

WETLAND MITIGATION ISSUES RELATED TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF U.S. HIGHWAY 93 ON THE FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION^{TWS}

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U.S. Highway 93 traverses some of the most ecologically sensitive wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat on the Flathead Indian Reservation. In December 2000, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Montana Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the U.S. Highway 93 Evaro-Polson Project. The MOA identifies the three entities' preferred conceptual roadway improvements including alignment, lane configuration, major design elements and mitigation concepts for 30.8 mi (49.6 km) of the project. The MOA also specifies a process for environmental and design phases of the Highway 93 project. This process, as it relates to wetlands, riparian, and aquatic issues, highway design details, mitigation designs, and the integration of the MOA with federal, state, and tribal environmental regulations, is presented. The MOA also commits the three entities to cooperate in preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for 11.2 mi (18.1 km) of the highway that traverse the Ninepipe glacial pothole wetlands complex. I also present a summary of the current status of the U.S. Highway 93 Ninepipe SEIS and design alternatives being evaluated.