

A WATERSHED-BASED APPROACH TO RESTORING WETLAND- RIPARIAN RESOURCES AND BULL TROUT ON THE FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION^{AFS}

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The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CS&KT) are undertaking a comprehensive watershed restoration effort on the Flathead Indian Reservation. In 1998, as part of a legal settlement, the Atlantic Richfield Company agreed to pay the CS&KT for mining-related damages to treaty-protected resources in the Upper Clark Fork River Basin. Under the terms of the settlement, the CS&KT were to replace, restore, and/or acquire the equivalent of the injured resources, which included wetland-riparian resources and bull trout. Rather than using a piece-meal approach to mitigation, the CS&KT decided to commit to a more holistic resource management approach in one focus area, the Jocko Watershed. The basic goal of the restoration is to maintain or reestablish natural processes to the greatest degree possible, while recognizing limitations imposed by past and ongoing watershed disturbances. The watershed restoration process the CS&KT chose involved four key actions: 1) assessment to determine environmental history and identify restoration potential; 2) protection to identify and maintain the best remaining habitats; 3) passive restoration to modify activities that are disturbing or preventing recovery; and, 4) active restoration to reestablish functions where the ecosystem would otherwise remain degraded indefinitely. In this talk we presented a broad overview of the settlement and of the planning and implementation of the watershed restoration effort.