

Water Quality Program History

The Fort Belknap Water Quality (WQ) Program was established in 1994 to monitor Tribal waterbodies impacted by the Zortman/Landusky Mines. Within 8 years, the monitoring expanded to include other pollution impacts from agricultural practices and non-point source pollution. Many monitoring sites have been established throughout the Reservation for all major waterbodies.

Fort Belknap Indian Reservation has 4 Watersheds: Middle Milk, Peoples, Beaver, and Fort Peck Reservoir. There currently are 51 monitoring sites within 26 waterbodies that include a mixture of perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral characteristics, however, there are more waterbodies that need to be assessed to determine future monitoring strategies.

The WQ Program works very closely with the Non-point Source Program in providing assistance, developing monitoring strategies, assessments, sampling implementation, and project proposals to be able to conduct additional and necessary field work. The WQ Program is funded by EPA based on the Clean Water Act, Section 106 requirements.

The WQ Program goals are parallel to the US EPA goals, and understand the critical importance of water as well as the issues that are occurring world wide, and highly encourage everybody to begin caring about our future, and this means taking care of our water resources and not polluting or allowing pollution to enter our sacred and most crucial water resources.

What would we do without water?



Water Quality Program

FORT BELKNAP ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT Water Quality Program

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PROTECT OUR TRIBAL WATERS



Section 106 of the CWA:
Water Pollution Control

Water Quality Program Overview—Section 106 of the CWA

SUMMARY OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT

The Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulating quality standards for surface waters. The basis of the CWA was enacted in 1948 and was called the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, but the Act was significantly reorganized and expanded in 1972. "Clean Water Act" became the Act's common name with amendments in 1972.

Under the CWA, EPA has implemented pollution control programs such as setting wastewater standards for industry. EPA has also developed national water quality criteria recommendations for pollutants in surface waters.

The CWA made it unlawful to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters, unless a permit was obtained:

- EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program controls discharges.
- Point sources are discrete conveyances such as pipes or man-made ditches.
- Individual homes that are connected to a municipal system, use a septic system, or do not have a surface discharge do not need a NPDES permit;
- Industrial, municipal, and other facilities must obtain permits if their discharges go directly to surface waters.

FBIC WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

To understand the cultural, chemical, biological, and physical characteristics of the waters of the FBIC and to provide scientific water quality analysis, monitoring, study design and procedures. The Water Quality Program administers the Clean Water Act Section 106 grant from the EPA.

SHORT TERM GOALS:

Develop improved monitoring strategies to collect the most valuable data that would be used in determining optimal approaches for the protection of tribal waters and Designated Uses.

Continue to ensure WQ staff are well-trained in all aspects of the WQ Program, Clean Water Act requirements, and Permitting processes.

Continue developing Tribal Water Quality Standards for Tribal Council adoption.

LONG TERM GOALS:

Apply for Treatment in a Similar Manner as States (TAS) to administer a CWA Section 303 (c) and Section 401—Water Quality Standards & Water Quality Certifications Program.

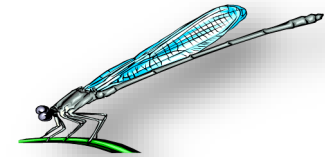
Seek Federal EPA approved Tribal Water Quality Standards to have the regulatory protection in the Clean Water Act.

All Goals are focused on ensuring our tribal waters are protected at the highest level from harmful levels of pollution, for future generations.



HABITAT ASSESSMENTS

Habitat Assessments are done to measure the health of stream banks, stream substrate, aquatic vegetation, and riparian zone vegetation. Habitat Assessments are done during the summer months when vegetation is at its fullest.



BENTHIC MACROINVERTEBRATES

Aquatic insects dwell at the bottom of streams. A Kick-net method is performed to determine biodiversity. Many benthics depend on non-polluted water, which means they are an excellent indicator of various types of pollution.



ELECTROSHOCKING/SURVEYS

Collection of specific fish species is conducted, which the fish tissue is analyzed for metals of concern such as Mercury. Species would include Brook Trout, Wall-eye, Northern Pike, and Catfish.