

EFFORTS TO RE-ESTABLISH NORTHERN LEOPARD FROGS ON THE FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION

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The northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*) has disappeared from much of its recorded range in western Montana including the Flathead Indian Reservation. In 2001, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' Wildlife Management Program began efforts to re-establish northern leopard frog on the Reservation. Preliminary studies included: 1) genetic sampling of remaining northern leopard frog populations in western Montana and potential source populations east of the Continental Divide for relatedness; 2) chytrid fungus testing of source populations and Columbia spotted frogs (*R. luteiventris*) at potential release sites; and 3) testing methodology for rearing tadpoles. Beginning in 2003, we translocated egg masses from source populations to the Reservation. We achieved highest success in hatching eggs and rearing hatchlings indoors in tanks. Rearing of tadpoles in outdoor enclosures imbedded in wetlands had mixed success in terms of mortality and growth. After several years, we concluded the disadvantages of enclosures outweighed the benefits. From 2003 to 2005 we focused our efforts at one release site. Although we located many metamorphs during fall surveys, we were unable to document over-wintering success. In 2006 and 2007, we chose a second release site. In 2007, we found northern leopard frog at the second site that were large enough to suggest some individuals had over-wintered successfully. We also observed extensive movements of frogs following metamorphosis. We plan to continue reintroduction efforts with the goal of establishing five successful breeding populations on the Reservation.