

Commissioner says effort comes with added cost

By Krista Duhon

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Members of the Quapaw Tribe planned to ask their county commissioner to pledge to terminate the use of chat in his district, but he beat them to the punch.

"As of last week I have decided to discontinue the use of any chat," Commissioner John Clarke said. "We are going to haul different materials that I have available to me. Unfortunately, I may not be able to address the roads in the manner that I have in the past — my intentions are to quit using it now."

According to Quapaw Tribe Chairwoman Tamara Summerfield and Quapaw Environmental Director Tabitha Worley, they are concerned about future liability connected with recent chat use and have offered assistance in helping Clarke clean up areas where chat has already been used.

"We have members who have filed complaints with us and against the state of Oklahoma," Worley said. "I think we all have to do better. We don't mean to point the finger because we have problems in our own backyard that we are working on."

The tribe is currently negotiating a contract to cover exposed chat found at the site of the Quapaw Casino parking lot, according to Worley.

"I understand your budget concerns, but the county very well could be held financially liable in the future," Worley said. "Are you really saving taxpayer money if later on you are going to be

responsible for the cleanup."

Funding is available for road surfacing within tribal land through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, according to Summerfield.

"If you want to work with us and let us know what roads you see as a priority, we would be glad to put those roads on our priority list," Summerfield said.

Clark said his crews were working Monday morning on roads throughout District 1 where straight chat was laid in error several weeks ago.

Currently, Clarke receives chat at no cost. Replacement material will be an added expense to the district in addition to the cost of trucking the material in.

Commissioners Russell Earls and James Leake say they have a mix of clay and gravel found naturally in their districts and have no need for chat.