



Blackfeet Tribe's Wetlands Program Plan for Fiscal Years 2012 to 2017

Statement of Intent:

The Blackfeet Environmental Office will develop a comprehensive strategy to protect, maintain and restore wetlands and aquatic resources on the Blackfeet Reservation for the Blackfeet People. These resources also serve as important storage and discharge points for the Upper Missouri River watershed within the United States and the Milk and Saint Mary River watersheds, which represent international waters flowing into Canada.

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1) Overall Goal Statement and Time Frame for Plan

The overall goal of the Blackfeet Tribe's Wetlands Program is to achieve implementation of no net loss of wetlands and existing wetland functions and values within the Blackfeet Reservation. The Reservation includes 1.5 million acres of land, five watersheds, and 73 subwatersheds, over 51,582 acres of wetlands and over 17,367 acres of lakes. Preserving and protecting existing natural wetlands results in preserving existing higher wetland functional values, which is critical to the health of the surrounding landscape, wildlife, water quality, and future generations of the Blackfeet people.

The Blackfeet Environmental Office (BEO) Wetlands Program plans to achieve no net loss of existing wetlands by implementing the following actions and activities during fiscal years 2012-2017:

- 1) Develop and enforce the updated Aquatic Lands Protection Ordinance 90-A for all proposed developments.
- 2) Develop a rotating watershed basin wetland monitoring and assessment program within the exterior boundaries of the Blackfeet Reservation; to identify and prioritize reference quality wetlands for protection, conservation management, and restoration. Monitoring data will be utilized in development of wetland Water Quality Standards and regulatory activities.
- 3) Integrate latest wetlands, surface water and groundwater research findings and methodologies into our protection ordinances, monitoring strategy, wetland protection and restoration strategies. Develop wetland Water Quality Standards that reflect current developmental pressures on and concerns about Reservation waters, wetlands and riparian areas.
- 4) Establish wetlands conservation initiatives by working with tribal members, non-member landowners, state, federal and non-profit organizations.
- 5) Develop wetland restoration and mitigation strategies and performance standards, based on current research; to protect wetlands and functional values.
- 6) Secure additional funding sources for regulatory enforcement, monitoring and assessment and voluntary restoration.
- 7) Utilize monitoring and assessment data to develop watershed management plans for the Reservation.
- 8) Coordinate with Water Quality Standards and Non-Point Source Program to use standardized water quality testing at stream monitoring sites and wetland study sites.

The Tribal comprehensive Wetlands Program Plan (WPP) will integrate the following core elements to achieve **no net loss of existing wetlands** over the next six years:

- 1) Regulatory Activities and Enforcement
- 2) Monitoring and Assessment
- 3) Voluntary Protection and Restoration
- 4) Water Quality Standards for Wetlands

During 2007-2009, the Blackfeet Environmental Office (BEO) Wetlands Program initiated a pilot wetlands monitoring and assessment protocol with the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Milk-Marias wetlands monitoring and assessment study. One of the conclusions from this past work is that the Blackfeet Tribe needs to develop a comprehensive wetlands monitoring and assessment program to adequately protect, manage and restore wetlands on the Reservation. The Wetlands Program acknowledges that monitoring and assessment protocols must be tailored to wetland system type within a particular region. Furthermore, we recognize that current developmental pressures on the Reservation wetland resources requires that we utilize recent studies to develop an intensive monitoring protocol that effectively evaluates wetland water quality, wetland condition, vegetation, macroinvertebrates, and identifies stressor effects on wetlands.

The Blackfeet Environmental Office Water Quality Program developed Water Quality Standards for the Reservation with guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Tribal Water Quality Standards were approved and adopted by the Tribe in 2005 and submitted to the Denver Regional Office for review and approval. In May 2012 the EPA granted the Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Reservation the authority to administer the Water Quality Standards program under the Clean Water Act (CWA). The Tribe is now authorized to administer water quality certifications conducted under CWA Section 401.

The Blackfeet Wetlands Program conducted a public opinion survey and in-person interviews with Tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs natural resource department heads in 2012. The purpose of the survey and interviews was to gain input on how to best manage the wetlands and riparian areas of the Blackfeet reservation. Over 90% of the survey respondents believe that it is extremely important to maintain clean surface and groundwater quality for the communities and livelihoods, the surrounding ecosystem and people living downstream of the Reservation. Over 70% of the respondents are extremely concerned about oil and gas development on the reservation. Respondents identified that the most important work that the BEO should engage in are 1) protection and restoration of existing wetlands and riparian areas, 2) strengthen tribal laws and ordinances protecting wetlands, and 3) increase enforcement of regulations. The top three actions were 1) restrict development near wetlands, 2) strengthen tribal and federal laws protecting wetlands and 3) increase enforcement of laws and promote educational outreach. The survey and interview results have been incorporated into our Wetland Program Plan.

In 1993 the Blackfeet Tribe adopted the Aquatic Lands Protection Ordinance # 90. In 2003, the Ordinance was revised to make the Blackfeet Environmental Office the managing tribal agency. During 2011-2012, the Blackfeet Environmental Office revised the Blackfeet Aquatic Lands Protection Ordinance (Ordinance 90-A-amended; 2012). The Aquatic Lands Protection Ordinance is the Tribe's wetlands protection regulation and requires a permit for all activities affecting water bodies or wetlands within the Reservation boundary. The Wetlands Program also performs homesite lease reviews for tribal members to identify potential impacts to wetlands and floodplains, and pre-construction site reviews for any projects that may impact wetlands. We have also identified a critical need to monitor and protect groundwater quality as well as surface

water and wetland quality, based on developmental pressures from oil and gas exploration, housing developments, and agricultural activities.

In past years, the Blackfeet Wetlands Program has primarily focused on developing two of the four EPA Wetland Program “Core Elements”; 1) Regulatory Activities and 2) Monitoring and Assessment. With this plan we intend to move toward developing all of the four Core Elements of our Wetlands Program. We will accomplish these objectives by executing the following actions:

1. Update the Tribal Ordinance 90-A to address recent and projected oil and gas exploration and development on the Reservation through collaborating with other Tribal departments, state agencies, and other organizations and utilizing the latest scientific research on the effects of oil and gas development on wetland resources. The amended Ordinance 90-A, regulatory enforcement, and 401 certification process will ensure the protection of existing wetland and riparian resources and preserve and protect water quality.
2. Implement Voluntary Protection and Restoration by identifying wetland resources on a Reservation-wide scale to fully protect existing water quality and existing wetland functional values. Key conservation and natural areas, special wildlife management areas and corridors and wetlands of cultural value will be identified within all watersheds. Boundaries and buffer zones will be developed around these areas during year one of this Wetland Program Plan.
3. Implement a Monitoring and Assessment Program to support the other core elements: Regulatory Activities, Water Quality Standards, and Voluntary Protection and Restoration. These core elements and how they are linked within the Blackfeet Wetland Program Plan are described throughout the Plan, and are identified through planned actions and activities over the next six years.
4. Research and begin development of Wetland Water Quality Standards that reflect current developmental pressures and concerns on wetland and surface water quality. Numeric values will be researched in collaboration with the State of Montana and EPA.

This Wetland Program Plan identifies the timelines, actions and activities the Tribe will undertake to amend and implement updated “Regulatory Activities” Core Element (1); develop the “Monitoring and Assessment” Core Element (2); develop “Voluntary Protection and Restoration” Core Element (3) and develop “Wetland Water Quality Standards” Core Element (4).

2) Actions and Activities Supporting Overall Goals, with Schedule

Year One (FY 2012)

Action: Coordinate with the Tribal Water Quality Program to develop a Monitoring and Assessment Strategy that includes monitoring and assessing surface water quality, wetland water quality and wetland condition on a rotating watershed basis to support the overall goal of *no net loss of wetlands*. (Core Elements 2, 4: Monitoring and Assessment; Water Quality Standards for Wetlands)

Activities:

- Utilize the probabilistic survey method used in 2009 to select sample sites.
- Organize the data that is already available and establish baseline data for wetland monitoring and assessment plan.

Action: Define wetlands monitoring objectives and strategies.

Activities:

- Continue coordinating with other tribal natural resource programs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Montana Natural Heritage Program, and the state of Montana.
- Examine other sources for monitoring information within the Tribe.
- Define data needs and uses.
- Coordinate with the Tribe's water quality monitoring program to identify shared goals and activities.
- Examine how to integrate wetlands monitoring strategy into existing water quality monitoring efforts.
- Research and develop a wetlands monitoring strategy *to support no overall net loss*.
- Develop and refine existing wetland monitoring protocol to capture data describing wetland condition and effects of regional specific stressors.
- Identify wetlands impacted by recent oil and gas exploration as first tier priority wetlands, for water quality and wetland condition assessments.
- Obtain baseline water quality data and wetland condition assessments from all wetlands near recent oil/gas well developments throughout the Reservation.

Action: Utilize the most recent version of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Wetland Assessment Protocol, 2012, and develop additional metrics and indicators for targeting region-specific wetlands and stressors on the Blackfeet Reservation.

Activities:

- Identify indicators that are relevant for established monitoring objectives – update in 2012.
- Confirm indicators are scientifically defensible – update in 2012.

- Develop/select field methods – update 2012.
- Add supplemental wetland condition indicators.

Action: Ensure the scientific validity of monitoring protocols and laboratory activities.

Activities:

- Update existing Quality Assurance/Quality Control Project Plan for the Blackfeet Tribe’s Wetlands Monitoring and Assessment Plan and Program (Core Element 2: Monitoring and Assessment).
- Select EPA certified laboratories for water quality and macroinvertebrate samples (Core Element 2: Monitoring and Assessment).

Action: Perform a regulatory review of projects that may affect wetlands on the Reservation.

Activities:

- Implement and enforce the amended Ordinance 90-A to protect wetlands and water quality from any proposed development, which includes set back requirements and baseline water quality sampling within the proposed development area.
- Continue collaboration with the Blackfeet Tribe’s water quality program.
- Obtain baseline water quality data on wetlands that may be potentially impacted by oil and gas development during FY2012 and from wells that have been recently developed (2009-2011).
- Review proposed homesite leases to determine if they will impact wetlands. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Evaluate and enforce wetland mitigation performance standards for impacted wetlands within the watershed. (Core Elements 1,2,3,4. Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Water Quality Standards).
- Inspect approved permit application sites and enforce regulations as needed (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Write 401 Certifications for any CWA 404 activities that require them on the Reservation. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).

Action: Develop a coordinated assessment of wetland and riparian areas that require immediate protection and conservation.

Activities:

- Nominate Outstanding Tribal Water and Wetlands areas within each watershed.
- Coordinate protection efforts with Tribal Fish and Wildlife, Cultural and Lands Departments and other federal, state and conservation agencies and organizations.
- Establish conservation management boundaries within each watershed.

- Protect identified wetlands and water bodies from development within each conservation management area in each watershed.
- Establish cultural resource protection areas and special wildlife management areas and buffer zones in each watershed.
- Protect cultural resources and special wildlife management areas from development.

Year Two (FY 2013)

Action: For Fiscal Year 2013, The Blackfeet Tribe Wetlands Program will complete a monitoring and assessment study within the Two Medicine River watershed. The project shall use tested and refined monitoring protocols within the watershed. Using Geographic Information System (GIS), we will concentrate on identifying wetlands in potential reference condition for protection and restoration, sites impacted by stressors, and select sites for monitoring wetland condition and wetland water quality.

Activities:

- Monitor a minimum of 40 wetlands using trained field staff (Core Elements 2, 4 Monitoring and Assessment; Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Revisit 10 wetlands previously assessed for data quality assurance and quality control (Core Elements 2, 4. Monitoring and Assessment; Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Analyze data and prepare wetland condition assessment report for the Two Medicine River watershed (Core Element 2. Monitoring and Assessment).
- Identify quality reference standard wetlands from field study and make recommendations for conservation, protection and restoration (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Develop conservation and protection plans for high quality wetlands (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Prioritize remaining wetlands from study for restoration needs (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Develop protection, management and restoration plans for identified wetlands within Two Medicine watershed (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Prepare draft version of the Two Medicine River watershed management plan (Core Elements 1, 2, 3 ,4. Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Voluntary Protection and Restoration, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Coordinate with other agencies and programs to protect identified, high quality wetlands (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Secure funding sources for protection and restoration (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).

Action: Perform a regulatory review of projects that may affect wetlands on the Reservation.

Activities:

- Implement and enforce the amended Ordinance 90-A to protect wetlands and water quality from any proposed development, which includes set back requirements and baseline water quality sampling within the proposed development area.
- Continue collaboration with the Blackfeet Tribe's water quality program.
- Obtain baseline water quality data on wetlands that may be potentially impacted by oil and gas development during FY2013.
- Review proposed homesite leases to determine if they will impact wetlands. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Evaluate and enforce wetland mitigation performance standards for impacted wetlands within the watershed. (Core Elements 1,2,3,4. Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Water Quality Standards).
- Inspect approved permit application sites and enforce regulations as needed (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Write 401 Certifications for any CWA 404 activities that require them on the Reservation. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).

Year Three (FY 2014)

Action: For Fiscal Year 2014, The Blackfeet Tribe Wetlands Program will complete a monitoring and assessment study within the Milk River watershed. The project shall use tested and refined monitoring protocol within the watershed Using Geographic Information System (GIS), we will concentrate on identifying wetlands in potential reference condition for protection and restoration, sites impacted by stressors, and select sites for monitoring wetland condition and wetland water quality.

Activities:

- Monitor a minimum of 40 wetlands using trained field staff (Core Elements 2, 4. Monitoring and Assessment, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Revisit 10 wetlands for data quality assurance/quality control (Core Elements 2, 4. Monitoring and Assessment, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Analyze data and prepare wetland condition assessment report for the Milk River watershed; compare data with Year 1 (Core Element 2. Monitoring and Assessment).
- Identify quality reference standard wetlands from field study and make recommendations for conservation and protection (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection).

- Develop conservation and protection plans for high quality wetlands within Milk River watershed (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection)
- Prioritize remaining wetlands from study for restoration needs (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection)
- Develop management and restoration plans for identified wetlands (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Prepare draft version of the Milk River watershed management plan (Core Elements 1,2,3,4. Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Coordinate with other agencies and programs to protect identified high quality wetlands (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Secure funding sources for protection and restoration (Core Element 3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection).

Action: Research and develop wetland water quality standards that reflect potential impacts associated with oil and gas exploration and development.

Activities:

- Implement and enforce Ordinance 90-A which includes baseline water sampling requirements from drinking water wells and wetlands (Core Element 1: Regulatory Activities; Core Element 4: Water Quality Standards).
- Coordinate Wetland Water Quality Standards development with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (Core Element 4: Water Quality Standards).
- Examine baseline water quality sampling data from new permit applications and past years' monitoring studies (Core Element 4: Water Quality Standards).
- Implement Wetland Water Quality Standards (Core Element 4) into monitoring and assessment plan (Core Element 2) and regulatory permit review (Core Element 1).

Action: Perform a regulatory review of projects that may affect wetlands on the Reservation.

Activities:

- Implement and enforce the amended Ordinance 90-A to protect wetlands and water quality from any proposed development, which includes set back requirements and baseline water quality sampling within the proposed development area.
- Continue collaboration with the Blackfeet Tribe's water quality program.
- Obtain baseline water quality data on wetlands that may be potentially impacted by oil and gas development during FY2014.
- Review proposed homesite leases to determine if they will impact wetlands. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).

- Evaluate and enforce wetland mitigation performance standards for impacted wetlands within the watershed. (Core Elements 1,2,3,4. Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Water Quality Standards).
- Inspect approved permit application sites and enforce regulations as needed (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Write 401 Certifications for any CWA 404 activities that require them on the Reservation. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).

Year Four (FY 2015)

Action: For Fiscal Year 2015, The Blackfeet Tribe Wetlands Program will complete a monitoring and assessment study within the Saint Mary and Birch Creek watersheds. The project shall use tested and refined monitoring protocol within the watershed. Using Geographic Information System (GIS), we will concentrate on identifying wetlands in potential reference condition for protection and restoration, sites impacted by stressors, and select sites for monitoring wetland condition and wetland water quality.

Activities:

- Monitor a minimum of 40 wetlands using trained field staff (Core Elements: 2, 4 Monitoring and Assessment, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Revisit 10 wetlands for data quality assurance/quality control (Core Elements 2,4: Monitoring and Assessment, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Analyze data and prepare wetland condition assessment report for the Saint Mary and Birch Creek watersheds; compare data with Years 1 and 2 (Core Element 2: Monitoring and Assessment).
- Identify quality reference standard wetlands from field study and make recommendations for conservation, protection and restoration (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Develop conservation and protection plans for high quality wetlands within Saint Mary River and Birch Creek watersheds (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration).
- Prioritize remaining wetlands from study for restoration needs (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Coordinate with other agencies and programs to protect identified high quality wetlands (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Secure funding sources for protection and restoration (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).

Action: Perform a regulatory review of projects that may affect wetlands on the Reservation.

Activities:

- Implement and enforce the amended Ordinance 90-A to protect wetlands and water quality from any proposed development, which includes set back requirements and baseline water quality sampling within the proposed development area.
- Continue collaboration with the Blackfeet Tribe's water quality program.
- Obtain baseline water quality data on wetlands that may be potentially impacted by oil and gas development during FY2015.
- Review proposed homesite leases to determine if they will impact wetlands. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Evaluate and enforce wetland mitigation performance standards for impacted wetlands within the watershed. (Core Elements 1,2,3,4. Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Water Quality Standards).
- Inspect approved permit application sites and enforce regulations as needed (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Write 401 Certifications for any CWA 404 activities that require them on the Reservation. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).

Year Five (FY 2016)

Action: For Fiscal Year 2016, The Blackfeet Tribe Wetlands Program will complete a monitoring and assessment study within the Cut Bank Creek watershed. The project shall use a tested a refined monitoring and assessment protocol within the watershed. Using Geographic Information System (GIS), we will concentrate on identifying wetlands in potential reference condition for protection and restoration, sites impacted by stressors, and select sites for monitoring wetland condition and wetland water quality.

Activities:

- Monitor a minimum of 40 wetlands using trained field staff (Core Elements 2, 4: Monitoring and Assessment, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Revisit 10 wetlands for data quality assurance and quality control (Core Elements 2,4: Monitoring and Assessment, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Analyze data and prepare wetland condition assessment report for the Cut Bank Creek watershed, compare data with previous years. (Core Element 2: Monitoring and Assessment).
- Identify quality reference standard wetlands from field study and make recommendations for conservation and protection (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).

- Develop conservation and protection plans for high quality wetlands (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration).
- Prioritize remaining wetlands from study for restoration needs (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Develop management and restoration plans for identified wetlands within Cut Bank Creek watershed (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Prepare draft version of the Cut Bank Creek watershed management plan (Core Elements 1,2,3,4: Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Coordinate with other agencies and programs to protect identified, high quality wetlands (Core Element 3: Voluntary Protection and Restoration).
- Secure funding sources for protection and restoration (Core Element 3: Voluntary Protection and Restoration).

Action: Perform a regulatory review of projects that may affect wetlands on the Reservation.

Activities:

- Implement and enforce the amended Ordinance 90-A to protect wetlands and water quality from any proposed development, which includes set back requirements and baseline water quality sampling within the proposed development area.
- Continue collaboration with the Blackfeet Tribe's water quality program.
- Obtain baseline water quality data on wetlands that may be potentially impacted by oil and gas development during FY2016.
- Review proposed homesite leases to determine if they will impact wetlands. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Evaluate and enforce wetland mitigation performance standards for impacted wetlands within the watershed. (Core Elements 1,2,3,4. Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Water Quality Standards).
- Inspect approved permit application sites and enforce regulations as needed (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Write 401 Certifications for any CWA 404 activities that require them on the Reservation. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).

Year Six (FY 2017)

Action: For Fiscal Year 2017, The Blackfeet Tribe Wetlands Program will complete a monitoring and assessment study throughout all watersheds within the exterior boundaries of the Reservation. Additional sites will be selected not previously monitored during past fiscal years. We will also select a subset of wetlands within each watershed

that have been previously monitored to measure changes in wetland condition and wetland water quality.

Activities:

- Monitor a minimum of 40 wetlands using trained field staff (Core Elements 2, 4: Monitoring and Assessment, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Revisit 10 wetlands for data quality assurance and quality control (Core Element 2, 4: Monitoring and Assessment, Wetland Water Quality Standards).
- Analyze data and prepare wetland condition and wetland water quality assessment report for Year Six monitoring, compare previous years data (Core Element 2: Monitoring and Assessment).
- Identify additional quality reference standard wetlands from field study and make recommendations for conservation and protection (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Develop conservation and protection plans for high quality wetlands (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration).
- Prioritize remaining wetlands from Year 6 study for restoration needs (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Develop management and restoration plans for identified wetlands (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).
- Revise and amend draft versions of watershed management plans based on monitoring results from field study (Core Elements 1,2,3,4: Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Water Quality Standards).
- Develop a Reservation-Wide Watershed Management Plan.
- Coordinate with other agencies and programs to protect identified, high quality wetlands (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection) for inclusion in special management and conservation areas.
- Secure funding sources for protection and restoration. (Core Element 3: Voluntary Restoration and Protection).

Action: Perform a regulatory review of projects that may affect wetlands on the Reservation.

Activities:

- Implement and enforce the amended Ordinance 90-A to protect wetlands and water quality from any proposed development, which includes set back requirements and baseline water quality sampling within the proposed development area.
- Continue collaboration with the Blackfeet Tribe's water quality program.
- Obtain baseline water quality data on wetlands that may be potentially impacted by oil and gas development during FY2017.

- Review proposed homesite leases to determine if they will impact wetlands. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Evaluate and enforce wetland mitigation performance standards for impacted wetlands within the watershed. (Core Elements 1,2,3,4. Regulatory Activities, Monitoring and Assessment, Protection and Restoration, Water Quality Standards).
- Inspect approved permit application sites and enforce regulations as needed (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).
- Write 401 Certifications for any CWA 404 activities that require them on the Reservation. (Core Element 1. Regulatory Activities).

Conclusion

Development of a comprehensive Wetland Program Plan will allow the Blackfeet Tribe to regulate, enforce, protect, restore and effectively manage its invaluable wetland and aquatic resources for future generations. Monitoring and Assessment data will aid our Regulatory Ordinances, allow collaboration with our Water Quality Standards and Section 319 (non-point source) Programs, assist with implementing our Wetlands Conservation Strategy, allow for protection and restoration of wetlands and help define our wetland mitigation performance standards. Finally, it will allow us to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan for the Reservation.

The proposed rotating basin monitoring and assessment is necessary to monitor, protect and regulate our wetlands, which are important storage and discharge points for the Saint Mary, Milk and Upper Missouri River watersheds. Our water quality and quality-condition wetlands are unique and are an integral part of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem and Western Prairie Pothole Region. Furthermore, two of our river drainages represent international waters flowing north into Canada. Continued development pressures on aquatic resources and wetlands within the Reservation necessitates the need to implement our Wetland Program Plan (WPP) so that we can achieve our goal of preserving water quality and aquatic resources as well as reaching our no-net loss in wetlands goal.