



A People of Vision

**Fiscal Year 2016-2020
CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP)**

February 9, 2016

**Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
Division of Environmental Protection
Natural Resources Department
PO Box 278
Pablo, MT 59855**

Overall goal Statement and time frame for Plan:

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) *Wetlands Conservation Plan for the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana* (1999) is the basis for developing the CSKT Wetland Conservation Program (WLCP) over the next five years of the CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP 2016-2020). The 1999 Wetlands Conservation Plan provides direction to Tribal Programs for the protection and restoration of wetlands and riparian areas on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The CSKT *Wetland Conservation Plan* and the CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP 2016-2020) provide the framework for linking and coordinating Tribal programs with wetland or wetland related duties so all function together as a comprehensive wetlands protection and restoration program. In addition, the Wetland Conservation Program (WLCP) will continue to develop its wetlands program development components and monitoring program.

CSKT's *Wetlands Conservation Plan* sets both an interim goal and a long-term goal for the wetland and riparian resources of the Flathead Indian Reservation (Figure 1).

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. This goal will be accomplished by:

1. Monitoring and Assessment
2. Regulatory Activities Including 401 Certification, if required
3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection
4. Water Quality Standards for Wetlands

The **long term goal** is to increase the acreage of wetlands and riparian areas and improve the quality of the resources.

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) as stated in the *Wetlands Conservation Plan for the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana* (1999).

The CSKT Wetland Conservation Program (WLCP) will use this information to:

- improve understanding of baseline wetland condition
- continue to develop benchmarks for wetlands restoration or protection
- inform development of wetland-specific water quality standards
- continue to build core elements of the Tribes' WLCP
- prioritize wetland restoration and protection activities

The CSKT plans to continue to reach for these goals by monitoring and assessing Flathead Indian Reservation aquatic resources over the next five years.

Additionally, CSKT is actively trying to address the issue of wetland data base development. For example, CSKT Wetland electronic data files have been provided to the AWQMS R8 group in 2014. The Ambient Water Quality Monitoring System (AWQMS) is a web-based data management system for ambient water quality data. It was specifically designed originally to be compatible with the EPA's Water Quality Exchange (WQX) - the method of exchanging water quality data between the EPA and its

partners. CSKT has a goal to add their wetland data to AWQMS and work to develop a template configuration for wetland parameters and to develop a consistent method to upload data to AWQMS and then to the WQX.

CSKT is currently using the MDT/MDEQ Wetland Rapid Assessment Method to collect data (Berglund and McEldowney 2008). Field data is tallied using MDT Rapid Assessment Wetland Inventory Field Sheet forms (Berglund and McEldowney 2008, App. A). A future consideration to improve and enhance documentation is customizing the method to include additional comment sections. CSKT may consider adding components documenting cultural use and significance; however, this important cultural component is solely dependent upon the prior approval of the Salish Pend d'Oreille Cultural Committee (SPCC) (Website: CSKT SPCC), the Kootenai Cultural Committee (KCC) (Website: CSKT-KCC), and the CSKT Tribal Preservation Department (TPD) (Website: CSKT). The SPCC seeks to preserve, protect, and perpetuate the living culture and traditional ways so that language and way of life will always survive and flourish. The KCC is a tribal program that functions independently from the Tribal Organization. The Committee serves to advise the Tribal Council on cultural issues that affect Tribal policy and provide information to assist tribal programs in project development. The TPD protects cultural resources by identifying, evaluating, and protecting cultural, historic and archaeological resources and by regulating undertakings upon protected lands when they may result in changes in the character or use of such cultural resources.

A key goal of the project is to return as much vegetation as possible to native species. Essential to the long-term success of this 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 competencies and capabilities of CSKT's Natural Resource Department (NRD) outreach and program building success as a whole. The CSKT also are eager to show their hard work and planning capabilities on the Flathead Indian Reservation, in addition, to continue building a better equipped Division of Environmental Protection on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

HISTORICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2004, the CSKT Wetland Conservation Program (WLCP) began monitoring and assessments of various wetlands within the seven watersheds of the Flathead Indian Reservation to assess wetland conditions and function; the monitoring is ongoing.

The following is a list of the CSKT Wetland Watershed Assessments completed to date.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| 1. 2004 Mission Creek | 20 sites |
| 2. 2005 Little Bitterroot River | 20 sites |
| 3. 2006 Crow Creek | 21 sites |
| 4. 2007 Flathead Lake | 13 sites |
| 5. 2008 Jocko River | 20 sites |
| 6. 2009 Lower Flathead River | 19 sites |

7. 2010 Camas 18 sites
8. 2012 Mission Watershed 20 sites
9. 2013 Little Bitterroot Watershed 20 sites

Note: 2011, no WL Monitoring

Starting Round Two of CSKT Wetland Assessment work

CSKT completed a CSKT Wetland Assessment in 2013. The Assessment was integrated into and completed under CSKT Water Quality Program because CSKT did not receive a Wetland Program Development Grant (WPDGs) award for FY 2013. An initial CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP) was completed in 2011 and an annual status review of the CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP 2011-2015) was completed on 11-7-2013 with the EPA Region 8 staff.

These CSKT Wetland Conservation Program products include:

- Watershed-based wetland conditions reports
- GIS-linked project tracking tools to share with other stakeholders
- An assessment of National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and hydrologic connectivity characteristics
- Continuing work on Aquatic Invasive Species; climate change; and other education materials for use in outreach activities

All products and outputs/deliverables are submitted to the EPA, in digital and CD copies.

In previous watershed assessments, the mapping work used 1983 aerial photographs for the base of the original NWI work completed in 1993. 2005 aerial photographs used to complete recent NWI update and compare changes. For current and future assessments, CSKT will use National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP) photography (2011 or 2013) to compare with the 1983 baseline mapping data.

In addition to developing and administering the Water Quality Standards Program and the Water Quality 401 Certification Program, the Water Quality Program administers the Water Quality Management Ordinance 89B. The purpose of this ordinance and the CSKT Water Quality Standards 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 developed a nonpoint source program by developing a TAS application and submitting a nonpoint source assessment and nonpoint source management plan; that details the implementation of BMP’s at the watershed level. This nonpoint assessment and management plan evaluates 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.

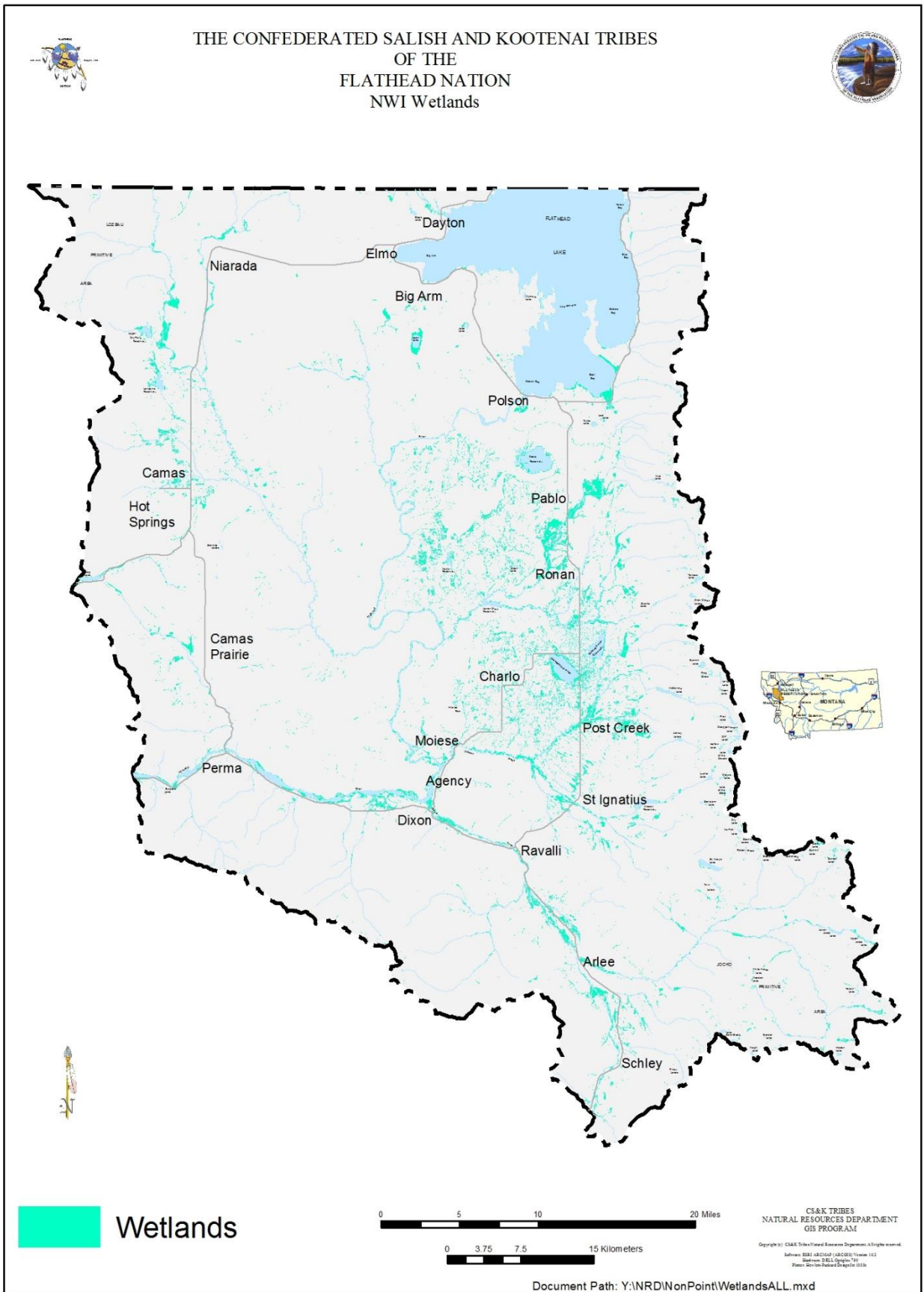


Figure 1. Map of Flathead Indian Reservation Wetlands.

CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP 2016-2020)

February 9, 2016

Action and Activities Supporting Overall Goals, with Schedule

Year One (2016)

Objectives/ Actions:

- *Review retrospective document and the Comprehensive Wetlands monitoring and assessment objectives and strategies*
- *Plan Annual review of CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP 2016-2020) following the scope of the CSKT Wetland Conservation Program (WLCP) and provide revisions as needed*
- *Consider best ways to continue efforts in financial sustainability (106 / 319 / Targeted Watershed)*
- *Continue National Wetland Inventory (NWI) mapping efforts; use mapping to improve wetland information for local decision makers and continued Aquatic Lands Conservation Ordinance (ALCO) and riparian reviews*

Specific Activities:

Review sampling methodology and inventory of accessible wetlands from specific watershed; look for improvements for future Assessment work based on CSKT Flathead Indian Reservation needs, experiences, and additions to the Montana Wetland Rapid Assessment Method (Berglund and McEldowney 2008).

- Review sampling methodology and inventory of accessible wetlands from specific watershed; look for improvements for future Assessment work based on CSKT Flathead Indian Reservation needs, experiences, and additions to the Montana Wetland Rapid Assessment Method (Berglund and McEldowney 2008).
- Develop a comparison analysis plan for a retrospective, longitudinal watershed monitoring and assessment to establish a baseline and establish wetland change, health, and sustainability for CSKT Flathead Indian Reservation's seven watersheds; coordinate this plan with Quality Assessment objectives.
- Work with AWQMS R8 to develop a consistent way to upload data to the Ambient Water Quality Monitoring System (AWQMS). Includes conversion of report tables and raw data to unloadable format.
- Continue to integrate wetlands monitoring strategy into existing water quality and non-point source monitoring efforts.
- Development of QAPPs, SOPs and any monitoring plans necessary to evaluate the quality and quantity of Reservation wetlands- Crow Watershed schedule 2017.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The Wetland Conservation Program Coordinator will work with the Water Quality Regularity specialist on wetland projects and to seek ways to improve 401 certifications involving wetland projects.

- Consider development of Wetland Water Quality Standards Narrative (IBI or biological assessment); during this next WQS Triennial review scheduled for 2016 and 2017.
- Training for Tribal staff on wetland topics, including Hydro geomorphic methods, functional assessments, wetland delineation, and other wetlands-regulated topics
- Plan periodic documentation of net gain/loss of Flathead Indian Reservation wetlands within the specified watershed.
- Implementation of the Tribes' Wetlands Conservation Plan; continue to integrate Wetland activities with Water Quality Program; Non-Point Source Program; and Tribal environmental programs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grant dollars and data collection efforts; MT DEQ; MDT mitigation projects; local Tribal Salish and Kootenai College (SKC); and develop partnerships as opportunity arises.
- Include the CSKT Climate Change Strategic Plan and CSKT Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan into wetland activities on the Reservation.

Year Two (2017)

Objectives / Action:

- *Wetlands monitoring and assessment of the Crow Creek watershed (while planning future assessment activities in conjunction with water quality program)*
- *Annual review of CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP) and provide revisions as needed*
- *Continued ALCO and riparian reviews*

Activities:

- Inventory of all accessible wetlands within specified watershed.
- Quantification and functional classification of all wetlands by their various types.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO, USACE.
- 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.
- Completion of wetland monitoring and assessment reports including required documentation within 1.5 years (expected December 2018).
- Consider development of Tribal Water Quality Standard Narrative statement for Reservation wetlands.
- 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.
- Integrate the CSKT Climate Change Strategic Plan and CSKT Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan into wetland activities to ensure that wetlands mitigation and conservation are addressed in climate change adaptation planning.

Year Three (2018)

Objectives / Action:

- **Compile the *Wetlands monitoring and assessment of the Crow Creek Watershed Report***
- ***Production of accurate wetland maps and documentation***
- ***Annual review CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP) and provide revisions as needed***
- ***Cultivate and improve relationships with CSKT and other local agencies that regulate activities on Reservation; i.e. continued ALCO and riparian reviews***

Activities:

- Produce Crow Creek Wetland Watershed Assessment; compile accurate wetland maps and documentation within the specified watershed.
- Improve relationships with CSKT and other local agencies through reviews of regulated activities on the Reservation.
- Gain a better understanding of the wetland functionality within the specified watershed.
- Consider development of CSKT Water Quality Standards Wetland Narrative statement for specified Reservation watershed.
- Wetland activities occurring on the Reservation will coincide with the CSKT Climate Change Strategic Plan and CSKT Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan to ensure cooperation between all tribal agencies and other local entities.
- Development of QAPPs, SOPs and any monitoring plans necessary to evaluate the quality and quantity of Reservation wetlands; produce an approved QAPP document for specified watershed- Flathead Lake Wetland Watershed Assessment schedule for 2019.
- Implementation of the Tribes' Wetlands Conservation Plan and CSKT Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan.

Year Four (2019)

Objectives / Action:

- ***Wetlands monitoring and assessment of the Flathead Lake watershed***
- ***Annual review of CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP) and provide revisions as needed***
- ***Continue ALCO and riparian reviews***

Activities:

- Inventory of all accessible wetlands within specified watershed
- Quantification and functional classification of all wetlands by their various types.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO, USACE.
- 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.

- Completion of monitoring and assessment including required documentation within 1.5 years.
- Implementation of the Tribes' Wetlands Conservation Plan.
- Include the CSKT Climate Change Strategic Plan and CSKT Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan into wetland activities on the Reservation

Year Five (2020)

Objectives / Action:

- **Compile and review of the *Wetlands monitoring and assessment of the Flathead Lake Watershed Report***
- ***Production of accurate wetland maps and documentation***
- ***Annual review CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP) and provide revisions as needed***
- ***Improve relationships with CSKT and other local agencies that regulate activities on Reservation; i.e. continued ALCO and riparian reviews***

Activities:

- Inventory of all accessible wetlands within specified watershed.
- Quantification and functional classification of all wetlands by their various types.
- Project-specific reviews of regulated activities involving wetlands, i.e. ALCO, USACE.
- Development of QAPPs, SOPs and any monitoring plans necessary to evaluate the quality and quantity of Reservation wetlands.
- Purchase, maintain, and upgrade necessary monitoring equipment.
- Completion of monitoring and assessment including required documentation within 1.5 years (December 2021).
- Consider development of Tribal Water Quality Standard Narrative statement for Reservation wetlands.
- 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.
- Include the CSKT Climate Change Strategic Plan and CSKT Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan into wetland activities on the Reservation.

Conclusions

Many of the actions and activities continue throughout the CSKT Wetland Program Plan's (WPP 2016-2020) duration. The monitoring and assessment work will continue for the extent of the Wetland Conservation Program (WLCP). Implementation of a wetland watershed rotating assessments does not currently allow for extensive data collection, but does provide a path to understanding the overall watershed health. The CSKT Wetland Program Plan (WPP 2016-2020) also builds on the current foundational work to develop more effective watershed management approaches, as well as incorporating the CSKT Climate Change Strategic Plan and CSKT Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan for wetlands on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

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.

In addition, all monitoring and assessments for the CSKT Wetland Watershed Assessments have been and will continue to be completed at the EPA's Tier 2 Wetland Monitoring 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 the EPA's Level 3 Standards, following the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Wetlands Delineation Protocol, as applicable to the situation.

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 Wetland Conservation Program (WLCP) 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, and assessment of NWI and hydrologic connectivity.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have two additional ordinances that 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; and a third ordinance 109-A, Tribal application for a Flathead Lake Maritime Event. 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 treatment in a manner similar to a state (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 challenged by the State of Montana, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of EPA, holding that the CSKT's TAS was appropriately determined. One of the priorities of the Wetland Conservation Program (WLCP), as outlined in the *Wetlands Conservation Plan for the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana* (1999), and the CSKT Wetland Conservation Strategy, is the mitigation of impacts from highway construction. The CSKT has implemented a wetland ecosystem restoration project to mitigate for unavoidable impacts to wetlands resulting from highway construction on the reservation. Please contact the CSKT Environmental Program if there are questions or concerns.

Appendix: *Wetlands Conservation Plan for the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana 1999*

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