

The Water Division works in partnership with the Federally recognized Tribes in the Region to assess water resources and to develop and implement plans to protect and restore water resources. Tribes place great importance on protection of surface water, groundwater, and wetland resources. Water resources have many highly-valued uses for Tribes, including:

- **Providing habitat for wildlife.** Tribes respect the importance of providing high quality habitat as part of Tribal cultural values. Also, Fish and other aquatic species are an important food source for many Tribal members. .
- **Providing wild rice and other important food sources.** Wild rice and other aquatic plants have great cultural significance for many Tribes.
- **Providing safe drinking water.** Water quality must be carefully protected where the water is or may be used as a source of drinking water.

Most of the Tribes in the Region are carrying out programs to assess and protect water resources. Region 5 seeks to support these programs with both technical and financial assistance. Technical assistance may include providing classroom training, reviews of plans and reports, and one-on-one assistance. The Region also convenes monthly conference calls with the Tribes to discuss current issues and needs, as well as for fostering the exchange of best practices among the Tribes. Financial assistance is available for many Tribes under the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. For example, 29 Tribes in the Region are currently receiving grants under Section 106 of the Clean Water Act to carry out Tribal water quality assessment and protection activities.

Region 5 Water Division follows U.S. EPA policies in terms of consulting with Tribes on program actions, including the development of regulations which affect Tribes and the issuance of permits. The Water Division participates in cross-media initiatives related to maintaining open and productive communications and partnerships with Tribes, including negotiation of Tribal Environmental Agreements and participation in quarterly Regional Tribal Operations Committee meetings with Tribal leaders.