

# **Tribal Managers Meeting: Aquatic Invasive Species**

A Gathering for Natural Resource Managers from  
Tribes and First Nations of the Crown of the Continent  
Monday, September 25, 2017  
Choteau, MT

*Facilitated by Lea Whitford, Blackfeet Tribe  
Tribal Liaison to the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



The annual meeting of the Crown Tribal Managers convened during the morning of September 25, 2017 in Choteau, Montana. Senator Lea Whitford, Blackfeet Tribe, facilitated. This year the meeting focused on one critical issue: aquatic invasive species. Participants from the Blackfeet, CSKT, Alberta Environment and Parks, the State of Montana, The Wilderness Society, Northfork Preservation Association, Center for Large Landscape Conservation, Flathead Basin Commission, Glacier National Park, the Crown Geotourism Council and other stakeholders attended (see list below).

Whitford opened the meeting by asking first about experiences from the summer and some of the challenges encountered regarding detection of zebra mussels, consistency in inspections, and communication of protocols and practices. With this foundation, the team explored innovative communication approaches and inter-jurisdictional enforcement ideas. Agreed-upon next steps include: a new focus on communication and consistency in messaging; creating understanding around the AIS bill; determining new target groups (e.g.; stand up paddleboards); understanding how to better partner and distribute combined outreach packages widely; and assuring consistency in decontamination and inspection regulations through a shared AIS protocols document.

### **Attending**

Anne Carlson  
Teri Dahle  
Ian Dyson  
Peter Gurche

The Wilderness Society  
Blackfeet ARMP  
Roundtable Leadership Team and Crown Managers' Partnership  
Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent

Eric Hanson	CSKT
AnneMarie Harrod	Northfork Preservation Association
Stephanie Hester	Montana DNRC
Sue Higgins	Center for Large Landscape Conservation (CLLC)
Libby Khumalo	CLLC
Tim McDonald	CSKT
Caryn Miske	Flathead Basin Commission
Jeff Mow	Glacier National Park
Sheena Pate	Crown Geotourism Council
Debo Powers	Northfork Preservation Association
Melly Reuling	CLLC
Mary Riddle	Glacier National Park
Dona Rutherford	Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife
Mary Sexton	Crown Leadership Team
Kimmy Shade	Alberta Environment and Parks
Grace Stonecipher	CLLC
Lea Whitford	Blackfeet Tribe
Germaine White	CSKT
Tom Woolf	Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks

## **NOTES FROM THE SESSION**

### **Summer Observations**

Tom W: There are 36 AIS stations statewide, operating April-October; 60,000 watercraft were inspected; 5 supervisors have been hired especially to handle hotspots, Tiber and Canyon Ferry

Stephanie: Coordinates State Agency AIS Council

Caryn: there are three stations on the Blackfeet Reservations at which three infected boats were detected. Overall the season went well, but intra-jurisdiction communication is an area needing improvement. In Flathead, there is a station in Polson, Kalispell, both offering pre-launch inspection. There is a partnership in these inspections

Dona: The Blackfeet expanded to 4 stations: US2E, US2W, HWY89S, HWY89N (this is the new one). There is good partnership with the Tribal campgrounds. Recently the program was moved from Blackfeet Environment to Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife. There are now 17-20 inspectors, and Jay Monroe is the sole supervisor. Swift reservoir is State owned, but must have inspections on the Reservation. Dona and team met with Pondera CD for an AIS discussion. There is some water sampling with some waters closed.

Tom W: There have been no positive detections so far in scuba (Tiber) and snorkel (Canyon Ferry) inspections. Spawning is very species dependent.

Eric: SKT has a good sampling program.

Tom M: SKT has a draft plan and works with Flathead Basin Commission (FBC) and MT Fish Wildlife and Parks. With situations at Tiber and Canyon Ferry, planning became aggressive, and there was frustration in not being able to participate in State planning process. The SKT Reservation is now closed to motorized boating except on Flathead Lake. The Tribal Council funded an AIS program and worked on legislation with FBC, especially with Tribes' location at the top of the Columbia Basin. Tribe added a new check station on Flathead. The average home on/near the lake has 5 watercraft; SKT has been working with the Flathead Lakers on this issue. The Polson station alone has 4,000-5,000 inspections. The State laws and bills need a lot of clarification.

Germaine W: See CSKT's new AIS website at [csktnomussels.org](http://csktnomussels.org). Other educational materials include: brochures, outreach to chambers and clubs, television and radio PSAs, production of a film for local schools, news ads, interviews in media, outreach to schools, Acquisition of \$200,000 BIA funding for AID training and sampling, and billboards.

Erik: Enforcement is a dire need

All, Ian: Discussion re: jurisdictions, and types of craft (e.g.; introduction of fold-up paddleboards).

Sheena: Geotourism Council tracks the issue and shares information across the border. Is instituting stand-up paddleboard certifications. There is a need to train boarder personnel and share messaging.

Tom W: We need to share information with the Invasive Species Council. FWP has developed outreach with DNRC and to CDs and communities, but more communication is needed.

Tom M: We need consistency with staff communications; some people were not being decontaminated who should have been, can all need to hear about these cases.

Germaine: Agreed. "Communications is an imperfect science"

Ian: People's messages matter – assure community networking to review best practices.

Caryn: FBC does do an end-of-season individual debrief.

### **What Works Well?**

Caryn: City of Whitefish's gates access points and inspection – also at Tahoe; also review City ordinances in other states. We truly need consistency among jurisdictions and regulations.

Kimmy: See the Alberta "Plug N' Pull", Canine Program, Clean and Dry, Don't Let it Loose, Weed Pull programs at <http://aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/invasive-species/aquatic-invasive-species/default.aspx>

Tom M: Assure equipment is dry before entering water body

Kimmy: Note programs that engage Youth and Elders with visuals; focus on transboundary opportunities

Tom M: Grants for FERC mitigation at CSKT have been very helpful

### Next Steps

Mary: Look into Big Sky Watershed Corps assist

Lea: Focus on communication and consistency; create understanding around the AIS bill. Figure out who to target (e.g.; stand up paddleboards), understand how to better partner, distribute our outreach packages widely; assure consistency in decontamination and inspection regulations.

### How Should We Communicate?

- Have DFWP attend all trainings
- Communication about a boat with contamination issues to and across all jurisdictions
- Bring CSKT, NPS, Blackfeet, DFWP, Cities (Whitefish), First Nations, Alberta EP, BC, etc. together to assure a good approach moving forward. FWP call this meeting?
- **Create a document outlining protocols of all jurisdictions**
- Create a working MOU between Tribes and State of Montana
- Share information electronically on some agrees-upon platform
- Share Crown-wide cases studies and precedents
- For DFWP, make Tiber/Canyon Ferry inspection mandatory. Change clean, drain, dry inspection; assure hot water wash to decontaminate.
- Clarify the “Local Only” program to outline the definition of a local boater. Make certain ramps available for them after strict certification. (FWP has hired 4 new wardens and will revisit the locals only ramp program)
- Dona: In reality, there is a resistance to gates. We need to work with all law enforcement (anyone with a radio) to educate and coordinate.

### Multi-Jurisdictional Enforcement

- Enforcement is good at CSKT. All law enforcement groups are informed (Ronan, Polson). Game wardens are also state officers. CSKT also partners with boat vendors to inspect.
- Blackfeet: Enforcement is good but still not enough staffing. There is a hesitancy during pullovers – consider cultural sensitivity training for officers.
- NPS inspects all watercraft including self-propelled: kayaks, paddleboards, canoes, etc. Many are not clean and dry making this inspection a big job. They are all offered an opportunity to wash their vessels depending on history of use. Vendors (boat rental) need to be informed, too.
- We need a mechanism for communicating. We need to participate in a meaningful and productive way.

- We have HB622 for Early Recognition and Rapid Response. Latest focus group includes to CDs, CSKT, Senate member, Rep member, at large member, recreation, industry, land owner/manager. A public meeting regarding a comprehensive statewide monitoring program is set for October 4 in Missoula.
- For this draft emergency plan, tribes need to be in on the ground floor, and part of the planning process in all statewide efforts. State needs to offer a mechanism for all stakeholders to be at the table at the INITIAL meetings.

### **Parting Remarks**

- Tom M and Erik: to implement HB622, there are differing opinions, and we must proceed with some changes. There is lack of revenue in a fire year and funds for FBC may be cut. This is a problem and we must work to assure the work of FBC continues.
- Dona: FBC has made a big difference and we must continue to fund. Also make sure Tribes, are included in any PRE-planning. We also need to learn of all new players on both sides of the border. We need funding for Tribal game wardens. BIA funding is poor in this regard.
- Stephanie: DNRC has been appropriated \$500,000 for two years for AIS. Funds are frozen now, and will likely be available next season.
- Kimmy: Traditional uses are key. Players muse engage with all stakeholders and Nations. Note the Alberta Indigenous Internship Program. Sharing communication programs and protocols is key. 13 Nations should meet 2 days every other month in S. Saskatchewan. This represents 7 basins and 7 AIS plans.
- Thanks to Mike Durglo for his work!
- Let's keep abreast of State budget
- Ask Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent to continue to host these kinds of conversations.
- Remember Tribal legacy of landscape protection and their multi-generational wisdom.