

Tribal Council hears comments on spray policy

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Social media/digital journalist

Community concerns about the Tribe’s herbicide spray policy were heard during an input meeting held Thursday, Nov. 9, in Tribal Council Chambers and over Zoom.

Tribal staff in attendance included Natural Resources Specialist Anna Rumthun, Facilities Manager Tyson Mercier, General Manager David Fullerton, Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, Communications Director Sara Thompson, Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier, Tribal Council Secretary Michael Langley and fellow Tribal Council members Jon A. George, Denise Harvey, Brenda Tuomi, Lisa Leno and Kathleen George.

Rumthun began the 90-minute meeting by explaining how the current list of herbicide weed killers was chosen.

“We were trying to take a pretty conservative approach to the chemicals we were using,” Rumthun said.

Rumthun said 10 chemicals were chosen that present minimum risk after Tribal employees filtered through recommendations provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Thurston County Board of Health and a software program.

Rumthun added other alternatives like agricultural vinegar are not recommended because they can damage aquatic environments and

salts can build up in the soil.

Fullerton said there are two spray policies in use at the Tribe: one for the Natural Resources management plan approved in 2021 by Tribal Council and one for campus spraying that was approved in May. Tribal Council recorded comments about the on-campus spray policy during the Nov. 9 meeting.

After staff explanations, attendees expressed concern and confusion about what was being exterminated and the chemicals used to do so.

More than 10 people gave comments, most using the entire five minutes they were allotted to present personal testimonies against the current use of herbicides.

Some said they could smell the chemicals and were concerned about the effects they could have on future generations exposed in Tribal Housing.

“What specifically are we spraying? What are we trying to kill?” Tribal member Shayla Meyer asked. “Blueberries and crab apples are intended to be eaten. Anything outdoor that is supposed to be eaten should be picked by our kids and that’s where firsthand education comes from.”

One commenter was concerned with the “stone people,” or stones used in the sweat lodges being contaminated with chemicals and later inhaled.

The Tribe currently contracts

through Springer Spray Services in Salem.

Several commenters, including Tribal Elders Carol Logan and Kathleen Provost, were upset with the company’s alleged lack of warning signs around spray sites.

“I’ve watched the spraying increase greatly. I now have cancer,” Provost said. “Why does a contract sprayer have more protection than Tribal members themselves?”

Provost’s husband, Don Hendricks, made an emotional plea to Tribal Council to change the policy.

“Grand Ronde should be leading the way,” Hendricks said. “People are always talking about being stewards of the land.”

Other alternatives were offered by community members during the meeting. Tribal Elder Perri McDaniel suggested community work parties, increased participation, goat grazing and ground cloths.

The meeting ended around 7 p.m. with Tribal Council members and staff thanking participants for their comments and agreeing they had a lot of information to discuss. ■

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Youth Empowerment & Prevention Activity Calendar

December 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	Parent Connections 12-1pm @ Community Center *Drop In*	2	3
Youth Council Regular Meeting 1-3pm @ Com. Center *Drop In*	4	5	6	7	8	9
11	Art & Healing 12 w/ BH 5-7:30pm @ Chachalu Museum *Drop In*	12	13	14	Bingo & Game Night 4:30-6:30 @ Com. Center *Drop In*	15
18	19	20	Gift Making Day 10-1pm @ Com. Center *Drop In*	21	Parent Connections 12-1pm @ Community Center *Drop In*	22
Christmas	25	CTGR Campus Closed 8-5pm	26	27	28	29
					CTGR Campus Closed 1-5pm	30
						NYE Sobriety Family Movie Night *RSVP* YC NYE Sobriety Party! @ Gym 9-1am *Drop In*

If you would like any further information on our events, please check our Facebook page @ Grand Ronde Youth Empowerment, our Instagram @ctgryouthempowerment, or email the YEP team @ yep@grandronde.org.