THE DALLES — The Confluence Project’s sixth and final art installation planned at Celilo Park is on hold because of opposition from the Yakama Nation.

The Yakamas oppose any development that encourages public access and would like to see the park decommissioned.

Confluence, in collaboration with the Columbia River tribes and the celebrated artist Maya Lin, has created five projects that stretch from the Nez Perce homeland to the Chinook Coast. Each art installation was created at a site along the Columbia River deemed to be historically significant to tribes. Those tend to be at the confluence waterways.

The other installations are at Cape Disappointment at Ilwaco on the Washington Coast, Fort Vancouver (Vancouver, Washington), Sandy River Delta (TROUTDALE, Oregon), Sacajawea State Park in Pasco, and the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Hi-def cameras to watch CTUIR Housing

By the CUI

MISSION — Eight high-definition cameras, capable of recognizing faces and license plates, will be installed in mid-February in sections of tribal housing where traffic is the greatest.

Marcus Luke, Housing Department Director for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, said residents are eager to see the 360-degree cameras installed.

Ray Denny, Public Safety Department Director, said cameras should help Tribal Police identify individuals suspected of committing crimes and causing trouble in the housing area.

“Especially at night,” Denny said, “cameras will help police see where individuals run to hide and locate them.”

Luke said tenants want to see a halt to graffiti, vandalism, trespassing and parties, but the emphasis will be on violence, particularly shooting in the projects.

Luke said there have been two relatively recent shooting incidents in which "cameras will help police see where individuals run to hide and locate them."

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Five of the six Confluence projects have been completed. The only one left is the artwork at Celilo Park on the Columbia River.

In a letter from Gary Burke, chair of the CTUIR Board of Trustees (BOT), said, “The BOT wishes to express its appreciation and support to Maya Lin and Confluence for undertaking the effort to construct a fitting and appropriate park redevelopment project to connect people with the history of Celilo Falls and remind visitors of the ongoing presence of native people along the Columbia River and its tributaries.”

In addition to the three tribes, the Legislative Commission on Indian Services (LCIS), which represents nine Oregon tribes, has given its blessing to the Celilo project.

Cheryl Kennedy, the LCIS Chair from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, said the project “intends to connect people to place, to educate Oregonians and visitors through the world on the past, present and future importance of Celilo Falls as a place of importance to Tribes and tribal people who have been here since time immemorial and still are here today. [It] is exactly the kind of ‘education’ LCIS knows is vitally important if we are going to have an informed and respectful citizenry.”

Further, three river chiefs - Wilbur Stolckish, John Jackson and Olsen Meanus - all support the project, according to Fogarty. "But the Yakama Nation, which supported the project in 2011, has told the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), which manages Celilo Park that it no longer approves of the development. The Corps has indicated they are willing to proceed only with the unanimous support of all four Columbia River tribes with cultural ties to Celilo Falls. JoDe L. Goudy, Yakama Nation Tribal Council Chairman, in an Oct. 11, 2018 letter to the Corps, formally pulled support from the project. The letter was written a day after a meeting between the Yakama Nation Tribal Council’s Cultural Committee with staff and representatives of the Confluence Project. Goudy wrote: ‘... The Yakama Nation does not support this proposal, any of its component phases, or related art installations … Celilo Park is located at the site of a traditional Yakama village and fishing site. Continued use of this location by the public risks further destruction of the Yakama Nation’s cultural resources. The Yakama Nation does not support any development, disturbance or public attraction of any kind at this location.’"

In an April 2015 letter to the Corps, Goudy wrote: “The greater Celilo Falls was an immense resource constantly sought after by other tribes. Our ancestors protected this extremely important fishing village with their lives and many have been laid to rest here. Since time immemorial we have protected this area and resource. This fishing epicenter remains a focal element in our culture today … Yakama Nation members still fish, conduct ceremonial activities and live at Celilo. The monumental sites, legendary stories, traditional use areas, and spiritual and ceremonial sites are still part of our cultural practices … As Yakama people we have an obligation to the Creator to protect the resources inherent upon these lands. There are consequences if we do not honor these principles.”

After a series of meetings in November and December with tribal councils, part-
nners and advisors, Confluence decided to redirect its energies toward ongoing education initiatives, including Confl  uence in the Classroom, Confluence in the Community, and Confluence Online, to provide information for students and citizens as well as professional development for teachers. The Online project will be a digital resource for educators, visitors and “anyone curious about a more inclusive understanding” of the Columbia River.

Confluence, which is governed by a 12-person Board of Directors, is chaired by CTUIR elder and language instructor Antone Minthorn. A group that included Minthorn met with the Yakama Cultural Committee in October, met with the Warm Springs Tribal Council in November, and with the Umatilla BOT and the Council of Celilo advisors in December.

“Throughout these discussions, we heard frustration at the Yakama Nation Culture Committee, but also thoughtful reflection,” Fogarty said. “We heard a diversity of opinions but the consensus of our tribal partners is that we should not give up on the Celilo Park project and that we should wait until the time is right … Our tribal partners remain confident that our project will move forward at some point, though none of us can say when.”

Fogarty said, “We have taken this as an opportunity to reflect and listen respectfully. Our guiding principles for moving forward are to listen first to our tribal partners and respect all voices along the Columbia River. We also remember our commitments. At this point, it is more important to do this right than it is to do it right now.”

Fogarty said Confluence representatives even told the Yakamas the artwork could be set aside until later and money could first be used to improve the parking lot and fishing site access.

But, Fogarty said, the Yakamas four-member Cultural Committee doesn’t feel it is respectful to have any non-tribal member visit that place.

“They said they don’t want anything. We went back to the other tribes and they said to be patient,” Fogarty said.

Fogarty said the project will do nothing to interfere with fishing, but the cultural education about Celilo Falls would be a benefit for generations.

“This is Celilo Falls, the most significant place on the Columbia River, with a dilapidated rest stop. We want the park to reflect the significance of the place respectfully,” Minthorn said.

Minthorn said he remains optimistic that there will be a “win-win” resolution to the issue. Right now, however, the decision by the Yakamas has created a “lose-lose” situation for the final Confluence installment.

The Yakama Cultural Resources Committee has been invited to visit the other five sites to better understand why the major art pieces have been installed and the message they bring to visitors.

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Fogarty said in the end the Confluence projects – the art installations and the education component - elevate the tribal voice and the understanding of the Columbia River system.

It’s hoped that the Celilo Park project will one day be among them.

Minthorn said the Confluence projects would provide cultural and education opportunities into the future.

“All the children,” Minthorn said, “are the next policy makers so they need to know what happened on the river.”

Fogarty said the Celilo project will not be a memorial, because Celilo Falls still exists.

“It will be a respectful space to remember. In my dream, a student that we bring to a rehabilitated Celilo Park to remember what happened will one day be the judge that orders The Dalles Dam to be removed.”

Colin Fogarty, Confluence Executive Director

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