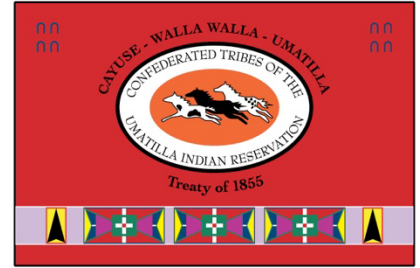


Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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CTUIR Planning Department Begins Johnley Pond Cleanup

MISSION – After learning of a truck at the bottom of Johnley Pond, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Planning Department has initiated a cleanup of the pond and its surrounding area.

Located along Johnley Road north of the Umatilla River, the 30-foot-deep pond is an old rock quarry that during the years became an illegal dump and party spot, said CTUIR Environmental Health & Safety Specialist Brian Fullen. It also became a shooting range that even the Umatilla Tribal Police Department (UTPD) uses.

Fullen said the UTPD informed him of the truck in November, and upon investigation they learned that an 18-year-old male lost his 1979 Ford F-150 in the pond around Halloween.

“The story that he had given us was he parked it, got out of the truck and somehow it knocked itself out of park and rolled into the pond,” he said.

Gas, oil and other fluids were found leaking into the water, contaminating it.

“The rest of the quarry was pretty damaged as well,” Fullen said. “A lot of it has been a dump site – ovens and stoves and water heaters and a lot of propane bottles exploded up there. So it kind of kicked off an even bigger investigation with multiple (CTUIR) departments.”

Along with Planning and UTPD, the project also includes the CTUIR’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) and Public Works.

“We’ve already started cleaning up,” Fullen said. “There’s been BOLSTER (Building Our Life Skills, Training and Employment Readiness) crews out there taking several truckloads to the dump already of debris, glass, computer parts and lawnmowers that have all been used for target practice.”

The departments are also looking at state and federal sources to help fund the cleanup. However, Fullen said such agencies want to know what the redevelopment will look like after remediation and “usually keeping it as a residential area or farm area kills any funding possibilities.”

After learning the truck’s owner cannot afford to have it removed, Fullen said workers will have to pump out the pond’s water, which should help the UTPD’s investigation as well as see what else has been dumped in it.

“We are looking at other possibilities to empty out the pond,” he said. “It borders trust land, but the pond itself is on private property, private fee property. It’s my job to make sure the people’s health and the environment are protected from the contamination.”

The pond is an active wetland with fish in it and wildlife tracks around it. If the pond and surrounding area are not cleaned, Fullen said the contamination would probably kill fish, poison passing elk herds and flow downstream to the Umatilla River.

“We got to get this pond emptied and cleaned up because the water runs downhill to residents and into the Umatilla River. So we have wells downstream of it, and we have wildlife and the river downstream of it,” he said.

With the project expected to take months or even years, Fullen said Planning is requesting estimates for pumping out the water and that the CTUIR is trying to make the area safe while respecting the various owners’ property rights.

“We’re looking at different possibilities of blocking the road off, putting eco blocks, concrete blocks,” he said. “The thing is part of the entrance is on fee land. What authority is there to block off the fee property? And at the same time we can’t block off the trust property. So it’s a balance, a very delicate balance of making sure we protect this area, but we also respect everyone’s property and everybody’s rights at the same time.”

After remediation, Fullen said the various owners must decide whether to still allow public access and that educating people about keeping the area clean would be important.

“I’m actually on a second abatement sign up there that basically says this is what is going on. The first one became a target within two days,” he said. “Anything we put out there until the education’s done is going to become a target, and people are going to keep dumping until we can get it cleaned up and people can see that’s it being cleaned up.”

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla 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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Caption 1: Brian Fullen, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Environmental Health & Safety specialist, holds a container that has been used for target practice while standing alongside a discarded TV that was also used as a target at Johnley Pond on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The CTUIR is cleaning up the contaminated pond and its surrounding area. CTUIR

Caption 2: Brian Fullen, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Environmental Health & Safety specialist, stands on the bank of Johnley Pond on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The CTUIR is cleaning up the contaminated pond and its surrounding area. CTUIR

Caption 3: Used shotgun shells and bullet casings litter the ground at Johnley Pond on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is cleaning the pond's water and surrounding area because of contamination. CTUIR