

# Tribe helps provide guidance in forest land management report

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals editor

Grand Ronde was among several Tribal nations to give feedback and guidance on a recent U.S. Forest Service land management report.

Tribal Timber Resource Program Manager Michael Karnosh reviewed a draft of the report “Braiding Indigenous and Western Knowledge for Climate-Adapted



Michael Karnosh

Forests: An Ecocultural State of Science Report,” which urges that Tribal stewardship practices be considered in future land management choices by the Forest Service.

The report was co-authored by Oregon State University faculty Cristina Eisenberg and Michael Paul Nelson. Grand Ronde’s Natural Resources Department has been working with Eisenberg, who serves as the college’s Maybelle Clark Macdonald Director of Tribal Initiatives, for the past few years regarding incorporation of Tribal ecological knowledge into mainstream forestry practices.

The authors say their recommendations include “practical and cultural management interventions that could help avert the loss of thousands of acres of old-growth forest.”

“The process was really pretty open and inclusive,” Karnosh said. “Our point of contact was Dr. Eisenberg and pretty soon after she was hired, she reached out to Grand Ronde and other Tribes seeking input and review. Everybody has been open and transparent during



Smoke Signals file photo

**The Tribe’s Natural Resources Department’s Forestry, Fire and Silviculture Program perform a prescribed burn on private land near Rickreall in 2013. Grand Ronde was among several Tribal nations to give feedback and guidance on a recent U.S. Forest Service land management report and use of prescribed burns was one of the recommendations.**

the process, which was helpful.”

Natural Resources Department Manager Colby Drake said that one concept he always tries to correct is the myth of a pristine, untouched landscape.

“That concept has never existed within Indigenous people,” Drake said. “Humans are part of the ecosystem and the landscape, so to remove them from large areas of land (National Forests typically or reserves) is doing more harm than good. People have always had a hand on the land from harvesting and tending food sources (meadows and wetland) to utilizing the large trees for shelter and transportation (canoes). Fire was put to the ground annually to help reduce underbrush and invasive plants, create hunting

opportunities and made traveling easier. When you remove humans from managing these lands over the last 100-plus years, we’re starting to see the results and they aren’t all positive.”

Traditional Indigenous knowledge was not always sought out or even respected by the government when it came to forestry practices and conservation.

Karnosh, who has worked for the Tribe for 27 years, said that began to shift in the 2010s.

“I think things started to move in the direction of Tribal management, especially fire management tools,” he said. “After the 2020 wildfire season, it got people talking even more about it.”

Karnosh added that the Forest Service report is easy to read and focuses on different regions of the country, with the main message that fire exclusion has real consequences.

“Before 2020, I don’t know how many people believed that,” he said. “There was this kind of idea that the right way to manage was to leave things alone. This report counters that really well.”

According to an OSU press release, the document recommends different forest management approaches depending on the region.

“We are very interested in understanding how Indigenous knowledge can be used in combination with western science to improve our management of all forest conditions including old growth,” Forest Service Deputy Chief Chris French said. “This report is a big step in

improving our understanding of how to do that.”

French added that the Forest Service, “values knowledge, input and learning from the Tribal community.”

The Forest Service sought out OSU’s help with hosting a series of roundtable discussion to begin the information-gathering process from Tribal experts, which eventually led to the following recommendations in the report:

- Adopt proactive stewardship by investing intentionally in cultural and prescribed burning, forest thinning and other active forest management tools needed to overtake the influence of wildfires.
- Recognize and respect Tribal sovereignty and Indigenous knowledge by establishing government-to-government co-stewardship partnerships.
- Provide flexibility to manage landscapes and navigate uncertainties under rapidly changing conditions. Managing for static landscape conditions has been ineffective in regard to changing disturbances.
- Agency planning, land and resource stewardship policies should be grounded in the ideas of reciprocity and the responsibility to future generations.
- Fund adaptive, long-term forest stewardship and long-term monitoring by learning what works best as conditions change across landscapes.

“Our report is deeper than changes in policy and management – it proposes a fundamental change in the worldview guiding our current practices,” Nelson said. “Our writing team’s cultural, geographic and disciplinary diversity allows for guidance on a shift in paradigms around how we approach forest stewardship in the face of climate change.”

Forest threats include wildfire, heat stress, drought, pathogen and insect outbreaks, rapid development and invasive species, the authors said, which combine to degrade habitat as well as lower the forests’ economic and cultural value.

“Our forests are in grave danger in the face of climate change,” Eisenberg said. “By braiding together Indigenous knowledge with western science, we can view the problems with what is known as ‘Two-Eyed Seeing,’ to develop a path forward that makes our forests more resilient to the threats they are facing. That is what this report is working to accomplish.” ■

## TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE



Contact the TVSO Office if you have any questions or for more event information.

CTGR Tribal VSO@GrandRonde.Org

503-879-1484

## MAY 2024 EVENTS

### Veterans beginner guitar class

2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Thursday, May 2.

2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Thursday, May 9.

Community Programs Building.

Lunch provided.

### Veterans cultural activity: Research room tour & research

11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Tuesday, May 7.

Chachalu Tribal Museum.

### Veterans yoga class

2 p.m. – 3 p.m. Wednesday, May 15.

2 p.m. – 3 p.m. Wednesday, May 29.

Community Programs Building.

Snacks Provided.

### Veterans “Romance Scams” presentation

10 a.m. – 11 a.m. Tuesday, May 21.

Community Programs Building.

Lunch Provided.

Ad by Samuel Briggs III

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