

General Council briefed on Natural Resource Management Plan

By Sherron Lumley

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal Natural Resources Department Manager Colby Drake briefed the membership on the Natural Resource Management Plan during the General Council meeting on Sunday, Dec. 3.

The plan focuses on the management of the 10,000-acre Grand Ronde Reservation during the next 10 years.

“Reservation and Tribal trust forest land will continue to be actively managed for fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, timber, fire management and minor forest products,” Drake said.

The 10-year plan acknowledges Tribal ecological knowledge and builds in the flexibility for adaptive management, he added.

Planning began in 2021 and included an information gathering process with Tribal members, Tribal Council and various committees. The plan takes effect Jan. 1 and continues through Dec. 31, 2033.

“This is a manageable, flexible plan that we can adapt,” Drake said. “A lot of change can happen in 10 years and we want to listen to the membership.”

Natural Resources programs include Parks and Recreation, Timber Resources, Fish and Wildlife, Fire Management and Protection, and Environmental Protection. Highlights of the management plan include:

- **Fish and Wildlife:** A new wildlife tree policy protects all trees that are 150 years or older, and four older legacy stands on the west side of the Reservation will have deferred-harvest status. New riparian management zones (natural buffers between streams

and logging) will ensure habitat enhancement and protection. In addition, the Coast Creek Special Management Area will be expanded from 300 to almost 900 acres.

- **Recreation:** There will be almost 6 miles of new hiking trails on the Reservation and a new nature playground near the Elder Activity Center on the Tribal campus. Big Buck Campground will remain fee-free for Tribal members and will feature a new online reservation system. Maintenance and monitoring of all trails and recreation facilities will be ongoing.
 - **Timber Resources:** The annual allowable cut will be 5.02 million board feet. The harvest schedule provides for almost 200 acres of commercial thinning per year and 83 acres of regeneration harvest. The minimum tree age for regeneration harvest will be 60 years on the Reservation’s west side and 70 elsewhere. In addition to commercial thinning, the plan includes salvage and treatment of areas affected by laminated root rot.
 - **Fire Management:** Planned burns will be the preferred method of site preparation and vegetation management. Commercial thinning and proactive treatments will occur at 12 years instead of 20 to manage spacing.
 - **Silviculture:** The focus is on cultivation, managing invasive species and implementing climate resilience. Silviculture treatments include burning, site prep, planting, netting, releasing, under planting, spot spraying, under burning and pre-commercial thinning.
- Drake then shared several maps

that are available from the Natural Resources Department. These show the borders of the Reservation, special management areas, riparian management zones, legacy stands, roads, streams and an estimated 10-year harvest schedule.

After the presentation, Drake took three questions and comments from the audience.

“For me personally, this is exciting,” Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said, recalling when the goal was to reacquire the land. “On the particular day we got the land, four Tribal Council women – Eula Petite, Candy Robertson, myself and Kathryn Harrison – we tromped out there in the snow to claim it.”

Tribal Council members expressed appreciation for the high level of professional work done by Drake and the Natural Resources Department. Kennedy also praised the many years of service of former Tribal Council member Jack Giffen Jr. and his work that led to the 2023 memorandum of agreement between the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Tribe. The agreement expanded cultural and sustenance hunting and

fishing rights on off-Reservation property.

In other action, three Tribal Elders were nominated for three open seats on the Elders Committee. Colette Abdi, Tammy Cook and Serena Layman accepted their nominations.

“There will be no need for an election process because this is an uncontested election,” Election Board Vice Chair Michael Mercier said.

The next General Council meeting will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 7, with a report from the Health & Wellness Department.

Door prize winners were Ashley Tuomi, Judy Williams and Kaylene Contreras, \$100; and Casandra Ashby, Aven Cox, Claudia Leno, Veronica Gaston and Michael Mercier, \$50.

Kalene Contreras donated her door prize to Kim Contreras.

Gail Wilkinson, Jacqueline Wilmot and Eric Bernando received \$25 gas cards and Lorena Rivera, Mary Ellen Good and Erin Castro received \$20 grocery gift certificates.

To view the meeting in its entirety, visit the Tribal government’s website at www.grandronde.org and click on the Videos tab. ■

Tribal Council approves Natural Resource Management Plan

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council approved the Natural Resource Management Plan during its Wednesday, Dec. 13, meeting.

The plan focuses on the management of the 10,000-acre Grand Ronde Reservation during the next 10 years.

Planning began in 2021 and included an information gathering process with Tribal members, Tribal Council and various committees. The plan takes effect Jan. 1 and continues through 2033.

Natural Resources Department Manager Colby Drake briefed the membership on the Natural Resource Management Plan during the General Council meeting Sunday, Dec. 3. He said the 10-year plan acknowledges Tribal ecological knowledge and builds in the flexibility for adaptive management.

“I want to thank the Natural Resources Department for this plan,” Tribal Council member Jon A. George said at the Tuesday, Dec. 12, Legislative Action Committee meeting. “I love the idea of old-growth (trees) set-aside because these are becoming so rare.”

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved an agreement between the Tribe’s Natural Resources Department and

Dallas, Texas-based Aspira for the use of an online booking system for reservations at Big Buck Campground;

- Approved enrolling two infants, eight non-infants and re-enrolling one non-infant because they meet the enrollment requirements under the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance;

- And approved an agreement with Portland-based Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Endreson & Perry, LLP to represent the Tribe on a contingent fee basis in investigating and potentially litigating against potential defendants, including 3M and DuPont, for the manufacture and sale of polyfluoroalkyl substances. These long-lasting chemicals, commonly known as PFAS, break down very slowly over time and may harm people, water systems, land, animals and agriculture.

Additionally, council approved an authorization to proceed, which authorized Tribal Natural Resource Specialist Anna Ramthun to apply for the \$298,495 federal Landscape Scale Restoration Program grant.

To watch the entire meeting, visit the Tribal government’s website at www.grandronde.org and click on the Videos tab. ■



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