

Yurok Tribe acquires Bigfoot Golf Course & Country Club

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Last week, the Yurok Tribe Construction Corporation purchased the Bigfoot Golf Course and Country Club in Willow Creek. The tribally owned construction corporation, in conjunction with the Yurok Economic Development Corporation and the Yurok Agricultural Corporation, will collaborate on a multi-phased effort to modernize and rebrand the ideally located course and restaurant.

“This acquisition is part of our long-term plan to develop a diverse economic development portfolio and provide jobs for our people, whether they live on or off of the reservation,” said Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. “I am proud of the progress we have made in terms of providing employment opportunities and services to the Yurok families in the Willow Creek area.”

“Together, the Yurok Tribe Construction Corporation, Yurok Economic Development Corporation and Yurok Agricultural Corporation are uniquely equipped to transform the course into a world-class golfing

destination, including a family friendly tap room and restaurant for Humboldt residents and visitors alike,” said Frankie Myers, the President of the Yurok Tribe Construction Corporation.

“With the acquisition and renovation of the bank and golf course properties, we are creating new jobs for the many Yurok families in the Hoopa/Willow Creek area and reviving the economy in the region,” said Yurok Tribal Council Member Lori Hodge, who represents the East District, where nearly 800 Yurok citizens reside.

The picturesque property is comprised of 90 acres near the Wild and Scenic Trinity River.

The far-sighted golf course investment includes: a golf course, club house with a restaurant and banquet room, pro shop building, maintenance building, a large garage for golf carts, 18 mobile home spaces, a seven-unit RV park and two houses.

For phase one of the renovation, the three tribal agencies have a plan to turn the restaurant into a well-appointed tap room based on the successful Mad River Brewing Company Tap Room in Blue Lake. Mad River Brewing Company COO Linda Cooley will be leading the development of the new tap room in Willow Creek. The contemporary Tap Room will offer delicious meals paired with the Mad River Brewing Company’s best-quality hand-crafted ales and seltzers. Owned by the Yurok Agricultural Corporation, the MRB Tap Room regularly hosts special events for the Blue Lake community. The tribal corporations will install a venue on the Willow Creek property for music shows and other forms of entertainment.

The Yurok Tribe Construction Corporation and Yurok Agricultural Corporation will implement the major remodel of the golf course. During phase two, the tribal corporations will create an executive golf course in the footprint of the current course. The Yurok Agricultural Corporation’s Weitchpec Nursery Manager Mike Searcy will oversee the redesign of the tee boxes, fairways and putting greens. Searcy has nearly two decades of golf course management experience. Most notably, he served as the Superintendent of the prestigious Western Skies Golf Course in Arizona and the Assistant Superintendent of Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians-owned Indian Canyons Golf Resort, which he helped build. In these leadership positions, he was intimately involved in all aspects of golf course operations, which included a wide variety of duties, ranging from designing and implementing irrigation systems to preparing golf courses for televised tournaments. In 2011, Searcy moved to Humboldt County, where he worked for seven years as the Superintendent of the Willow Creek Golf Course, the former name of the Bigfoot Golf Course and Country Club, before accepting a position with the Tribe and later the nursery.

“I am extremely excited about this project,” said Yurok Agricultural Corporation President Toby Vanlandingham. “We have assembled an amazing team to transform this property into a truly special place for visitors and the local community. Like all of our companies, this business will embody the highest standards when it comes to the environment.”

The Yurok Economic Development Corporation will manage the mobile home and RV parks. YEDC operates several businesses as well as multiple mobile home and RV parks including the Riverside RV Park and Bluff Creek Resort.

“I am particularly proud of the collaboration between our tribal corporations. We are working hard to build a brighter future for our Tribe,” said Raymond Bacon, the Yurok Economic Development Corporation’s Executive Director. “In addition to producing new jobs, this project will result in a revenue stream that will serve the Yurok people for many years to come.”

Ranging from the Lindgren Mill to Redwood Yurok Canoe Tours, the Tribe currently owns more than a dozen businesses in a variety of industries and employs more than 600 personnel. The Tribe’s economic footprint includes Del Norte, Humboldt and Trinity Counties. On the coast, tribal corporations operate the Mad River Brewing Company, Shoreline Market and Redwood Hotel Casino as well as Klamath Jetboat Tours, Weitchpec Nursery and additional companies. To the east, the Yurok Tribe Construction Corporation puts tribal operators to work on large scale river restoration projects, while Condor Aviation occupies the skies of Northern California collecting survey data.