



Smith River Rancheria

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The Mission of the Natural Resources Department is: ***“To preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources of both the Smith River Rancheria and the Tolowa aboriginal territory”.***

The Natural Resources Office is responsible for issues and projects pertaining to the water, wastewater, air, solid waste, watershed, water quality, cultural resources, natural resources, roads, and fire potential of the Rancheria.

With the Natural Resources Mission Statement in mind, this current year and last year have been indeed very busy for the Natural Resources Department:

- With technical assistance provided by Indian Health Service and funding from both IHS and the EPA, the Howonquet Community Water System Improvement Project has been completed and in full operation. Over \$1,000,000 was provided to the Tribe in order to meet the ever more stringent regulations from the EPA to provide safe and quality water to all customers on the water system. This project started in 2003 with the replacement of asbestos concrete water lines, replacement of the redwood water storage tanks, and the pump house upgrade including new and additional filtration and ultra-violet protection. The Natural Resources Director and two Rancheria employees and Tribal Members are now certified as both Treatment and Distribution Operators and are working toward the advanced levels of certification required to operate the facility, and two additional employees/Tribal Members are on track to become certified.
- Construction of the Smith River Rancheria Wastewater Treatment Facility has been a major priority with the Natural Resources Department this past year. The system went on-line in April 2009. The intent of this project was to provide a long-term solution to the Rancheria’s wastewater treatment and disposal issues. After significant effort over the past six years, the Tribe has developed a permitted facility which provides for both the current and long-term wastewater needs of the Tribe. The facility is a state of the art 25,000 gallons per day Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) tertiary treatment facility capable of a daily peak load of up to 50,000 gallons per day. A 2 ½ acre community leach field was constructed 2.3 miles north of the facility and the cleaned effluent from the facility is disposed of and capable of handling up to 58,000 gallons of effluent per day at this site. The facility was designed as an expandable wastewater treatment process capable of handling 50,000 gallons per day with a peak load of up to 100,000 gallons per day. This was part of the design and construction and can be accomplished by adding a second MBR unit within the existing building and utilizing the additional tanks already constructed on site. The initial planning and design considered connection of existing and future enterprises of the Rancheria (Lucky 7 Casino – present and future expansions, Fuel Mart and possible Hotel), existing Rancheria

facilities such as the UIHS Health Clinic, Community Center, Community and Family Services, Tribal Gaming Agency, etc., as well as the connection of the homes within the residential community.

With this project the Tribe has taken the environmental lead in this community and this part of the County to insure that the ground and surface waters on and near the Rancheria are protected as well as providing for the future economic growth of the Tribe. This facility is functioning well and within all requirements set by the state. The Natural Resources Director is a Grade II Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator and three Tribal Member employees are working toward becoming Tribal Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators.

We have been busy working on the Design and Construction (Phase II) of this project which will be to extend the sewer collection line across Highway 101 and down South Indian Road, terminating at Mouth of Smith River Road. This \$1.5 million project is possible through Congressional Appropriations funding with a 45% match funding required from the Tribe. We have received bid proposals from engineering firms to commence Phase II of the project. The Contract should be awarded on October 1, 2010, with 100% of design completed by January 31, 2011. Actual construction on the system is scheduled to begin in April 2011 and complete by October 2011. The project will provide a service connection at each and every property along South Indian Road and provide service to the soon to be constructed Elder Housing Facility currently under construction.

- For solid waste issues, the yearly Rancheria Clean Up activities were very successful this last year, along with considerable success in recycling and waste reduction activities. We are presently underway with our fall Rancheria Clean Up activity. We will continue to remain diligent with the clean up of illegal dumpsites and abandoned vehicles that threaten not only the beauty of the Rancheria but also the safety of our drinking water. We are also presently developing a long term Solid Waste Management Plan for the Tribe including possibly solid waste removal by the Tribe and the development of a Tribal Blight Ordinance.
- Our Water Resource Technician has been very busy sampling and monitoring the waters in and surrounding the Rancheria. This is important to monitor water quality and to assess watershed areas directly affecting the Rancheria. We have received funding for non-point source pollution protection from the EPA to protect our water source. We want to establish monitoring stations that are connected to the USGS gauging stations to help assess the quality of the Smith River. We will eventually be monitoring the waters of the Pacific Ocean along the borders the Rancheria. Our Technician also attended a month long, in-residence BIA Water Resource Technician Training Program at New Mexico State University.
- The Tribal Emergency Response Team continues to meet monthly to help establish plans and procedures to handle emergency situations on the Rancheria. This includes communication, transportation, securing emergency supplies, and various trainings for both Team members and Tribal Members. We are a part of the North Coast Tribal Emergency Management Association which will combine the strength of

the Northern California Tribe's to have a stronger voice with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and with securing monies provided to the State of California that should go to the Tribes. An Emergency Operations Plan for the Rancheria was completed early in 2009, bringing the Tribe into compliance with FEMA requirements. Recent events include an Adult CPR and First Aid Certification Training presented by the Red Cross, a Hazardous Materials First Responder Certification Training, Fire Extinguisher use training for employees, Living on the Fault Line Along the Coast Training and a Tsunami Planning/Awareness Workshop.

- We have been working with the BIA and independent consultants to bring various tribally owned properties into Trust Status to insure Tribal sovereignty. Two tribally owned properties were brought into Trust Status in May 2009. Trust Status for eight additional other properties are being actively pursued and the goal is to have at least three of these parcels into Trust before the end of this year.
- Working with the Housing Department, Environmental Assessments have been done for various Tribal Members for existing housing rehabilitation, loan guarantee, and down payment assistance for new housing.
- We have applied and been approved for funding from the Bureau of Reclamation to drill up to three exploratory drinking water wells alongside Gilbert Creek. We expect to be able to bring a reliable well and water source as an alternate source to our existing water system. If we are successful with the funding and drilling, our next phase is to secure funding to bring the water line down Oceanview Drive to the Reservation.

These have been very busy times for the Natural Resources Office and this coming year looks to be even busier. As Natural Resources Director, I personally have enjoyed working for the Tribe for over seven years, hope to continue into the future, and am dedicated to providing as much help and assistance to the Tribe and Tribal Members to the utmost of my abilities. Should you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding any environmental, and water and wastewater system related issues, please contact me or any of my staff.