

Grand Ronde efforts cited in proposed delisting of Nelson’s checker-mallow

By Dean Rhodes
Publications coordinator

A perennial herb that the Grand Ronde Tribe has been trying to save from extinction for almost 30 years will be taken off a list of threatened species in the near future.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced on Monday, Oct. 16, that the Nelson’s checker-mallow will be coming off the Endangered Species Act list 30 days after an upcoming notice appears in the Federal Register.

In April 1995, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde signed an agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service to continue upkeep of the plant that was found growing in the path of the planned Spirit Mountain Casino site.

Although the Tribe was under no legal obligation to transplant the plants, 299 of them were moved to a different location on Tribal property and most of them survived the ensuing winter.

At the time, a Fish and Wildlife representative said the Grand Ronde Tribe was setting a positive example for other Tribes and developers to follow.

Since then, the Tribe has established reserves for the plant and performed prescribed burns related to it, said Natural Resources Department Manager Colby Drake.

Nelson’s checker-mallow grows from south of Corvallis, Ore., to north of Vancouver, Wash. It was classified 30 years ago as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

It grows 15- to 40-inch-tall spikes of deep pink flowers that dot prairies, wetlands, edges of woodlands and riparian areas in the Willamette Valley and Coast Range. It was placed on the threatened list because of habitat loss caused by agricultural development, stream alterations that limited water to meadows, recreational activities and roadside spraying.

However, 33 independent populations are now thriving in more than 50 locations in the Willamette Valley and Coast Range, the Fish and Wildlife Service said. Some sites are publicly owned, have been purchased by conservation groups or are enrolled in conservation programs.

The Fish and Wildlife Service said it expects the number of locations where Nelson’s checker-mallow plants currently grow to remain constant for the foreseeable future.

The wildlife service cited landowners and more than a dozen federal, state and Tribal entities, including the Grand Ronde Tribe, as contributing to the recovery of Nelson’s checker-mallow.

Prairies require continued distur-



Photo courtesy of Annaliese Ramthun

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bance, such as prescribed burning, to keep them from turning into woodlands. Many landowners are helping with that by mowing areas and working with the Fish and Wildlife Service to maintain habitat.

Natural Resources Specialist Annaliese Ramthun said the Tribe maintains five refuge sites around the Grand Ronde area for the plant.

“These areas have been mowed and occasionally burned to maintain the wet prairie habitat that the plant needs,” she said. “We’ve been monitoring these populations since that time.”

Since 2008, the Tribe also began working with the Institute for Applied Ecology to restore the Tye Preserve near Tribal housing to bolster the number of checker-mallow in the area along with other native species with cultural and fiber value.

“The Plants for People grant which started in 2014 extended similar restoration efforts to restore habitat at the South Yamhill property and that has been ongoing until this year,” Ramthun added. “Within the last two years, we have been cooperating with the USFWS to provide population estimates for Tribally managed properties to help inform the delisting decision.”

The delisting of Nelson’s checker-mallow coincides with the 50th anniversary of passage of the Endangered Species Act. More than 100 species have been removed or down-listed from endangered to threatened since the act was approved by Congress. In Oregon, 15 plants remain on the list, said Jodie Delavan, a Fish and Wildlife spokesperson. ■

Tribal nonemergency text line

The Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department has a nonemergency text line at 541-921-2927.

“If you have a nonemergency situation or question, feel free to contact my officer via text through this line,” said Grand Ronde Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight. “When one of my officers receives the text, they will call you back when they have time.”

McKnight said that emergency situations still require calling 911. For more information, contact McKnight at 503-879-1474. ■

Help us look for chronic wasting disease in our herds!

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a highly infectious, fatal disease that can infect both deer and elk. **CWD has not been found in Oregon**, but has been detected in 31 states. In 2021, Idaho had two detections in their free ranging population within 30 miles of the Oregon border.

NRD will be cooperating with ODFW to collect lymph nodes of harvested deer and elk for CWD testing. Staff will be available to collect samples from animals brought to NRD during business hours and there will be an after hours drop off station at the ceremonial cooler at the lower shop at NRD. Hunters are asked to fill out a brief information card to include with the head of the animal, which requires first vertebrae below the skull. Heads will be returned upon request.

RAFFLE for a \$50 Cabela’s gift card for participation!

Natural Resources Department CWD sampling after hours drop off:
47010 S.W. Hebo Road

Contact Wildlife Biologist Marie Vicksta at 503-879-1458 or marie.vicksta@grandronde.org if you want more information.

