary relinquishment of membership and OK'd the enrollment of eight individuals into the Tribe because they meet the requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.

The entire meeting can be viewed by visiting the Tribal government's website at www.grandronde.org and clicking on the Government tab and then Videos. ■



Smoke Signals file photo

The Grand Ronde Tribe released its vision for redevelopment of the Blue Heron Paper Mill site in Oregon City on Wednesday, March 24. The Tribe purchased the culturally important land in August 2019.

Tribe shares vision for Blue Heron site

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

After acquiring the 23-acre Blue Heron site near Willamette Falls in August 2019, the Tribe is now sharing its ideas for future use of the culturally significant land located in its ancestral homelands.

Potential plans include environmental and cultural restoration along with new development. Other priorities are to help restore public access, provide economic prosperity and return the Tribe to the role of caregiver over an important piece of its homeland.

"Acquiring the property at Willamette Falls let us reclaim part of our history and allowed us to once again become stewards of the land and the falls," Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said in a press release. "Now, we head into the future with a vision for this land that helps heal it and revitalize it while telling our story and sharing our history."

The Tribe purchased the property from Washington developer George Heidergerken in 2019 for \$15.25 million. Since then, it has been working with a design team from GBD Architects and Walker | Macy to create a vision for the site. The Tribe also has been working with the state Department of Environmental Quality on onsite cleanup efforts.

"Focused on the central idea of healing, the vision will also be guided by the values of spirit, place, people and prosperity," the press release stated. "What that means for the site itself is extensive ecological restoration at the southern end, which would include restoring natural basalt

landscape and water channels underneath defunct industrial buildings. Native plantings would be re-established, and restored riparian habitat would provide vast benefits for native fish, birds and other wildlife."

Additionally, the Tribe envisions mixed-use development at the northern end of the site that would be a visual and physical connection to the restored landscape.

Potential development could include office, hospitality, institutional or educational spaces, as well as Tribal spaces, public gathering spots, restaurants, retail and a riverwalk area. Any new development would reflect the story of the Tribe and its historical and cultural connection to Willamette Falls.

"This is a meaningful and exciting time for our Tribe and for everyone who will benefit from the healing and promise of our Willamette Falls site," Kennedy said. "We look forward to working with all of the partners who share in our vision for the land, from its historical, ecological and cultural significance to its potential to create prosperity for the entire region."

In December 2020, Tribal Council approved the allocation of \$1.235 million to purchase an approximately half-acre plot adjacent to the Blue Heron property. It is located at the entrance to the former Blue Heron Paper Mill site and has an office building.

The property was on the market and the Tribe's purchase ensured that it controls the site's future use so that it is complementary to Blue Heron's development. ■

Remembering Saige



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Tribal member Veronica Gaston works on renewing the Saige Selwyn Bicycle Memorial on Grand Ronde Road on Monday, March 15. Gaston has been taking care of the memorial since 2016. She was able to replace the bike and add a ceramic angel with money she won during General Council door prize drawings, along with a small personal contribution. Any future money from the door prizes will be used to decorate the memorial in May, which is Saige's birth month. Saige, 12, walked on in September 2015 after the bicycle she was riding was struck by a vehicle while she was crossing Grand Ronde Road.



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