

State parks commission approves transferring Fort Yamhill to the Tribe

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals editor

More than 165 years after Fort Yamhill was first established to surveil the movement of Tribal people to and from the Grand Ronde Reservation, it will soon be returned to Tribal ownership.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission unanimously voted to transfer the 110-acre Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde during a Wednesday, Nov. 20 meeting.

The park is located near the uyxat Powwow Grounds and achaf-hammi Tribal plankhouse off Hebo Road.

“This has been a long and important process...To really understand why this all makes sense you have to go back 170 years and understand that the whole reason this fort existed was to assist in the rounding up, sometimes by force, of the ancestors of the Grand Ronde and placing a military presence on their back doorstep to keep them contained and under surveillance,” Commissioner Doug Deur said. “So, it is really their history and an awkward history, and an awkward one for us to try and interpret and



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission unanimously voted to transfer Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde during a meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 20.

manage on their behalf. So, it is a unique property with a unique history tied specifically to this Tribe and so it feels like that just going back the Tribe and then in federal trust for the Tribe is an interesting kind of full circle in that history... we’re playing a role in history as we speak.”

The commission first tried to transfer the land to the Tribe in

2022 but was unable to complete the process because at the time, there was no Oregon statute that permitted a no-cost transfer to a federally recognized Tribe. In the interim, a memorandum of understanding was approved in 2023 between the Tribe and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to jointly manage the property with

the eventual goal of the Tribe taking over ownership.

“The arrangement has been very successful,” OPRD Field & Community Services Deputy Director Matt Rippee said. “Operations are going well. (The Tribe) would like to assume ownership and use the site as a hub for celebration in addition to keeping the property open to visitors. (We) are committed to an ongoing relationship.”

Tribal Lands and Self-Governance Manager Jan Michael Reichbach said the transfer process is expected to be complete by early 2025 and that more information on the process would be forthcoming.

Before the transfer is finalized, Tribal Council must give its approval, which is tentatively set to occur in January.

“We are honored by OPRD’s board of commissioners unanimous decision to transfer Fort Yamhill park to the Tribe,” he said. “This has been a lengthy, multi-layered project and we are now close to completing the process. Our hearts are full of gratitude. We look forward to the continuation of healing the land and celebrating with our members and communities.” ■

Tribal Library merges with Regional Library Service

The Tribal Library has merged with the Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service, said Tribal Librarian Kathy Cole. Tribal members can now get books from libraries in Polk, Yamhill and Marion counties, as well as access to many free programs. Tribal Library patrons should visit the Tribal Library and update their information and obtain a new Regional Library Service card. For more information, contact Cole at 503-879-1488. ■

Tribal nonemergency text

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

No in-person voting available

ENROLLMENT continued from front page

tailoring the procedures for correcting the membership roll with blood quantum corrections.

If approved, the amendment will change the Tribe’s enrollment criteria from 1/16 Grand Ronde blood quantum to descent from a biological parent or grandparent who were enrolled members of the Tribe, and not enrolled by error.

Additionally, the 1999 enrollment amendment requirements will be removed, including the provision that an applicant had to be born to a parent who was a member of the Tribe at the time of their birth and who, unless they had passed away, was a member of the Tribe when the applicant filed an enrollment application.

The constitutional amendment will be decided by Tribal members 18 years and older in an election conducted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, while the enrollment ordinance is only approved by Tribal Council. There is no precedent for the Tribal membership voting on language in a drafted ordinance

before Tribal Council votes on it, according to Tribal staff.

If the constitutional amendment passes, the amended enrollment ordinance would be approved during the next Tribal Council meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 18.

Ballots for the constitutional election were sent out Friday, Nov. 8, and Tribal members must return the ballots in the mail by Monday, Dec. 9. There is no in-person voting available and the mail-in ballot is the only form of voting. Tribal members are also encouraged to mail in their ballots sooner than later.

Several community meetings and office hours with Tribal staff have been held to offer opportunities for the Tribal membership to discuss the amendment and drafted ordinance.

Remaining office hours with Tribal staff are scheduled from noon to 1 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 3, in Tribal Council Chambers and on Zoom.

Any Tribal member who did not receive a ballot and is registered to vote with their name on the voter registration list should request one as soon as possible by calling 360-614-5848 or by email at Cherisse.Tiger@bia.gov. ■

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- Title: Senior Miss Grand Ronde.
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Must submit photos of progress when requested.

Bid deadline is Monday, Dec. 9, 2024. (deadline is firm and no bids will be accepted after 5 p.m.)

Mail bids and designs to:
CTGR Royalty c/o Shannon Simi
9615 Grand Ronde Road
Grand Ronde, OR 97347

Questions: Call Shannon at 503-879-1358 or email shannon.simi@grandronde.org

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