

The people of Warm Springs

The history, demographics and economic challenges of the three tribes that make up Central Oregon's Warm Springs Reservation.

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Historical archive photos courtesy of The Museum at Warm Springs



THREE INTO ONE

The Warm Springs, Wasco and Paiute tribes had different cultures and languages. The U.S. government forced them to live together on a reservation that is about 640,000 acres.

Warm Springs

The Sahaptin-speaking bands now generally called the Warm Springs survived on salmon, catching the fish with dip nets from platforms they built over waterfalls. The bands also migrated between inland villages to hunt and to gather berries and roots. The Warm Springs shared ancestry and language with bands that were later relocated to the Umatilla Reservation in Oregon and the Yakama Reservation in Washington.

Wasco

The Wasco bands spoke a dialect of Upper Chinook, a language shared by other tribes along the lower Columbia and lower Willamette rivers. The Wasco bands lived mostly near the Columbia River, where they thrived on salmon and traded with other tribes. The Wasco and Warm Springs bands had good relations and frequently traded for horses and grain.

Paiute

Paiute bands ranged across what is now Southeast Oregon, Southern Idaho, Northern Nevada and Western Utah. Unlike the Warm Springs and Wasco bands, the Paiutes relied little on fishing. As a result, the Shoshone-speaking bands covered far more ground as they searched for food. They also fought with Columbia River tribes. Despite the hostilities, the U.S. government resettled Paiutes from Southeastern Oregon to the Warm Springs Reservation.

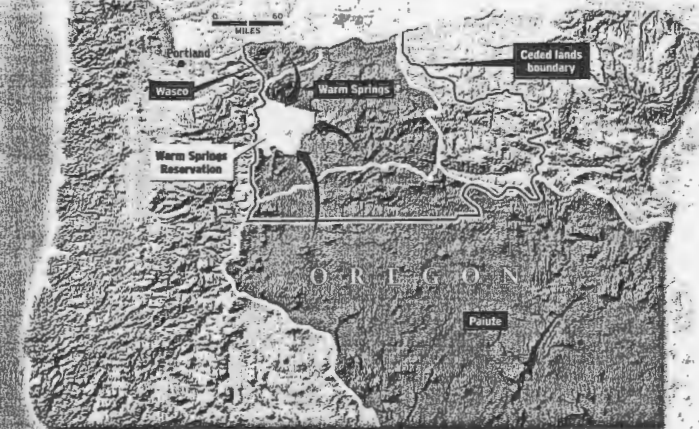
HISTORY OF THE WARM SPRINGS RESERVATION

- ◆ 1805: The Lewis and Clark Expedition reaches the Columbia River and comes into contact with the Warm Springs and Wasco bands. The tribes' population had been cut by about half during the previous three decades by smallpox.
- ◆ 1849: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, previously part of the War Department, is made part of the new Department of the Interior. Thousands of westward-moving settlers pass across tribal lands each year.
- ◆ 1855: The Warm Springs and Wasco bands sign a treaty creating the Warm Springs Reservation. The tribes

- surrender 10 million acres in exchange for a barren 600,000-acre reservation. In turn, the U.S. government promises to "promote their well-being and advance them in civilization; for their moral improvement and education." The treaty also promises health care, assistance with farming and a sawmill.
- ◆ 1859: Oregon wins statehood.
- ◆ 1879: The U.S. government moves a small group of northern Paiutes to the Warm Springs Reservation, despite years of antagonism between the Paiutes and the Warm Springs and Wasco tribes.

- Eventually, more Paiutes follow.
- ◆ 1934: Congress passes the Indian Reorganization Act, giving tribes greater power for self-governance.
- ◆ 1938: The Wasco, Warm Springs and Paiute tribes form a unified government, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and establish a constitution and governing tribal council.
- ◆ 1942: Warm Springs Lumber Co. is created.
- ◆ 1957: Cello Falls, the traditional fishing grounds along the Columbia, is drowned behind The Dalles Dam. The U.S.

- government pays \$4 million in restitution to the tribes.
- ◆ 1958: Pelton Dam on the Deschutes River begins operations. The hydroelectric project begins bringing revenue for the tribes.
- ◆ 1960: The tribes begin work carrying out an economic plan, written at their behest by Oregon State College, which guides development on the reservation for decades to come.
- ◆ 1964: In a bid to draw tourists, the tribes open Kah-Nee-Ta Village along the Warm Springs River.
- ◆ 1967: The tribes buy the reservation lumber company from its nontribal owners.
- ◆ 1972: The tribes open the resort lodge at Kah-Nee-Ta.
- ◆ 1979: National Geographic magazine lauds the Warm Springs tribes for their economic success.
- ◆ 1993: The tribes open two major facilities: The Museum at Warm Springs, to display and preserve the tribes' heritage; and the Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center, run by the Indian Health Service under an agreement with the tribes.
- ◆ 1996: The tribes open Indian Head Casino. The casino merged with the resort in 2001 to become the Kah-Nee-Ta High Desert Resort & Casino.



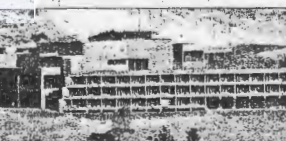
The Wasco and Warm Springs tribes tended to live in distinct areas (labeled above) prior to signing an 1855 treaty with the U.S. government. The government laid claim to a larger area - called ceded lands - and forced the tribes onto the reservation.

WARM SPRINGS TODAY

TRIBAL REVENUE

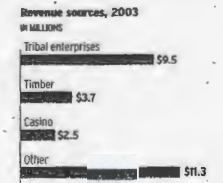


◆ The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs' revenues have fallen sharply in recent years, to an estimated \$24.5 million next year. Tribal officials blame a flat economy and a loss of jobs at the lumber mill. Unlike at other reservations, casino net revenue - an estimated \$2.5 million a year - is a relatively small part of the revenue picture.

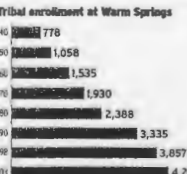


The Kah-Nee-Ta High Desert Resort & Casino, the best-known business run by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

◆ The tribes operate a number of businesses, including a lumber mill and the Kah-Nee-Ta High Desert Resort & Casino. The biggest sources of revenue for the tribes are hydroelectric projects on the Deschutes River, which bring in about \$10 million a year.



BUDGET SQUEEZE

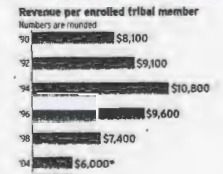


◆ According to the Warm Springs Constitution, eligibility for tribal enrollment is automatic for anyone who has one-fourth or more blood of the tribes, has a parent who is a member and maintains a residence on the reservation.

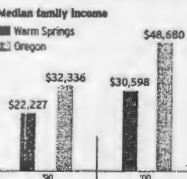


The Warm Springs Forest Products mill, the reservation's primary manufacturing site.

◆ As tribal revenues drop and membership increases, the tribes have less money per person in their budget to provide for services and social programs.



POVERTY PERSISTS



◆ The tribes pay a dividend, called the "per capita," to every tribal member. Each adult member receives a \$100 monthly payment and each child gets \$75. (An additional \$25 a month goes into a trust fund for each child.) The payments will cost the tribes \$5.3 million next year, or 22 percent of the tribal budget. The tribes also pay an annual per-member bonus - \$1,000 this year.



The Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center, operated by the Indian Health Service.

◆ Even in the best of times, one in four tribal members ages 18 to 65 is out of work. Unemployment rates climb as high as 47 percent during the winter, when many seasonal jobs on the reservation end.

