

MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF KERR DAM ON WILDLIFE WITHIN THE FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION TM

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Kerr dam was initially licensed in the 1930s and began controlling the outflow of Flathead Lake in 1938. A new license was applied for and granted in 1985 contingent on mitigation measures to be determined. Impact studies, damage assessments and an initial mitigation plan were completed in 1990. The Federal Energy Regulation Commission approved a partial settlement in 1998 and a final settlement in January 2001. Documented losses include 1792 acres of wetland and riparian habitats along the shores of Flathead Lake and 985 acres of shoreline habitat along the lower Flathead River lost because of altered lake and river hydrographs, and 624 acres of riparian habitat along the lower Flathead River lost because of flood control. Half of the lost riparian acres (312) were attributable to operations at Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead River and will not be mitigated under the Kerr settlement. A Fish and Wildlife Implementation Strategy was developed that covers program goals, specific mitigation activities, threatened and endangered species, monitoring methods, and an adaptive management strategy. A Habitat Acquisition and Restoration Plan was developed that outlines acquisition priority areas on the Flathead Reservation, criteria to prioritize individual parcels, an accounting system to measure habitat crediting and a structure for restoration and management activities. This paper will give an overview of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe's acquisition plans, management goals, restoration efforts and other activities planned as part of this mitigation effort.