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New agreement expands Grand Ronde Tribe's hunting and fishing area

Grand Ronde, Ore. – The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde can return to hunting and fishing on an expanded area of its historical homelands under a new state agreement approved late Friday.

After lengthy testimony and debate, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted 4-3 to allow Grand Ronde to harvest ceremonial and subsistence resources beyond its reservation and the Trask wildlife management unit. The Tribe expected the agreement to be approved in June, but the Commission pulled it to allow more time for discussion with other tribes.

“This historic agreement helps right a dark and unfair chapter in Oregon’s history with the tribes, and we are grateful to the Commission for approving it,” said Tribal Council Member Kathleen George. “We are pleased that it does not affect other tribes, though we are saddened that some tribes in Eastern Oregon testified at the meeting based on misinformation. We look forward to providing for our Tribe and following our traditions of sustainable fish and wildlife management into the future.”

Grand Ronde is the fifth and final tribe in Western Oregon to enter new fish and wildlife agreements with the state of Oregon. The new pacts establish a framework for tribal members to hunt and fish for subsistence and ceremonial purposes under tribal licenses that are managed by the tribal government in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon State Police.

Under Grand Ronde’s agreement, enrolled Grand Ronde Tribal Members may harvest for subsistence and ceremonial purposes in the Wilson, Trask, Willamette, Stott Mountain and Santiam wildlife management units using tribal tags. The agreement excludes certain areas along the Columbia River, as well as the Cascade Mountain Range summit and areas east of the summit to avoid overlapping with other tribes.

“We’ve gone for many, many years without this type of arrangement, and so I am glad that the Commission has listened carefully to all of my people,” Council Chairwoman Cheryl Kennedy told the Commission on Friday. “Signing this memorandum of understanding is such a huge

step. This is who we are. It's part of our soul, the connection to the land and to our way of life. It's part of our soul as Native Americans who lived here on this land that we call North America."

This newest agreement is just the next step in cooperative management between Grand Ronde and Oregon, already having other agreements in place such as ones that outline shellfish harvesting on the Oregon Coast and ceremonial fishing at Willamette Falls. The Tribe is grateful to be working so closely with the Commission and reaching agreements that are beneficial to every party involved.

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