

Council members meet Interior officials in Bend

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and Secretary Michael Langley traveled to Bend on Thursday, Oct. 14, to confer with Department of the Interior representatives who were visiting the state.

Unfortunately, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American to ever occupy a Cabinet post in the history of the United States, was unable to attend due to the death of her mother.

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland (Ojibwe) and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Rachael Taylor visited southern Oregon to highlight conservation efforts, survey wildland fire damage and discuss the department's support for rural and Tribal communities. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley joined them.

The Interior Department contingent visited Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and toured the site of the 2020 South Obenchain fire, which burned more than 30,000 acres and destroyed almost 100 buildings.

Department representatives and Merkley also traveled to Crater Lake National Park to highlight ongoing and future projects to make the park more accessible.

At Central Oregon Community College in Bend, Newland met with Tribal leaders to highlight the department's work to strengthen the role of Tribal consultation in federal decision-making, support Indigenous resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic, combat the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous peoples and address the country's dark history with the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

"We did take the opportunity to talk about, in the bureau budget, the things that are lacking for our Tribe," Kennedy said during the Tuesday, Oct. 26, Legislative Action Committee meeting. "I want to believe that they feel on open ears. The things that I talked about were public safety, fire management and establishing a line item for cultural recovery for all of the oversight in the trust responsibility area."

"I talked about education because, especially in our rural community, education is really, really suffering," Langley said. "It's not just that, it's an economic issue, it's a mental health issue ... there's a lot of issues that are wrapped up in that. We think a lot of our urban schools, but they actually have way more resources than the rural schools right now. I think more attention needs to be paid to that and that's what I was asking for."

The next day, Newland and Taylor visited the Warm Springs Reservation, where they met with Tribal leaders and highlighted federal investments that the bipartisan infrastructure deal would make to local Tribal water infrastructure. The Warm Springs Tribe's aging water system has led to an urgent need for investments in safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Newland said the infrastructure deal would make \$250 million available to help improve drinking water quality and services for the Warm Springs Tribal community.

Interior representatives ended their Oregon visit on the Columbia River, where they discussed ongoing work to secure treaty fishing on the river and ensure that Tribal communities have the resources they need to fish along their ancestral lands and waters. ■

Tribe started demolition work on the more than 50 buildings

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for this funding as it moves through Congress, and do everything I can to support the sovereignty and self-determination of Tribal nations in Oregon."

The funding will be included in an upcoming Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill, Merkley said.

"Since its foreclosure, the old Blue Heron site has sat empty and abandoned," said Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy. "The funding allocated to the Grand Ronde Tribe under the appropriations bill will allow us to make significant improvements to the property's infrastructure and take this project one step closer to welcoming family and friends back to Willamette Falls. We want to thank our senators for work they've done to highlight this important project."

The bill also includes support

for a variety of other areas and is the basis for negotiations with the House of Representatives as Congress works to fund the federal government for fiscal year 2022.

Merkley is the first Oregon member of Congress from either chamber to serve on the Appropriations Committee since Sen. Mark Hatfield. He joined the committee in 2013.

The Tribe purchased the 23-acre Blue Heron site in August 2019 for \$15.25 million. In addition to the possible \$2 million in federal funding, the Tribe received an \$800,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency in May to begin environmental remediation at the site, which has been home to a paper mill and other industrial and commercial uses since the arrival of European settlers in the mid-1800s.

The Tribe started demolition of the more than 50 abandoned and dilapidated buildings in September. ■

Elders dine-in



Photos by Kamiah Koch

Tribal Elder Bud White was one the first to enter the Elders Activity Center as it opened its doors again to serve Elder lunches on Tuesday, Oct. 19, after being closed for 19 months. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the center stopped serving indoor meals to Elders on March 13, 2020, and transitioned to serving to-go meals. Now with scheduled time slots and a maximum capacity of 25 people, Elders can pick up to-go lunches or sit down and enjoy the meal at a table.



Tribal Elder Marline Groshong was served fish tacos and a celebratory cookie from Crumbl Cookies as the Elders Activity Center opened again for indoor Elder lunches on Tuesday, Oct. 19. The EAC has delivered meals or served to-go meals in a drive-through line since March 2020 to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Free Playgroup in Grand Ronde!



Children & Family SERVICES

Family Building Blocks
Keeping Children Safe and Families Together

When: First Thursday of each month 10:00 am-11:30 am

Where: CTGR - Community Service Center 9615 Grand Ronde Road Grand Ronde, OR 97347

Who: Parents and caregivers of children under 5 years.

Why: Come to play, have a snack and have fun!