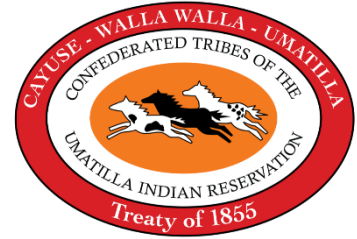


Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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Construction on Thornhollow Bridge to Begin May 15

MISSION – After being damaged in a 2020 flood and fully removed in 2022, work on replacing Thornhollow Bridge is set to begin May 15, officials with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) said.

Michelle Owen, ODOT Region 5 local agency liaison, said with survey work finished, contractor HP Civil Inc. of Salem was expected to begin construction on the ODOT project mid-May.

Located about 13 miles east of Mission along Thornhollow Road on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the project consists of installing a new bridge over the Umatilla River and constructing roadway approaches to the bridge.

Owen said because traffic is already detoured, the road would remain closed until the bridge and roadway approaches are finished. Most of the bridge and roadway work is anticipated to be done by late fall with final paving of the bridge and approaches occurring in the spring.

Owen said the bridge was substantially damaged by flooding in February 2020 and removed by a Umatilla County contractor in 2022. The bridge, up until its destruction, was considered the closest river crossing for those residing north of the river and in the Thornhollow area. With the bridge gone, residents have had to detour either north or south of the former bridge.

“Community members have regularly brought up the issue in many venues. Its absence has been very disruptive,” Dani Schulte, CTUIR Planning Department senior planner, said. “There are tribal members on one side of the river with elder care responsibilities on the other side of the river. School bus routes have been affected. The bridge replacement will allow improved operations for all these people, as well as for the up-river residents who regularly travel north toward Athena, Weston, Milton-Freewater and Walla Walla.”

CTUIR officials are advising residents to avoid swimming and fishing in the area until construction is completed next spring.

Overall, the project cost is budgeted at \$5.3 million through ODOT's Local Bridge Program that includes design engineering, construction, right-of-way and construction engineering costs. The county is providing a 10.27% match.

"CTUIR expended a lot of time and energy trying to expedite the process, however it is by nature a long process because it's a large piece of infrastructure that needs to be engineered to withstand future natural disasters," Schulte said. "I hope that the new bridge will be well maintained so that we don't have this kind of unexpected interruption again someday."

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption1: From left are Oregon First Lady Aimee Kotek Wilson, Gov. Tina Kotek, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Planning Department Senior Planner Dani Schulte, Planning Director Patty Perry and CTUIR Executive Director J.D. Tovey. The governor and first lady toured the site of the torn down Thornhollow Bridge on the Umatilla Indian Reservation during a visit on April 25, 2024. Construction to replace the bridge is expected to start May 15 with completion scheduled for next spring. CTUIR

Caption2: Barricades guard one side of Thornhollow Road to prevent drivers from going into the Umatilla River after a substantially damaged Thornhollow Bridge was torn down in 2022. The bridge was damaged during flooding in 2020. Construction to replace the bridge is expected to start May 15, 2025. CTUIR