

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

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Planning for the reconstruction of U. S. Highway 93 through the Flathead Indian Reservation resulted in substantial consideration regarding wildlife and wildlife habitat issues. After years of negotiation, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Montana Department of Transportation and the Federal Highways Administration reached agreement on most aspects of the project in 2000. Still to be finalized are reconstruction plans for a ten-mile portion of the highway that passes through the Ninepipe-Kicking Horse wetland complex. The Memorandum of Agreement between the three governments includes provision for the construction of 42 wildlife crossing structures and other design features to enhance wildlife habitat features and maintain habitat linkages. In addition, wetland habitat mitigation will be aimed at avoidance of wetland habitat to the extent possible and acquisition, restoration and ongoing management of wetland habitat. The logic included in planning for these design features and the details of the reconstruction plans, as they apply to wildlife and habitat concerns are presented, as are details of the anticipated designs for wildlife crossings and other mitigation plans.