CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE WETLAND PROGRAM PLAN

FY: 2022-2024

THE CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE WETLANDS PROGRAM MISSION:

DEVELOP THE TRIBAL WETLAND PROGRAM TO FULFILL THE TRIBES' DESIRE OF NO NET LOSS OF WETLANDS OR WETLAND FUNCTIONS AND VALUES.

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INTRODUCTION

The updated 2022-2024 Wetlands Program Plan addresses wetland water quality results during past years work and will incorporate wetland water quality results over the next 2 years in the Big Sandy Creek Watershed. All wetland water quality data will be used to update water quality regulatory language and all sampling will be coordinated with the 106 Program Manager. Wetland condition data and the status of wetland cultural resources examined during the Big Sandy Creek Watershed monitoring will be used to develop wetland restoration planning and protection, where sites are identified. The WPP will conduct public outreach and education on wetland water quality and wetland resources in order to improve overall water and wetland quality on the Chippewa-Cree Rocky Boy Reservation.

The Chippewa Cree Tribe will address all 4 core elements into updated Wetland Program Plan (2021-2022).

1. Monitoring and Assessment

2. Regulatory activities (including 401 certifications)

3. Voluntary restoration and protection

4. Water quality standards for wetlands

Link to EPA Strategic Plan:

The Big Sandy Creek headwater wetland monitoring project is directly linked to the EPA Strategic Plan 2018-2022, Goal 1: Provide for a cleaner, healthier environment and Objective 1.2: Provide Clean and Safe Water by ensuring waters are clean through improved water infrastructure and, in partnership with states and tribes, sustainably manage programs to support drinking water, aquatic ecosystems, and recreational, economic, and subsistence activities.

This project and past headwater monitoring projects (Box Elder and Beaver Creek) are directly linked to the U.S. EPA Strategic Plan 2020, Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters, Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems, Increase Wetlands. Wetland Program project activities will lead to: 1) Increased restoration and protection of wetland acreage and wetland water storage; 2) Improved wetland condition and by 3) Development of baseline data for wetland water quality standards.

Past Wetland Program Performance:

The Chippewa Cree Tribe has consistently proven programmatic capability in performing and successfully completing wetlands project plans during each of the last five funding cycles. The Tribal Wetlands program has successfully completed work plan components and submitted technical reports documenting results from all projects, including Box Elder Creek and Beaver Creek water quality and wetlands monitoring. The Big Sandy Creek monitoring represents the third watershed that will be sampled during FY 2021-2022.

FY2011/2012 Chippewa Cree Tribe Sweetgrass Wetlands Monitoring, Assessment and Protection Project- Develop site-specific restoration plans for sweetgrass restoration areas located in and around wetlands, partner with the Tribal Infrastructure Committee (TIC) in the development of a Unified Tribal Development Code (UTDC) including a Setback Ordinance for building and infrastructure development, participate in the newly formed TIC to educate decision-makers on the current regulatory processes protecting wetlands and to promote the active and informed management of wetlands as a means to provide the highest level of protection, and develop a Wetlands Anti-degradation Policy with an emphasis on Outstanding Tribal Resource Waters (OTRW).

FY12 & FY 13 Continued Chippewa Cree Tribe Sweetgrass Wetlands Monitoring, Assessment and Protection Project-Box Elder Creek, Beaver Creek and Big Sandy Creek Drainages- For FY12 and FY13, the Chippewa Cree Tribe utilized Wetlands Program Development Grant funding to continue Wetlands/Sweetgrass monitoring in the Box Elder, Beaver and Big Sandy Creek drainages, work with the newly created Office of Attorney General on compiling and revising the Wetlands Aquatic Lands Protection Ordinance (WALPO) and the newly created Wetlands Mitigation Policy into a single Tribal Wetlands Protection Policy document that will ensure wetlands are protected on the Reservation; and finally-the106, GAP and Wetlands Coordinators worked with the Stone Child College (local community college) on public educational course on 'Wetlands and Environmental Issues on the Reservation'.

FY14 & FY15 Chippewa Cree Tribe WPDG Application The Chippewa Cree Tribe, by and through the Tribal Water Resources Department, will utilize FY14 and FY15 Wetland Program Development Grant Funding to accomplish the following: 1) Conduct a Triennial Review of the current Tribal Water Quality and Wetlands Standards that were passed by Resolution 98-08; 2) Revise the current Wetlands Program Plan (which expires in FY14) for an additional three (3) years (FY15, FY16 and FY17) which will prioritize monitoring and assessment, Tribal Policy making pertinent to wetlands protection and restoration feasibility of future wetlands restoration projects on the Reservation; 3) Continue sweetgrass/wetlands monitoring in the Box Elder Creek Drainage and restore at least one (1) sweetgrass site within the conclusion of the project period; and 4) Develop an internal 401 Certification Protocol to be utilized for assisting Reservation

decision makers on any future 404 Permit Applications on the Reservation. The Tribal Water Resources Department will utilize the following partners in accomplishing this endeavor: NRCS Liaison (Chester, Havre and Rocky Boy Field Office), NRCS Bridger Plant Materials Center (Bridger, Montana) and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (Billings, Montana Office).

FY15 & FY16 Wetland Program Development Grant The Chippewa Cree utilized its FY 15 & 16 funding to accomplish the following: 1) Conduct a Triennial Review of the current Tribal Water Quality and Wetlands Standards that were passed by Resolution 98-08; 2) Revise the current Wetlands Program Plan (which expires in FY14) for an additional three (3) years (FY15, FY16 and FY17) which will prioritize monitoring and assessment, Tribal Policy making pertinent to wetlands protection and restoration feasibility of future wetlands restoration projects on the Reservation; 3) Continue sweetgrass/wetlands monitoring in the Box Elder Creek Drainage and restore at least one (1) sweetgrass site within the conclusion of the project period; and 4) Develop an internal 401 Certification Protocol to be utilized for assisting Reservation decision makers on any future 404 Permit Applications on the Reservation.

FY17 & FY18 Wetland Program Development Grant The Chippewa Cree utilized its FY 17 & 18 funding to accomplish the following: 1) Conduct a Triennial Review of the current Tribal Water Quality and Wetlands Standards that were passed by Resolution 98-08; 2) Revise the current Wetlands Program which will prioritize monitoring and assessment and development of wetlands water quality standards, 3) Review Tribal Policy making pertinent to wetlands protection and restoration feasibility of future wetlands restoration projects on the Reservation; 4) Conduct sweetgrass/wetlands monitoring and finalize monitoring results and 5) Incorporate Water Quality and Wetlands Program work into Tribal 319 Program goals to improve wetlands and water quality protection on the Chippewa-Cree Reservation.

FY19 & FY20 Tribal Wetland Program Set-Aside Grant

The Chippewa Cree Tribe Environmental Department conducted wetlands water quality and wetland condition monitoring in the Box Elder Creek and Beaver Creek watersheds. At least 10 remote headwater wetland sites were examined during this 2 year study. Work continued on schedule during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Water quality results and wetland condition sampling resulted in restoration planning and a headwater wetland water quality data set that will be used to develop CCT wetland water quality standards. Headwater wetland sites were also evaluated as potential assisted migration sites for locally imperiled sweetgrass.

Overall Goal Statement and Timeframe for Plan:

The Chippewa Cree Tribal Wetlands Program Plan (2022-2024) overall goal is to develop headwater wetland water quality standards, preserve and restore headwater wetland condition to improve downstream water quality, protect invaluable wetland cultural resources and to ensure no-net-loss of wetlands.

The overall goal will be achieved by wetland and water quality monitoring and sampling, evaluating wetland condition and wetland cultural resources, conducting public education and outreach and applying results to develop restoration of identified sites. Results will also be applied to protect Tribal interests and protect locally imperiled cultural species that are directly impacted by increasing frequency of drought and declining population trends.

The Tribal Wetlands Program intends to fulfill the overall goal of no net loss by carrying out the following activities based on a 2-year time frame.

Hire and train a new wetlands program manager in 2022

Develop Wetland Water Quality Standards in collaboration with 106 Program

Protect Tribal Wetlands Identified Specifically as Traditional Cultural Places

Monitor Headwater Wetland Condition in Big Sandy Creek Watershed

Utilize and Review Tribal Wetland Rapid Assessment Methodology

Identify Unique and High-Quality Wetlands (Headwater Wetlands)

Restore Headwater Wetland Condition

Review Wetland Regulatory Mechanisms with US EPA and ACOE

Complete Baseline Wetland Inventory in 3 Watersheds

Use Wetlands Monitoring Data for Wetland Water Quality Standards

Develop Wetland Condition and Wetland Water Quality Database (AWQMS)

Promote Wetlands Education and Community Outreach

Evaluate Big Sandy Creek wetlands as potential assisted migration sites

Apply monitoring results to protect Tribal Interests, laws and regulations

This WPP does not specifically include protection activities to Traditional Cultural Places (i.e. sweetgrass harvesting areas, culturally sensitive waters) but is an overall ongoing activity within the Chippewa Cree Tribal Wetlands Program. We will conduct a wetlands regulatory review in collaboration with U.S. EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a component of Wetland Program Plan during the next 2 years.

Action and Activities Supporting Overall Goals, with Schedule:

Year One (2022)

Action:

During fiscal year 2022, the Chippewa Cree Tribe Wetlands Program will complete the following actions that includes three of the EPA's Four Core Elements for continued Wetlands Program progress: 1) **Monitoring and Assessment:** headwater spring and fen wetland monitoring in **Big Sandy Creek Watershed** and 2) **Voluntary Restoration and Protection:** restoration and protection of critical headwater springs and wetlands where identified and 3) **Develop Wetland Water Quality Standards** based on headwater wetlands water quality monitoring data and 4) **Develop SOPs for hydric soil monitoring.**

Core elements of a comprehensive wetlands program addressed by each activity are listed in parenthesis. Activities require field research, data analysis and collaboration with the CCT Tribal 106 program. "Field season" is roughly from April to September (give or take a month). Non-field season activities will include but not limited to: research and development of wetland water quality standards and restoration plans, data entry, public education activities and reporting on wetland monitoring results.

Activities:

- Review and revise (if needed) the Wetlands Monitoring Quality Assurance Project Plan. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***Jan-Feb 2022***
- Develop wetland monitoring plan for 2022 field work in Big Sandy Creek watershed; including GIS wetlands analysis, mapping and research. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***Feb-March 2022***
- Investigate training and equipment needs for developing SOPs for hydric soils monitoring. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***Feb-March 2022***
- Conduct headwater wetland condition monitoring and water quality sampling in the Big Sandy Creek Watershed Using Tribal Rapid Assessment Methodology. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***May-June 2022***
- Evaluate headwater wetlands as potential assisted migration sites for locally imperiled wetland cultural species as directed by the CCT Tribe. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***May-June 2022***

- Analyze wetland condition and wetland water quality data and enter into AQWMS database **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***September-October 2022***
- Develop restoration plans for identified headwater springs and wetlands **(Core Element 3. Restoration and Protection).** ***September-October 2022***
- Review rapid assessment methodology and conduct existing regulatory review **(Core Elements 1,2 Monitoring and Assessment, Regulation)** ***Nov-Dec 2022***
- Research and develop wetlands water quality standards based on monitoring results and research **(Core Element 4. Wetland Water Quality Standards)** ***Ongoing 2022***
- Conduct education and outreach to community on wetland water quality **(Core Elements 1,3,4)** ***Ongoing 2022***

Year Two (2023):

Action:

For FY 2023, Chippewa Cree Wetlands Program in collaboration with 106 Water Quality Program will monitor headwater wetlands condition and water quality in the Upper Big Sandy Creek Watershed. Data will be used to assess for restoration needs, develop Tribal Wetland Narrative and Numeric Wetland Water Quality criteria and standards. Data will also serve to evaluate sites as potential restoration sites and finalize Tribal Wetlands Water Quality Standards. Data will also be used to collaborate with US EPA and Army Corps to update Tribal wetland regulatory mechanisms. Hydric soil sampling SOPs researched and developed the previous year will be applied to sampling sites during the second year of funding.

Activities:

- Review and revise (if needed) the Wetlands Monitoring Quality Assurance Project Plan. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***Jan-Feb 2023***
- Develop wetland monitoring plan for 2023 field work in Upper Big Sandy Creek Creek watershed; including GIS wetlands mapping and research. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***February-March 2023***
- Apply SOPs for hydric soils monitoring to wetland condition monitoring sites found in the Big Sandy Creek watershed **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***May-June 2023***
- Conduct headwater wetland condition monitoring and water quality sampling in the Upper Big Sandy Creek Watershed Using Tribal Assessment Methodology. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***May-June 2023***
- Evaluate headwater wetlands as potential assisted migration sites for locally imperiled wetland cultural species as directed by the CCT Tribe. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***May-June 2023***
- Analyze water and wetlands monitoring data and enter into AWQMS database **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***September-October 2023***
- Develop restoration plans for identified headwater springs and wetlands **(Core Element 3. Restoration and Protection).** ***September-October 2023***

- Provide final headwater wetland monitoring results, draft and final versions of Wetlands Water Quality Standards to US EPA for review and comment. **(Core Element 4) October 2023**
- Develop and enhance the Tribes' SOPs and BMPs for restoring local wetlands and perennial stream channels to maintain water quality, water storage, cultural plant populations and other ecological benefits necessary for maintaining or improving water quality. **(Core Element 1 and 3. Monitoring and Assessment, Voluntary Restoration and Protection).** ***Nov/Dec 2023***
- Incorporate public and Council reviews into Final Wetland Water Quality Standards **(Core Element 4)** ***Nov-Dec 2023***
- Develop Wetlands water quality standards based on monitoring results from all 3 watersheds **(Core Element 4. Wetland Water Quality Standards)** ***Ongoing 2023***
- Conduct existing wetlands regulatory review in collaboration with U.S. EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineering **(Core Element:2 Regulation)** ***Ongoing 2023***
- Conduct education and forum for public comments on draft Tribal wetland water quality standards **(Core Elements 1,3,4)** ***Ongoing 2023***

Year Three (2024):

Action:

For FY 2024, Chippewa Cree Wetlands Program in collaboration with 106 Water Quality Program will monitor headwater wetlands condition and water quality in the Box Elder Creek Watershed. Data will be used to assess for restoration needs, continue to develop Tribal Wetland Narrative and Numeric Wetland Water Quality criteria and standards. Data will also serve to evaluate sites as potential restoration sites and finalize Tribal Wetlands Water Quality Standards. Data will also be used to collaborate with US EPA and Army Corps to update Tribal wetland regulatory mechanisms. Hydric soil sampling SOPs researched and developed the previous year will be applied to sampling sites during the second year of funding.

Activities:

- Review and revise (if needed) the Wetlands Monitoring Quality Assurance Project Plan. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***Jan-Feb 2024***
- Develop wetland monitoring plan for 2023 field work in Box Elder Creek watershed; including GIS wetlands mapping and research. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***February-March 2024***
- Apply SOPs for hydric soils monitoring to wetland condition monitoring sites found in the Big Sandy Creek watershed **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***May-June 2024***

- Conduct headwater wetland condition monitoring and water quality sampling in the Upper Big Sandy Creek Watershed Using Tribal Assessment Methodology. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***May-June 2024***
- Evaluate headwater wetlands as potential assisted migration sites for locally imperiled wetland cultural species as directed by the CCT Tribe. **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***May-June 2024***
- Analyze water and wetlands monitoring data and enter into AWQMS database **(Core Element 1. Monitoring and Assessment).** ***September-October 2024***
- Develop restoration plans for identified headwater springs and wetlands **(Core Element 3. Restoration and Protection).** ***September-October 2024***
- Provide final headwater wetland monitoring results, draft and final versions of Wetlands Water Quality Standards to US EPA for review and comment. **(Core Element 4) October 2024**
- Develop and enhance the Tribes' SOPs and BMPs for restoring local wetlands and perennial stream channels to maintain water quality, water storage, cultural plant populations and other ecological benefits necessary for maintaining or improving water quality. **(Core Element 1 and 3. Monitoring and Assessment, Voluntary Restoration and Protection).** ***Nov/Dec 2024***
- Incorporate public and Council reviews into Final Wetland Water Quality Standards **(Core Element 4)** ***Nov-Dec 2024***
- Develop Draft Wetlands water quality standards based on monitoring results from all 3 priority watersheds (Beaver, Upper Big Sandy and Box Elder) **(Core Element 4. Wetland Water Quality Standards)** ***2024***
- Conduct existing wetlands regulatory review in collaboration with U.S. EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineering **(Core Element:2 Regulation)** ***2024***
- Conduct education and forum for public comments on draft Tribal wetland water quality standards **(Core Elements 1,3,4)** ***2024***