
ASSESSING ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS DUE TO THE OPERATION OF LIBBY DAM, MONTANA

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Damming of rivers represents a cataclysmic event for large river-floodplain ecosystems. By altering water, sediment, and nutrient flow dynamics, dams interrupt and alter a river's important ecological processes in aquatic, riparian, floodplain and surrounding terrestrial environments. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, with the support of numerous subcontractors, are currently exploring the ecological impacts related to the operation of Libby Dam. To assess the cascading effects, KTOI personnel and subcontractors are developing indices to assess individual abiotic and biotic components. These individual assessments will be combined into an Index of Ecological Integrity (IEI) at a geomorphic reach or subbasin scale. The IEI will be used to assess, mitigation, monitor, and rehabilitate the Kootenai River Floodplain.