
MISSION MOUNTAINS TRIBAL WILDERNESS

CASE STUDY

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Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Case Study

Wilderness Management Distance Education Program The University of Montana

I. Class Objectives

- 1) Describe the role Tribal community members had in designating the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness.
- 2) Explain the similarities and differences between the Tribal Wilderness Ordinance 79A and the Federal Wilderness Act.
- 3) Describe Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes management of wilderness.
- 4) Describe Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes management of natural areas and other protected areas.
- 5) Identify enabling laws and policies of the BIA, Tribal, etc. for designating natural areas on Indian lands.
- 6) Identify conflicting land uses (issues) for designation of natural areas/wilderness.
- 7) Explain benefits, direct and indirect, of the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness.

Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness

- Case Study -

Introduction

Wildlands or wilderness areas have always been very important to the peoples of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes for the perpetuation of culture and traditional practices. However, after the Allotment Act, the once natural and primitive lands of the Flathead Reservation became congested by settlement and development. Many sacred, cultural sites were destroyed. The only wild and untamed areas that remained were away from so-called “civilization,” in the mountains where the bridge linking the past to present could be found. When these mountain lands became threatened by more development (logging, settlement, etc.), a movement was made to preserve the remaining untouched areas in their natural state.

In 1974, the Tribal Council passed Resolution 4575, designating the area surrounding the South Fork of the Jocko River as a “Primitive Area,” describing it as “one of the last vestiges of unspoiled land on the Flathead Reservation, where Tribal members can have the opportunity for solitude and an unconfined type of recreation.” In October of 1979, the Tribal Council voted to put the resolution to a referendum vote so that the area could not be opened to development by the Council—but only by a vote of the people. On December 15, 1979, Tribal members approved Resolution 2-79, establishing the South Fork Primitive Area, and Resolution 3-79, establishing the Mill Creek Primitive Area in the northwest corner of the Reservation.

The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness, along the eastern boundary of the Reservation, was designated in 1979 by the Tribal Council. In 1982, the Tribal Council approved Ordinance 79A and Resolution 82-173 to further define the Tribal Wilderness area and its management direction. This wilderness is the first in the nation to have been established by a Tribal governing body. Recognizing the potential impacts of activities outside the wilderness, in 1986 the Tribal Council established a Wilderness Buffer Zone adjacent to the Tribal Wilderness Areas to protect and preserve its integrity.

For the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the primitive and wilderness areas provide hunting grounds and fishing waters, a sanctuary for cultural practices, recreation opportunities, scenic amenities, a place for educational and scientific study, and the economic benefits of various natural resources. The Tribal Wilderness Area’s goal is simply this: to preserve quiet and untamed areas for cultural and spiritual use.

I. History of the MMTW

The striking peaks found in the Mission Mountains of Flathead Nation of Western Montana crown a wilderness range unique in the United States both in majesty and management. Standing more than a mile above the farmlands and towns of the Mission Valley, the western front of the range provides one of the most spectacular valley landscapes in the Rocky Mountain Region. But the range is more than a natural wonder. It is the first place in America in which an Indian Nation has matched, and possibly excelled, the Federal Government in dedicating lands to be managed as a wilderness preserve.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes are comprised of descendants of Salish (Flathead), Pend d'Oreille (pon-duhr-ay), and Kootenai (coot-nee) Indians who traditionally had occupied an area of 20 million acres, stretching from Central Montana to Eastern Washington and north into Canada. The signing of the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 ceded the vast majority of those ancestral lands to the United States Government in return for the approximately 1.243 million acres that now constitute the Flathead Indian Reservation. The Treaty agreement only formalized the Tribes' relinquishment of their lands; events long preceding the Hellgate Treaty event had guaranteed this eventual loss.

In the words of then governor of the Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens, the Treaty gave access to "much valuable land and an inexhaustible supply of timber" and enabled "settlers to secure titles to land and, thus, the growth of towns and villages." The loss of this vast wilderness meant the potential loss of traditional Indian society. Every aspect of the Indian culture, from hunting and food gathering to religious practices, depended upon a wilderness setting.

To the Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai Indians, the Mission Mountains were one part of this wilderness homeland, distinct in its incredible ruggedness and extreme weather. In those days, it was no more wild or primeval than anywhere else. Like other features of the landscape, the Mission Mountains influenced the culture and economy of the Tribes. The area could be crossed only through certain passes. These routes were used for hundreds of years by many different tribal bands and are still used today for hunting, fishing, plant gathering, and cultural activities.

The first attempt by the Tribes to officially protect the Mission Range occurred in 1936, during a period of extensive trail construction by the Indian Civilian Conservation Corps in the mountainous areas of the Reservation. The Tribal Council voted to set aside about 100,000 acres of the western slope of the Mission Mountains as an Indian-maintained national park. The Tribes were to retain ownership of the lands but planned to model the National Park Service in its administration of the area. The main goals were to encourage Tribal member use of the park with traditional encampments and activities, and to provide an economic opportunity for Indian guides to bring visitors into the park. However, nothing ever came of the Tribal Council action. Correspondence from the period suggests the idea died in Washington D.C. in the office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs—supposedly while performing their trust responsibilities for the Flathead Nation.

Ironically, one year later the same Office of Indian Affairs classified the Mission Range as a roadless area. However, the Tribes objected to this action because it was done without the

consent or input of the Tribes. In addition, some of the land proposed for wilderness was determined to be better suited for other Tribal uses. The Mission Range Roadless Area was declassified in the Federal Register in 1959.

During the mid 1970's, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Flathead Agency proposed to log portions of the remaining roadless area on the western front of the Mission Range on behalf of the Tribes. [Timber management on national forests at this time was almost exclusively by clearcut methods]. The proposal fueled a renewed interest in preserving the Mission Mountains in a natural state. The Tribal Council's response was to set aside 91,778 acres as a Tribal Wilderness in 1979. This decision came about through the efforts of a number of Tribal individuals and groups. Three greatly respected grandmothers (Yayas) raised the initial protest to the proposed logging. This led the way for other community leaders to organize the "Save the Mission Mountains Committee," in order to stop the proposed timber sales in the area. The Committee circulated a petition in 1975 asking the Council to designate a Mission Mountains Primitive area in which logging would be banned. Soon after this, the Council seriously began to consider some type of wilderness protection.

Several proposals were advanced, all of which lacked overall management considerations other than the degree to which logging would be prohibited. A proposal containing the least acreage set aside only those lands that were economically unfeasible for timber harvesting. Advocates of this proposal were concerned about loss of income from reduced commercial timber lands.

A proposal offered by the "Save the Mission Mountains Committee" suggested that the wilderness boundary begin at the base of the mountain range. Unfortunately this included private and roaded lands, which reduced its political viability. The Committee's interest centered on protecting aesthetic values and preserving the wilderness character of the area, thereby helping to retain some of the cultural and spiritual values important to the Tribes.

In 1976, the Tribal Council, at the recommendation of Thurman Trosper (a Tribal member, retired U.S. Forest Service employee, and past president of The Wilderness Society), contracted with the University of Montana's Wilderness Institute to develop a draft boundary and management proposal for a Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Area. Two years later the Institute presented the drafts—a compromise of previous proposals—to the Council for review. The Council took no immediate action on the Institute's management proposal and boundary until a year later, when they approved the draft boundary and decided to create a new Tribal program to oversee the interim management of the area. This program, called the Wildland Recreation Program, was also charged with developing a wilderness management plan to meet the specific needs and values of the Tribes.

The Program completed the plan in the spring of 1982 and on June 15 the council voted overwhelmingly to approve Ordinance 79A, the Tribal Wilderness Ordinance, and the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Management Plan.

II. Tribal Wilderness Ordinance vs. Federal Wilderness Act of 1964

The Tribal Council's action in 1982 to approve Tribal Wilderness Ordinance 79A was historic. It was the first time that an Indian Tribe had decided on its own accord to protect a sizable portion of its lands as wilderness and provide policy and personnel to fulfill its propose.

The Tribal Wilderness Ordinance states:

“Wilderness has played a paramount role in shaping the character of the people and the culture of the Salish and Kootenai Tribes; it is the essence of traditional Indian religion and has served the Indian people and the culture of the Salish and Kootenai Tribes; it is the essence of traditional Indian religion and has served the Indian people of these Tribes as a place to hunt, as a place to gather medicinal herbs and roots, as a vision seeking ground, as a sanctuary, and in countless other ways for thousands of years. Because maintaining an enduring resource of wilderness is vitally important to the people of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the perpetuation of their culture, there is hereby established a Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Area and this Area, described herein, shall be administered to protect and preserve wilderness values.”

The Federal Wilderness Act states:

Sec. 2. (a) In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness. For this purpose there is hereby established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be composed of federally owned areas designated by Congress as “wilderness areas”, and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness; and no Federal lands shall be designated as “wilderness areas” except as provided for in this chapter or by a subsequent Act.

These two policies illustrate a major difference between Federal and Tribal Wilderness. The Tribes place the basic rationale for wilderness on preserving culture and religion, while the U.S. Congress focused on preserving the last remaining undeveloped land.

Due to the precedent-setting designation of wilderness by the Tribes, the ordinance describes Tribal wilderness land and its uses in similar fashion as the Federal Wilderness Act (no other example existed, especially for Indian Tribes). The Tribal authors deliberated on the language in the Wilderness Act, but also looked to cultural leaders in the Tribal community for direction. As

a result of this process, special considerations are given for Tribal cultural and religious activities, at the same time valuing preservation of the area over human uses.

The Tribal Wilderness Ordinance states:

4 a. It is the principal objective of this Ordinance to protect and preserve an area of land in its natural conditions in perpetuity. This Wilderness shall be devoted to the purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, cultural, religious and historical use only insofar as these uses are consistent with the spirit and provisions of this Ordinance. Human use of this Area must not interfere with the preservation of the Area as wilderness.

III. Tribal Wilderness Management

Current Situation

The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness ranges in elevation from 4,000 feet to nearly 10,000 feet at the mountain peaks. Approximately 34 miles long and averaging five miles wide, the wilderness extends from Moss Peak on the north end to the Jocko/Seeley Lake Road at the south end.

On the eastern slopes of the Mission Range, the U.S. Forest Service Mission Mountains Wilderness, established in 1975, covers approximately 75,000 acres. Both Mission Mountains wildernesses combine with the Bob Marshall Wilderness to the east to form one large ecosystem. Geographic features include forested slopes and high mountain valleys, rocky cliffs, rugged rocky peaks, subalpine and alpine lakes, creeks and some small glaciers.

The Tribal Wilderness forest cover is mostly dominated by Douglas-fir and subalpine fir, with western red-cedar, western larch, Englemann spruce, Ponderosa and lodgepole pine stands intermingled. As the Douglas-fir on the lower slopes approach maturity, many of the stands are becoming quite dense. In some stands this density has resulted in increased mortality because of insect and disease. This has resulted in increased blow-down and a build up of fire fuels. A wide variety of wildlife species inhabit the lower Douglas-fir stands, although some species range into the higher subalpine and alpine tundra during the summer.

There are nine major watersheds and drainages in the Tribal Wilderness area of the Mission Range. In addition, approximately 113 lakes greater than one acre in size can be found in the higher basins. These cirques were created by the glaciers which formed this landscape. In the past, campsites along these lakes were used when Indians hunted in the Missions, or as rest stops during journeys across the mountains to or from other traditional hunting grounds. For hikers able to make the climb, these high mountain lakes provide some of the most breathtaking and memorable sights on the Reservation. These lakes are also used as fishing sites and—for those who can handle it—swimming holes. Unfortunately, some of these mountain lake areas have been degraded by backcountry and wilderness users. Soil compaction and erosion, litter, multiple fire rings, and horse and human fecal contamination of surface waters has occurred.

Most trailheads for the major wilderness trails are located at the Wilderness boundary—some with campground facilities, others marked only by a trailhead sign. Many of the trails were built by members of the Tribes long ago, and others were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCCs) in the 1930s during the Depression. Trailhead/campground areas contain some facilities, whereas campsites usually consist of only fire rings.

The number of trails and trailheads has varied through the years. A CCC inventory in 1941 accounted for 26 trailheads and 40 trails; a 1963 inventory counted 20 trailheads and 20 trails; and a 1972 inventory counted 6 trailheads and 8 trails. Today, there are 9 developed trailheads and 12 major trails that are maintained and receive regular use, and an additional 8 trails that receive limited use or maintenance. Primary use of the Wilderness and trails occurs from June to September, although higher trails and lakes aren't usually used until mid-summer because of

snowpack. The trails are all located in prime wildlife habitats. Grizzly bears, black bears, elk, deer, mountain lions, mountain goats, eagles, and other wildlife all use the area together with humans, creating special management concerns in the area. Most campgrounds and trailheads are located in the Wilderness Buffer Zone and fall under less strict management guidelines than within the Tribal Wilderness.

Numerous roads access the Wilderness along the foothills of the Mission Range. County roads, private roads, irrigation roads, power line access roads, and old tribal logging roads criss-cross the landscape. Many private and Tribal (BIA logging) roads run within the Buffer Zone and in some cases into the Wilderness itself. All roads within the Wilderness have been ordered to be closed, however some remain open simply due to logistics. These open roads are sometimes used for illegal activities within the Wilderness such as illegal wilderness access, Christmas tree and fuelwood harvesting, hunting by non-Tribal members and other vehicle use.

Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Management

The Wilderness is currently managed under the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Management Plan, revised in 1990, for the “protection and preservation of the area’s natural conditions in perpetuity.” Management of the area enables the Tribes to monitor human uses and their influences, define limits of acceptable change, and undertake management actions to prevent degradation—or further degradation—of the area and its resources. It is an administrative guide for Tribal staff and the framework for determining allowable human uses.

The Tribal Wilderness Ordinance provides for various human uses of the Area as long as they are consistent with its primary purpose, ie: the protection and preservation of the Area's natural conditions in perpetuity. The integrity of the wilderness resource shall be dominant in all management decisions where a choice must be made between wilderness values and visitors or their activities.

Also inherent in the Ordinance is the recognition that, in addition to the benefits derived from the direct use of the Area as wilderness, there are substantial vicarious benefits to many tribal members. That is, many tribal members may never visit or directly use the wilderness. Nevertheless, they draw spiritual and physical refreshment from simply knowing the Area, and the plants and wild animals it supports, are protected as wilderness.

Management is necessary to ensure an enduring wilderness in the Mission Mountains. The manager's job is to monitor human uses and their influences, to identify how they are affecting or changing natural processes, to define the limits of acceptable man-caused change, and then to act in a manner consistent with the purpose of the Wilderness. The policies contained herein help to define the limits of acceptable man-caused change.

The Ordinance recognizes that the wilderness has many elements and that management must take into account all of these elements and their functioning as a whole. Losing one or more elements of the Wilderness can seriously degrade the quality of the overall wilderness resource. Management then must treat the Wilderness as a whole and not as a series of separate, distinct parts.

The Wilderness will be managed so as to be affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. Management will strive to maintain or, in

special cases, reestablish natural distributions and numbers of plants and animals to the Area. Except as specifically provided for in the Ordinance, natural processes, both physical and biological, will be allowed to continue without human influence.

Management will seek to preserve spontaneity of use and as much freedom from regulation as possible while preserving the naturalness of the Wilderness. The social qualities of the wilderness will be managed to emphasize solitude, physical and mental challenge, and freedom from the intrusion of unnatural sights and sounds. Indirect methods of distributing use will be favored over direct regulation. In addition, management will seek to provide visitors with a spectrum of wilderness recreation opportunities; opportunities will range from a good selection of well-maintained trails on one end of the spectrum to an area without trails on the other. Another objective is to prevent the further degradation of naturalness and solitude and to restore heavily impacted, substandard settings to minimum standards rather than letting all areas deteriorate to a minimum standard.

Management will be carried out in the least obtrusive manner. Tools used in the administration of the Area will be the minimum necessary to safely and successfully do the work. The tool, equipment, or structure chosen will be the one that least degrades wilderness values temporarily or permanently.

The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness will be managed as a Tribal resource; the needs and values of tribal members will take precedence over those of non-tribal members. A common thread through all management considerations will be the Tribes' own cultural and spiritual ties to the landscape.

Although wilderness use trends may vary, the simple existence of wilderness in a region has distinct economic benefits. Population growth over the past 15 years in counties located adjacent to wilderness areas has been 2 to 3 ½ times higher than in other counties, according to a study of 277 U.S. counties. In Montana during the 1980s, nine of the top 12 counties in population growth were located next to wilderness areas. These "wilderness counties" became "magnets to business and population because of the high quality, local environmental resources, many of which are preserved and protected by wilderness" (Rudzitis, 1987). These counties grew economically in spite of severe fluctuations in the state or national economy because the natural landscape "drew people there, kept them there, and helped them permanently sustain the local communities and economies" (Power, 1988).

Continuous impacts on the limited wilderness resources by human and stock use have made it necessary to restrict certain activities in certain areas. It is with the protection of these wilderness and wildlife resources in mind that the following 'zones' in the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness receive special management considerations:

1. Special Grizzly Bear Management Zone - established in 1982 along with and within the Tribal Wilderness, it covers approximately 10,000 acres surrounding McDonald Peak and Ashley Lakes drainage. It is where, during the summer months, a number of grizzly bears gather to feed on insects in the area. Each year the entire area is closed to human use from July 15 (earlier if the situation warrants it) to October 1 (later if the situation warrants it) to both minimize disturbance to bears and to provide for the safety of people.

2. Ashley Lakes Day Use Area - the Ashley Lakes area and trail, located within the Special Grizzly Bear Management Zone, is restricted to day use only when the area is open to recreational use (when the Grizzly Bear Closure is in effect, this area is also closed). During spring and fall this area may receive heavy grizzly bear use and potentially cause human-bear conflicts. This restriction is designed to both minimize disturbance to bears and to provide for the safety of people.
3. Trailless Area - when the Tribal Wilderness was established, this area, with a few minor exceptions, was trailless. Not only was it not economically feasible to develop new trails in this rugged and rocky terrain, in most cases the country was open enough that trails were not needed. In addition, for recreationists, the Trailless Area provides a wider spectrum of opportunities in cross-country travel, a greater chance to experience solitude, and a generally more primitive and wild camping and hiking experience.
4. Spring Stock Use Closure - since 1989 the entire Tribal Wilderness area is closed to all livestock use (including pack and riding stock) from March 1 through June 30. This closure came about due to the damage and erosion problems to the trails and campsites caused by stock when the soils are most vulnerable—during seasons of heavy precipitation and runoff.
5. North Fork Post Creek Fishing Closure - enacted in 1989 to protect naturally reproducing trout populations in the Summit Basin area from fishing harvest, this regulation affords protection to spawning runs in the tributary streams of Moon, Long, Frog, and Summit Lakes.

The following areas and resources are given special consideration when decisions are made regarding management of wilderness resources:

1. Grizzly Bear Management Zone and grizzly bear habitats for a sustainable grizzly population.
2. Other endangered species and habitats for maintenance of biological diversity.
3. Cultural site protection.
4. Maintenance of fragile alpine/tundra ecosystem.
5. Sensitivity of riparian zones for water quality and wildlife protection.
6. Municipal watershed protection.
7. Trailless area maintenance.
8. Wilderness Buffer Zone.
9. Trails and campsites (locations, environmental impacts, and history of visitor use).
10. Fisheries management is weighted to give special attention to waters containing native West Slope Cutthroat Trout and native Bull Trout.

Other special management direction/regulation, primarily for Non-Tribal members only:

1. Use of any Tribal lands or waters by Non-Tribal members requires the purchase of a Tribal conservation license and the appropriate activity stamp (fish, bird hunt, or camp), this is a requirement for use of wilderness lands.
2. A group size limit of 8 persons and 8 head of livestock is in place for wilderness lands.
3. Use of a campsite for longer than 3 consecutive days is prohibited.
4. It is illegal to carry or use a firearm.

5. Any commercial use of the Tribal Wilderness is not allowed (no outfitting or guides).

The following plans, policies, codes and resolutions affect the Wilderness:

1. Ordinance 79A, Tribal Resolution 82-137, which approved the plan to protect wilderness as a valuable resource
2. Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Management Plan
3. Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan
4. Grizzly Bear Management Plan for the Flathead Reservation
5. Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Fire Management Plan
6. Fisheries Management Plan of the Flathead Indian Reservation
7. Reservation Class I Airshed Designation (See Chapter 9, Air.)
8. Ronan municipal water supply lease (Middle Crow Creek)
9. Snow Survey Measurement Agreement (See Chapter 10, Water.)
10. Ordinance 44D subject to Joint Tribal/State Hunting & Fishing agreement

In addition to the policies established by the Tribes and BIA, other agencies involved in the management of similar resources adjacent to the Tribal Wilderness and Buffer Zone are making an effort to standardize their management policies with those of the MMTW. For example, the US Forest Service is attempting to adopt the Tribes' wilderness regulation limiting group size in wilderness.

In 1992, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes and USDA Flathead National Forest developed a joint wilderness map for the Mission Mountains wilderness complex. The purpose of this map was to increase visitor awareness of the tribal wilderness regulations, wildlife protection zones and to reduce visitor pressure at high use areas.

The first Flathead Nation wilderness manager stated: "Wilderness is, to a segment of the Tribal population, vitally important. It is one part of the Indian culture that remains as it was. Preservation then, expresses reverence for the land and its community of life, as well as respect for Indian culture."

IV. Other Management Areas

- A. *Wilderness Buffer Zone*
- B. *South Fork Primitive Area*
- C. *Lozeau Primitive Area*
- D. *Lower Flathead River Corridor*

A. Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone

Current Situation

In June of 1982, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council approved the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Ordinance 79A. By that action, the Tribes set aside approximately 91,778 acres (acreage determined by the Tribal Geographical Information System (GIS)) of Tribal lands in the Mission Range as the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness.

The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Ordinance is the Tribal equivalent of the Federal Wilderness Act in terms of the framework to establish a wilderness. While the Tribal Wilderness is managed as a wilderness, its management does not necessarily exhibit the same techniques as might occur under federal jurisdiction. The management of the Tribal Wilderness reflects the economic and cultural needs of the Salish and Kootenai people.

The overall management goal of the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness is, “the protection and preservation of the area’s natural conditions in perpetuity.” Human uses of the area are permitted as long as they are consistent with the area’s primary purpose. Maintenance of the wilderness resource is the dominant theme in all management decisions.

Currently, the management goals of wilderness differ drastically from the management goal(s) of non-wilderness. Management strategies can change abruptly at the Tribal Wilderness boundary with impacts from activities occurring outside the Tribal Wilderness encroaching, at least to some degree, into the Tribal Wilderness. Accordingly, the Tribal Council decided to establish a buffer zone to act as the Tribal Wilderness’ “cushion” from outside influences.

In January 1986, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council approved Resolution 86-47 (Tribal Council Resolutions, Appendix I) which established the Wilderness Buffer Zone Committee and charged it with drawing up a Buffer Zone boundary and management plan for Council review by March 14, 1986. Following Council direction, the Wilderness Buffer Zone Committee developed an overall goal for the Buffer Zone which is, “to protect and preserve the integrity of the Tribal Wilderness.” On May 29, 1987, the Tribal Council adopted the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan (Appendix I). On February 9, 1990, the Tribal Council approved Resolution 90-73 re-establishing the Buffer Zone Administrative Use Committee (Appendix I), which revised the 1987 Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan contained herein and approved by the Tribal Council on August 27, 1993, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs on September 13, 1993 (Appendix I).

The Buffer Zone is designed to control, to the extent possible, those activities that may adversely impact the Tribal Wilderness and cause erosion of its primary purpose. The intent of this plan is to establish interim Tribal management practices for natural resources within the Buffer Zone. This document is not intended to represent an ultimate Tribal governmental position on any aspect of natural resource management. Rather, its purpose is two-fold. First, it is enacted to deal with immediate management concerns in the least confrontational method possible. Second, the Tribes encourage other jurisdictions and interested individuals to offer advice and suggestions on how to more fully address, on an ecosystems basis, holistic natural resource management. Those suggestions and the experience derived from immediate implementation of this interim plan will be utilized in the continuing evolution of Reservation natural resource management.

Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Objectives, Policies and Actions

The Buffer Zone encompasses approximately 22,833 acres in the Mission Mountains foothills (acreage calculated from Tribal Geographical Information System, Figure 1). The Buffer Zone is bounded on the east by the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness, on the north by the section line common to Sections 28 and 33, T. 22 N., R. 19 W., MPM, on the west by the Pablo Feeder Canal, on the southwest by the Mission "DA" Canal and on the south by the Dry Creek Canal (Buffer Zone boundary description, Appendix II).

The lower foothills of the Missions have been and are used for a multitude of purposes including, but not limited to, cultural uses, livestock grazing, timber harvest, recreation, homesites, Christmas tree harvest, and post and pole harvest. Tribal lands and resources within the lower Mission Mountains foothills, prior to the establishment of this Buffer Zone Plan in 1987, were not managed under a long-term, comprehensive policy.

Objective

The objective of the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan is the development of an administrative process that ensures that management of the Buffer Zone will be conducted using an interdisciplinary approach so planning and decision-making will consider all the resources within the area. Additionally, this Management Plan will provide resource managers with clear guidelines to follow when considering activities within the Buffer Zone.

Policy

1. All Tribal, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and other federal government programs conducting activities within the Buffer Zone will be governed by the guidelines set forth in the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan, as approved by the Tribal Council.
2. Private landowners and all non-Tribal governmental entities conducting activities within the Buffer Zone are encouraged to follow the guidelines in the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan, as approved by the Tribal Council.
3. The Administrative Use Oversight Committee (AUO) will be responsible for implementation and monitoring of the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan. The AUO will use the interdisciplinary approach to decision-making and will call upon experts in appropriate fields as needs arise.

4. The Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan will be updated and amended as needed.

Actions

1. The Tribal Council will maintain the Administrative Use Oversight (AUO) Committee (Resolution 90-73). The AUO will be composed of a Tribal Council representative, a wildland recreation specialist, a wildlife biologist, a fisheries biologist, a land specialist, a forester, an agriculture specialist, and two Culture Committee representatives, one from each Committee. The Tribal resolution that establishes the AUO will also identify the Committee members and designate one of them as the Committee chairperson. The chairperson will be responsible for preparing meeting agendas, for scheduling meetings and for submitting reports that describe the Committee's activities and decisions to the Tribal Council.
2. The AUO will be responsible for informing all Tribal, BIA and other government programs of new policies governing administration of the Buffer Zone and for monitoring the effectiveness of this management plan.
3. Within three years of establishment, the AUO will develop a methodology to monitor the results of Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan implementation.
4. The AUO will revise the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan with Tribal Council approval and report to and advise the Tribal Council on activities and issues within the Buffer Zone.

The following programs or departments assist in the management of the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone:

1. Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CS&KT) Wildland Recreation Program - overall management direction
2. CS&KT Fish and Game Department - policing and law enforcement
3. CS&KT Wildlife Program - wildlife and habitat management
4. CS&KT Fisheries Program - lakes and streams fisheries and habitat management
5. CS&KT Water Quality Program - water quality monitoring and enhancement
6. CS&KT Forestry Department - Buffer Zone timber management
7. CS&KT Air Quality Program - air quality monitoring
8. Bureau of Indian Affairs Fire Control - fire suppression
9. U.S. Forest Service Flathead National Forest - adjacent Federal wilderness Management east of Reservation
10. CS&KT and U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service - operation of SNOTEL site in the North Fork of the Jocko.

Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness and Buffer Zone Issues

The following issues were identified by wildland managers regarding resource use conflicts, sensitive areas and future management needs:

1. Preservation of the wilderness ecosystem; dual management with the U.S. Forest Service.
2. Restriction of homesite development, and the acquisition and protection of land near the Wilderness by the Tribes.

3. Methods and strategies for fire control and fuel management (i.e.; “let burn” policy, wildfire prevention/protection by Buffer Zone residents, fuels reduction timber harvesting, etc.).
4. Fisheries and riparian zone protection and enhancement.
5. Livestock management and practices including: seasons of use, stocking rates, areas of placement (riparian, wetlands), competition for graze with wildlife, and fencing placement and maintenance.
6. Commercial outfitting within the wilderness.
7. Forest pest, disease and weed management.
8. Seasonal closure of Grizzly Bear Management Area.
9. Roads leading up to or entering the wilderness.
10. Recreation regulation, enhancement, opportunity development and facility Management.
11. Unrestricted access to cultural, spiritual and historical sites.
12. Water quality for valley watershed.
13. Consider extending Buffer Zone southward.

B. South Fork Primitive Area

Current Situation

As described previously, the “South Fork” is an area set aside for Tribal members for solitude and recreation. The only non-members allowed to enter are the non-member spouses and/or children accompanied by the related Tribal member for recreation purposes other than hunting or fishing. Located in the southeast corner of the Flathead Reservation, the South Fork primitive area covers approximately 59,000 acres, and is bordered on the north by the Jocko/Seeley Lake Road and on the west by the Jocko Mountain Divide. The area is comprised of deep valleys, steep forested slopes and a relatively high topographic relief to the west; to the east it is generally flatter and composed of continuous forest.

The South Fork forest cover dominated by Douglas fir habitat types, with some cedar groves along creeks and drainages and subalpine fir at higher elevations. The area provides suitable habitat for grizzly and black bears, elk, deer, mountain lions and other big game species and wildlife. Although logged in the past, the area has been closed to tree harvest since 1979. Firewood can be taken only in certain areas.

Twenty-three lakes larger than or equal to an acre in size can be found within the South Fork. The Lower Jocko Lake is the largest at approximately 34 acres. The Middle Fork of the Jocko River drains the north end of the area. The South Fork of the Jocko River is the major drainage that flows through the middle of the area, with Boles Creek and Liberty Creek draining into it.

Although this is a “primitive” area, management of the area is not as restrictive as within the Tribal Wilderness. Construction of shelters, sanitation facilities, picnic tables, hitch racks, corrals etc. has occurred in the South Fork. Current sites of these facilities are listed below:

1. South Fork Gate - sanitation facility, shelter, two picnic tables and gate attendant cabin. Vanderburg Trail begins here.
2. Janie’s Camp - shelter and sanitation facility one-quarter mile past gate
3. Louie Lake Road Junction - picnic table, sanitation unit
4. Liberty Meadows - shelter, sanitation unit, several old corrals at the campsite. Trail to Yellow Lake starts here.
5. Darcy’s Camp - sanitation unit
6. Burnt Cabin - shelter and two sanitation units
7. Sunny Camp - sanitation unit and shelter
8. Louie’s Camp - sanitation unit

Many spontaneous campsites are located along the roads and lakes. Gate attendant records show that during the summer months of June through September 1988, 1,439 people passed through the gate. Some people visit for a few hours, while others stay days, weeks or even months to fish, hunt, harvest berries or plants, etc.

The main road within the South Fork is the South Fork Road, which follows the river through the area. Several roads branch off from this main road, including the Middle Fork Road that runs along the area’s northern boundary through the mountains and into the Swan Valley. Other roads include the Louie Lake, Crazy Fish Lake, White Horse Lake, Liberty Meadows and Boles Meadow Roads. These roads were originally used for logging and fire control purposes.

The whole primitive area is considered a sensitive area. Specific concerns include:

1. Maintaining native trout populations and habitats
2. Protection and preservation of Grizzly bear and other wildlife habitats and the enhancement of Elk ranges
3. Cultural site protection
4. Fire lookout and road maintenance
5. Maintenance and possible upgrade of transmission power line
6. Ownership and land use of state sections located within Primitive Area
7. Trespass by non-members from Rattlesnake Wilderness Area located to the south
8. Jocko Reservoir and Black Lake Reservoir Safety of Dams work
9. Land use practices on areas adjacent to Primitive Area

There is no overall management plan for the South Fork Primitive Area; management policies are currently made by Tribal Council resolutions, ordinances or a referendum vote by Tribal members. Main objectives for management are to prevent further development and logging in the area to protect it from the exploitation and degradation of its natural resources. Recent Tribal Council action has withdrawn timber harvest plans for adjacent Tribal lands due to concerns of adverse impacts to the South Fork Primitive Area.

South Fork of the Jocko Primitive Area Management and Policies

Because no management plan has been created for the South Fork Primitive Area, management of specific resources is the responsibility of designated programs or departments. However, Tribal Resolution 4575 and the aforementioned plans and policies specify the following guidelines:

1. The area is open only to Tribal members, and a non-member spouse and non-member children when accompanying the Tribal member for recreational purposes other than hunting and fishing.
2. No logging operations are allowed (i.e., post and pole cutting, timber harvesting, Christmas tree cutting). Firewood cutting is allowed only in certain areas.
3. All roads entering or leaving the primitive area, except the main South Fork Road leading up to Jocko Lookout and White Horse Lake, will be closed.
4. No powerline construction or other development will be permitted.
5. Cutting of dry firewood (for personal use only) is allowed on the area south of the road to Boles Meadows (the right side). No logging trucks are allowed.
6. A gate attendant is assigned to the South Fork to prevent illegal entrance by non-members usually from around June to October.
7. Harvesting of bull trout is prohibited. Check Fisheries.

C. Lozeau Primitive Area

Current Situation

The Lozeau Primitive Area, located in the northwest corner of the Reservation, covers approximately 34,901 acres. When the area was established in 1979 by referendum vote, no

legal boundary description was delineated. The referendum only referred to the Lozeau, Mill Creek, Mill Pocket and Clear Creek areas as comprising the primitive area.

The boundary used is the Reservation boundary to the west and north, the Little Bitterroot River on the east, and the Mill Pocket Creek as partial boundary on the south.

The Lozeau Primitive Area is comprised of gently sloping terrain, with steeper slopes to the west at the boundary. While the Little Bitterroot River is approximately 2,900 feet in elevation, a few peaks at the west boundary rise to over 7,000 feet.

Dominated by Ponderosa pine and moist Douglas-fir habitat types, the area is currently managed according to Tribal forest management and harvest practices. The area provides excellent habitat for moose, elk, deer, black bears, other large and small game, and upland game birds.

The Lozeau Primitive Area drains into the Little Bitterroot River which flows southward along the area's eastern boundary. Redmond Creek drains the northwest corner of the primitive area and flows northeast into the Little Bitterroot below Hubbard Reservoir off the Reservation. Clear Creek drains the remaining northern portion of the area, and Bassoo Creek drains the west central portion. Mill Creek and Mill Pocket Creek drain the southwest corner. There are no lakes in this primitive area.

In 1941, according to a CCC I.D. Project Map, there were four shelters located in this area but no established trailheads or trails. Since then, the Wildland Recreation Program has constructed and maintains the three campgrounds listed below:

1. Lozeau Campground - fenced with one shelter, one lean-to, two picnic tables, and two sanitation units
2. Little Bitterroot Campground - fenced with a shelter, two picnic tables, and one sanitation unit
3. Pike's Camp - access bridge, shelter, picnic tables, and sanitation units

Many logging roads cover the area. The Mill Pocket, Mill Creek, Clear Creek, Bassoo Peak Lookout, and Lozeau Roads receive the most use. Five outside roads access the area—two from the north, two from the west and one from the south.

Sensitive areas include:

1. Wildlife habitats
2. Streams
3. Lolo National Forest (to the west)
4. Private land ownership within the Primitive Area (Fee, Trust, State Lands)
5. Bassoo Peak Lookout and access road

Lozeau Primitive Area Management and Policies

The Lozeau Primitive Area has no overall management plan to date. The area does have a forest (timber harvest) management plan in effect. The primary purpose of the "primitive" area designation was to prevent entry by non-members. The area is open to Tribal members only and a non-member spouse and children are allowed when accompanying the Tribal member for recreational purposes other than hunting and fishing. For many Tribal members, it is a favorite

area for hunting moose, elk, and mule deer. Post and pole harvest, Christmas tree harvest, firewood gathering, and tree planting logged blocks provide income for many Tribal members.

D. Lower Flathead River Corridor

Overall Management Direction and Goals for the River Corridor

This document directs future management of the Lower Flathead River Corridor, an area that includes lands within one-half mile of each side of the river, from Kerr Dam to the Reservation Boundary. It establishes a long-term vision for the area and an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to the management of its resources. It endeavors to restore and maintain the environmental integrity of the river ecosystem in a way that includes, to the extent possible, the activities of humans. Finally, it recognizes that the river has been important to Indian people for millennia, and that it continues to enrich and ennoble their lives and their culture.

The guiding direction for the plan states that:

It is the desire of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes that the natural and cultural values of the Lower Flathead River Corridor shall be preserved for present and future generations of the Tribes; that management shall give priority to enhancing resource values associated with traditional cultural uses of the corridor such as hunting, fishing, plant harvesting, and other cultural activities; that resource uses in the corridor are managed to be compatible with the restoration and maintenance of the river's outstanding natural and aesthetic qualities; and that management shall be consistent with the needs and desires of the Tribes (CS&KT Tribal Council 1992).

The plan sets many resource-specific goals to achieve this overall direction. These can be summarized by the following general goal statements:

- Manage all segments of the Lower Flathead River Corridor in a manner consistent with the guiding direction stated above.
- Develop adequate baseline data on key resources to enable managers to detect the adverse impacts associated with excessive or damaging use.
- Develop long-term, integrated management strategies that will ensure the restoration and protection of the scenic and environmental integrity of the corridor and that will minimize permanent human influences within the rural areas of the corridor.
- Promote those uses that are consistent with the restoration and long-term preservation of the river's natural and scenic values.
- Give priority to appropriate tribal uses of the corridor.
- Favor management strategies that will accomplish resource management objectives in the least obtrusive manner.
- Emphasize education and visitor contact over regulation.
- Provide an adequate and properly trained workforce to achieve the objectives of this plan.

Lower Flathead River Corridor Management Objectives

Achieving the plan's goals is dependent upon accomplishing a series of action-oriented objectives listed in the plan. Again, most of these are resource specific. They call for activities such as resource inventories, the development of restoration and protection plans, monitoring fish and wildlife populations, initiatives to coordinate management efforts, visitor education programs, policy reviews, and so on.

Among these are several major initiatives that will require an interdisciplinary effort to be accomplished. These major objectives are identified below:

- Establish an inter-disciplinary team review process for managing range resources within the corridor to ensure multiple resource concerns and opportunities are addressed.
- Develop and promote through an ID team process riparian land management practices for livestock grazing, agriculture, housing, road development, dumping, and channel or streambank modifications to help protect fish and wildlife values.
- Identify river access and road management needs for the corridor, and develop a ten-year transportation plan that will designate open and closed roads, parking areas, boat ramps, bicycle and pedestrian areas, equestrian facilities, maintenance schedules, and restoration areas. This plan will also develop strategies to control off-road vehicle use within the corridor.
- Protect the natural scenic integrity of the river corridor and viewshed by developing and implementing a scenic viewshed plan which will preserve the scenic beauty of the Core Area and other important landscapes as identified by an interdisciplinary team.
- Develop and implement a river corridor fire management plan that allows naturally caused fires to burn in areas (such as islands and isolated pockets of rangeland) where fire will not threaten range or other important resources within or outside of the corridor.
- Develop and implement a public education program that will emphasize the following: using signs, information materials, conservation workshops, and river patrols to promote the safe use of the river; developing events to celebrate the river; seeking the participation of sportsmen, civic, environmental or school groups to assist the Tribes in improving access sites and public education about the river; and developing audio visual programs to promote understanding of the Lower Flathead River Corridor Management Direction.