Wetland Program Development Work Plan of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

"No Net Loss"
- CSKT PPG FY2011 - FY2015 -

A People of Vision

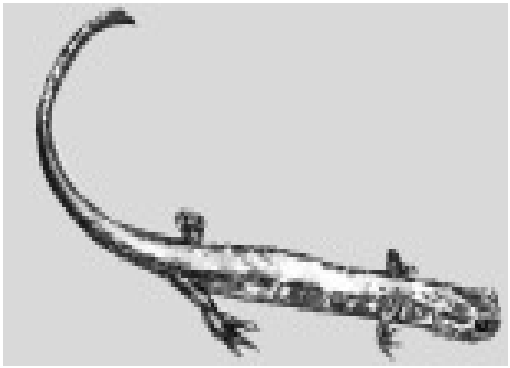
Importance of Wetlands to the Environment

Possibly the most important functions of Wetlands is to purify the water by filtering out sediment and other pollutants. Wetlands within a watershed reduce flood damage also, by dissipating stream energy. As floodwaters spread across the floodplain, wetland and riparian plants absorb much of the force of the water. Flood damage is usually substantially less along streams with healthy wetlands and riparian areas than it is along streams without them.

Wetlands: Important to Mammals too

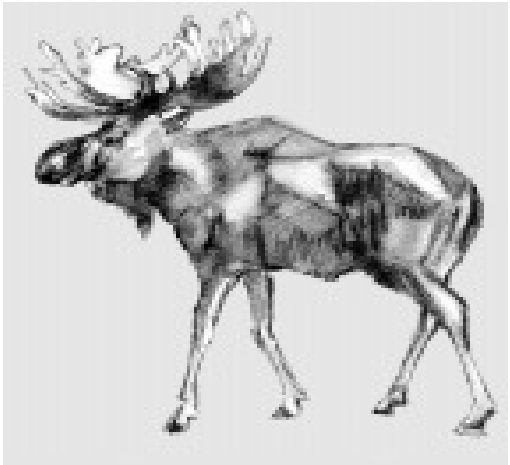
Another important function of wetlands, and again one of the most important functions wetlands perform is that of offering a home for wildlife. Wetlands provide food and shelter to hundreds of species of birds and mammals, such as beavers and bears. Bears are omnivores and feed on fish, frogs, and many of the succulent plants and berries found in wetlands. Black bears are known to spend 60 percent of their time during the spring

and summer in forested wetlands and much of the remainder of the time moving between wetlands; grizzly bears, too, spend much of their time in wetlands.



The Coeur d'Alene salamander lives in the spray zones of waterfalls; seepages with wet soil; under mosses, logs, and rocks; and in wet talus along mountain streams. This salamander is lungless; it breathes through its thin, moist skin.

Mink favor cover found in thickets in forested wetlands. White-tailed deer, moose, muskrat, river otter, raccoon, and weasel are just a small example of other mammals, not to mention the countless Water birds, shorebirds, perching birds, birds of prey, woodpeckers, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates that utilize the food and cover available in wetlands. Wetlands also produce much of the food consumed by many of our most common fish species. In addition, some of the Flathead Indian Reservation's (FIR) more popular gamefish use wetlands as nurseries or spawning areas. After reading this short narrative, is it any wonder why we work so hard to preserve our Wetlands.



Moose spend much of their time near or in wetlands and riparian zones. They are strong swimmers and can dive as deep as 18 feet for aquatic plants.

1) Overall Goal Statement and Time Frame for Plan:

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Wetlands Conservation Program (WLCP) plans to continue to develop its wetlands monitoring program over the next five years (2011-2015), and beyond. In 1999, CSKT developed a Wetlands Conservation Plan, this plan sets both an interim goal and a long-term goal for the wetland and riparian resources of the Flathead Indian Reservation (FIR). The interim goal is to halt the loss ("no net loss"), of the remaining wetlands and riparian areas and the decline in wetland and riparian quality **(1.Monitoring and Assessment, 2. Regulatory Activities Including 401 Certification, if required)**. The long-term goal is to increase the acreage of wetlands and riparian areas and improve the quality of the resource **(3.Voluntary Restoration and Protection, 4. Water Quality Standards for Wetlands)**. The interim and long term goals are a synthesis of Tribal goals for wetlands and riparian lands articulated in prior plans, strategies, ordinances, consent decrees, environmental standards, and best management practices (BMP's). In FY-2004, the CSKT WLCP began monitoring and assessments of various wetlands within the seven watersheds of the FIR to assess wetland conditions and function. FY-2010 will conclude the first round, completing all seven watersheds, between 20 and 30 in each watershed. Beginning in FY-2011 I will begin the second round, the seven repeats will continue beyond the scope of this work plan, and begin again. The CSKT WLCP will use this information to improve understanding of baseline wetland condition, to continue to develop benchmarks for wetlands restoration or protection, to inform development of wetland-specific water quality standards, to continue to build core elements of the Tribes' WLCP and to prioritize wetland restoration and protection activities. The CSKT WLCP plans to achieve this goal through implementing the following actions and activities over the next five years:

2) Action and Activities Supporting Overall Goals, with Schedule:

Year One (2011):

Action:

Wetlands Monitoring and Assessments will take place in the Mission Watershed, which was originally completed in FY-2004. In addition, NWI Mapping will continue onto Phase II and Phase III, also, continued ALCO and riparian reviews will continue.

Activities:

- Monitoring wetlands of the Mission Watershed, maintain NWI mapping.
- Inventory of Mission Watershed wetlands and generation of GIS maps.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO.

- Develop and refine Tribal Water Quality Standards for Reservation wetlands (Watershed at a time).
- Training for Tribal staff on wetlands topics, including Hydro geomorphic methods, functional assessments, wetlands delineation, and other wetlands-related topics.
- Periodic documentation of net gain or loss of Reservation wetlands on a watershed basis.
- Implementation of the Tribes' Wetlands Conservation Plan.

Year Two (2012):

Action:
Wetlands Monitoring and Assessments will take place in the Little Bitterroot Watershed, which was originally completed in FY-2005. Phase II and Phase III NWI mapping will continue, as will timber sale reviews. New home site reviews and delineation work will progress as they come to the office.

Activities:
- Monitoring wetlands of the Mission Watershed, maintain NWI mapping.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO.
- Inventory of all Reservation wetlands and generation of GIS maps of wetlands.
- Develop and refine Tribal Water Quality Standards for Reservation wetlands.
- Periodic documentation of net gain or loss of Reservation wetlands on a watershed basis.
- Training for Tribal staff on wetlands topics, including Hydro geomorphic methods, functional assessments, wetlands delineation, and other wetlands-related topics
- Implementation of the Tribes' Wetlands Conservation Plan.

Year Three (2013):

Action:
Wetlands Monitoring and Assessments will take place in the Crow Watershed, which was originally completed in FY-2006. Phase II NWI mapping will be completed, thus work will be centered exclusively on Phase III. Standard field reviews of wetlands in regards to timber sales, sub-divisions and ALCO will continue as in years past. New home site reviews and delineation work will progress as they come into the WLCP office.

Activities:
- Inventory of all Reservation wetlands and generation of GIS maps of wetlands.
- Quantification and functional classification of all wetlands by their various types.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO.

- Development of QAPPs, SOPs and any monitoring plans necessary to evaluate the quality and quantity of Reservation wetlands. Purchase, maintain and upgrade of necessary monitoring equipment
- Develop and refine Tribal Water Quality Standards for Reservation wetlands.
- Training for Tribal staff on wetlands topics, including Hydro geomorphic methods, functional assessments, wetlands delineation, and other wetlands-related topics.
- Periodic documentation of net gain or loss of Reservation wetlands on a watershed basis.
- Implementation of the Tribes' Wetlands Conservation Plan.

Year Four (2014):

Action:
Wetlands Monitoring and Assessments will take place in the Flathead Lake Watershed, which was originally completed in FY-2007. In addition, NWI Mapping will continue on Phase III, also, continued ALCO and riparian reviews will continue. Timber sales may increase if the recession continues into 2014 or even earlier, thus I am expecting to do more reviews in this arena in the future. New home and sub-division reviews will continue as well.

Activities:

- Quantification and functional classification of all wetlands by their various types.
- Inventory of all Reservation wetlands and generation of GIS maps of wetlands.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO.
- Review and comment on project-specific wetland mitigation plans.
- Develop and refine Tribal Water Quality Standards for Reservation wetlands.
- Training for Tribal staff on wetlands topics, including Hydro geomorphic methods, functional assessments, wetlands delineation, and other wetlands-related topics.
- Periodic documentation of net gain or loss of Reservation wetlands on a watershed basis.
- Implementation of the Tribes' Wetlands Conservation Plan.

Year Five (2015):

Action:
Wetlands Monitoring and Assessments will take place in the Jocko River Watershed, which was originally completed in FY-2008. Phase III NWI mapping will continue, though should be coming to a completion, and timber sale reviews will also continue. New home site reviews and delineation work will progress as they come to the WLCP office.

Activities:

- Inventory of all Reservation wetlands and generation of GIS maps of wetlands.
- Quantification and functional classification of all wetlands by their various types.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO.
- Development of QAPPs, SOPs and any monitoring plans necessary to evaluate the quality and quantity of Reservation wetlands. Purchase, maintain and upgrade of necessary monitoring equipment.
- Develop and refine Tribal Water Quality Standards for Reservation wetlands.
- Training for Tribal staff on wetlands topics, including Hydro geomorphic methods, functional assessments, wetlands delineation, and other wetlands-related topics.
- Periodic documentation of net gain or loss of Reservation wetlands on a watershed basis.
- Implementation of the Tribes' Wetlands Conservation Plan.

Many of the actions and activities written into this 5-year work plan will continue throughout its duration and beyond. The monitoring and assessment work I foresee continuing for the duration of the WLCP, running a seven-year rotation does not allow for too much data building, but provides an excellent path to understanding the watershed health, and builds a foundation for developing more effective management approaches, though that is not the soul purpose of the assessments. In addition, all monitoring and assessments in the annual watershed assessments have been and will continue to be completed at EPA's Level 2 Standards, using the Montana Department of Transformation Rapid Assessment Methodology. All timber sales, new home sites, sub-divisions, and other disturbance based field reviews will continue to be conducted at EPA's Level 3 Standards, following the U.S. Army Core of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Protocol, as applicable to the situation.

Development of GIS linked project tracking and evaluation database, completion of enhanced NWI and riparian mapping to assist with jurisdictional determination, and promotion of sound wetland conservation activities through effective wetland education and outreach activities will proceed as usual. Production of National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (reservation lands were at one time the only place in Montana with NWI maps). Digitization of NWI maps for use in the CSKT geographic information system (GIS) Program and CSKT WLCP (1999) goals are consistent with the National Strategic Plan and Region 8 priorities. Products will include watershed-based wetland condition reports, GIS-linked project tracking tools to share with other stakeholders, assessment of NWI and hydrologic connectivity**.**

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have two programs that serve to legally protect wetland resources on the reservation. The Shoreline Protection Program is responsible for administering the Shoreline Protection Ordinance 64A (revised) and the Aquatic Lands Conservation Ordinance 87A. The purpose of the Shoreline Protection Ordinance is to "conserve and protect Flathead Lake and all navigable waters within the Flathead Reservation." The purpose of the Aquatic Lands Conservation Ordinance is to "prevent the degradation of Reservation waters and aquatic lands by regulating construction or installation of projects upon aquatic lands whenever such projects may

cause erosion, sedimentation, or other disturbances adversely affecting the quality of Reservation waters and aquatic lands." The CSKT are approved for TAS to manage their CWA Section 303 Water Quality Standards Program and CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certification Program. Water quality criteria, designated uses, and an anti-degradation policy are all included in the Confederated Tribes' water quality standards. The CSKT's water quality standards were recently challenged by the State of Montana, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of CSKT and EPA, holding that the CSKT's TAS was appropriately determined.

In addition to developing and administering the Water Quality Standards Program and the Water Quality Certification Program, the Water Quality Program administers the Water Quality Management Ordinance 89B. The purpose of this ordinance is to "restore, and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of Reservation waters." The ordinance specifies programmatic items such as reporting requirements and enforcement mechanisms. The Water Quality Program has also developed a nonpoint source management plan detailing the implementation of BMP's at the watershed level. This plan will evaluate the contribution of nonpoint sources of pollution to surface waters. Tribal water quality staff has assisted with development of a nutrient loading study for Flathead Lake conducted by the Flathead Basin Commission.

In partnership with the Montana Department of Transportation, which provided funding, the CSKT implemented the first wetland ecosystem restoration project on the reservation. Before restoration began, the site was impacted by extensive grazing along with the drainage of wetlands to allow for crop production. In addition, the dominant vegetation at the site had shifted from native to introduced species. A key goal of the project is to return as much vegetation as possible to native species. Essential to the long-term success of the wetland restoration project are clearly stated goals and objectives, performance standards, a detailed monitoring plan (including a monitoring and reporting schedule), and operation and maintenance considerations. The CSKT continues to monitor selected parameters to determine achievement of performance standards. The selected parameters are wetland mapping; functional assessment, before and after restoration; annual photographic records; water level; vegetation; aquatic invertebrates; wildlife populations; and amphibians. The breadth and depth of the monitoring plan demonstrates the complexity and capabilities of CSKT's Natural Resource Department (NRD) outreach and program building success as a whole. The CSKT are also eager to show their hard work and planning capabilities on the FIR, in addition, to continue their building of a better equipped Division of Environmental Protection on the FIR.

One of the priorities of the WLCP, as outlined in the Wetlands Conservation Strategy, is the mitigation of impacts from highway construction. The CSKT has also implemented a wetland ecosystem restoration project to mitigate for unavoidable impacts to wetlands resulting from highway construction on the reservation.

I hope I have given an ongoing scope of work the WLCP is developing and will continue to develop. Please contact me if there are any questions or concerns.