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## **CURRENT STATUS OF EFFORTS TO RESTORE NORTHERN LEOPARD FROGS TO THE FLATHEAD RESERVATION IN NORTHWEST MONTANA**

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One long term goal of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Wildlife Management Program is to restore populations of native wildlife species on the Flathead Indian Reservation. In 2003 we embarked on a project to restore populations of northern leopard

frogs (*Lithobates pipiens*), a species not documented on the Reservation since 1980. Over the next 4 years, 26 egg masses were translocated from populations in eastern Montana to a release site on the Reservation. Although tadpoles developed and metamorphosed successfully, we could not document significant overwintering survival. In 2006 a second release site was chosen in a newly restored wetland along the Little Bitterroot River. A total of 128 egg masses have been translocated to this and surrounding wetlands since 2006. Overwintering survival was suspected in 2007 and confirmed in 2008. Adult leopard frogs were first heard calling at this release site in 2010. A significant milestone in the project was achieved when egg masses were documented in 2013. This represented the first documented breeding of northern leopard frogs on the Flathead Reservation in over 30 years. Since 2013, the number of egg masses documented at our release wetland has increased giving us guarded optimism. Future plans include continuing to translocate egg masses into the Little Bitterroot River release wetland and additional nearby wetlands in an attempt to diversify breeding sites within the localized population. Pilot releases will be made in other areas in an attempt to reach our ultimate goal of 5 breeding populations on the Flathead Indian Reservation.