Yurok Tribal Member David Sylvia falls timber on the telephone and electrical line project.

The Yurok Tribe recently completed construction of more than seven miles of power and phone lines, starting from Upper Ke’pel Road to the Ke’pel Bluffs.

To date, the Tribe’s Planning Department has overseen the installation of approximately 20 miles of power and phone lines, beginning from Weitchpec to McKinnon Hill in the Pecwan District. The Tribe has spent approximately $4.5 million of federal and state funding on this project so far.

The Tribe contracted with International Line Builder’s, Inc. to complete this portion of the project.

The power line company sub-contracted a significant portion of the project including, brushing and tree removal work to Northern California Indian Development Council.

NCIDC hired a crew consisting of more than 20 local laborers, fallers, equipment operators, flaggers, and climbers. The majority of the crew are local tribal members, all of which are being paid at prevailing wage rates.

International Line Builders Inc. will begin installation of the underground section of the project during late February or early March.

The underground section will be constructed through the Ke’pel Bluffs and will connect power line from Upper Ke’pel Road to McKinnon Hill. Power and phone lines were installed in the McKinnon Hill community area in 2007.

The Planning Department is in the process of obtaining final right-of-way agreements for the portion of the project leading to the Notchko Village area and beyond. In 2007, the Yurok Tribe was awarded $605,000 from the Department of Housing and Urban Development Indian Community Development Grant Program to construct the Notchko Village portion of the power line project. The Department is working closely with the Yurok Tribal Council and current funding agencies to obtain additional funding to complete the project to Wau te c Village. It is the goal of the department to obtain additional resources to complete the backbone of the project along with tap lines to individual homes.

“This is a shovel ready project with design and environmental work already completed. With additional funding this project could be completed by 2009 and continue to create jobs in the local community.”

said Peggy O’Neill, Planning Director.

Project Manager Mandy Mager said Peggy O’Neill, Planning Director.

international Line Builder’s, Inc. is working on the engineering and cost estimates for supplying electrical and phone lines to the Weitchpec Water System on Lake Prairie Road.

The Planning Department is also setting up additional field visits with Pacific Gas and Electric and Verizon Communications to continue work on completing the project. To date, funding for this project comes from a grant from the USDA Rural Utilities Service, the California Public Utilities Commission, the Department of Housing and Urban Development ICDBG Program and the Yurok Energy Trust Fund.

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“The end goal is to bring power to the entire upper Reservation,” Mager said. This has been a challenging process, but I believe the end is in sight."