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Begins March 12, 2023**
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Tribe begins third round of Tumwata Village demolition

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

OREGON CITY – The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is starting the third, but not final, round of demolition at the former Blue Heron Paper Mill site it purchased in August 2019.

The third round will demolish structures on the northwestern section of the 23-acre property close to downtown Oregon City. Among the buildings scheduled to be demolished are two that housed paper machines, Mill D and one known as the Butler Building.

The work was scheduled to start in late February and take four to five months to complete.

“We could not be more grateful or excited about this next phase of work kicking off to bring us that much closer to realizing our vision for Willamette Falls,” Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said in a press release. “We’ve already come so far. To see the progress and the work continue just makes us feel so hopeful for our site at the Falls.”

The second round of demolition that started in April 2022 took down the site’s water filtration plant, millwright shop, auto shop and carpentry shop.

Since purchasing the property for \$15.25 million in August 2019, the Tribe has released its vision statement for the site in March 2021, started environmental remediation, launched the first phase of demolition in September 2021 and secured federal support by obtaining an \$800,000 Environmental Protection Agency grant in May

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Fixing a hole



Photo by Kamiah Koch

The long-delayed repair work on Grand Ronde Road is tentatively scheduled to begin in late June to remedy the increasing number of potholes and alligator cracking occurring on the heavily traveled roadway.

Grand Ronde Road improvements coming this summer

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals assistant editor / staff writer

After an almost three-year delay, Grand Ronde Road improvement work is tentatively scheduled to begin in late June.

“We’re very pleased with how things are working out at this time,” Tribal Public Works Director John Mercier said. “We’re hoping that we can still get all the compliances and agreements in place. The public has been really understanding (about the delay) and that’s been nice. ... The heavy trucks on the road cause a lot of damage there.”

The long-awaited work from Hebo Road to

Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center was first delayed due to unsafe air quality caused by the catastrophic wildfires in September 2020 and then again in 2021 due to lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mercier said.

A specific construction date hasn’t been set as the project still needs to be put out to bid, but Mercier and Polk County Public Works Director Todd Whitaker anticipate it will begin sometime in late June and wrap up by October. There will be special consider-

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Agency Creek Round Dance returns after three-year hiatus



Smoke Signals file photo

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

The Agency Creek Round Dance was one of the first annual Tribal events affected by the March 2020 outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and is now one of the last annual events to return.

But return it does.
The 19th annual Agency Creek Round

Dance will be held Friday and Saturday, March 3-4, in the Tribal gym. Friday’s events will start with a pipe ceremony at 5 p.m. and a traditional salmon dinner served at 6. Round dancing will begin at 7. On Saturday, the schedule is the same except there will be no pipe ceremony.

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Tribal members last gathered in 2019 for the Agency Creek Round Dance, which was canceled in 2020, ’21 and ’22 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual event finally returns on March 3-4 in the Tribal gym.