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Tribal members from the Fort Belknap Indian Community monitor mine pollution in South Big Horn Creek near the Zortman-Landusky mine complex in Montana. (Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Tribes / CC BY 2.0)

Fort Belknap Indian Community Voices Opposition to Zortman-Landusky Settlement

Tribe to file opposition demanding additional accountability

Contacts: Perry Wheeler, Earthjustice, pwheeler@earthjustice.org | May 26, 2026

Breanne Main, Fort Belknap Indian Community, breanne.main@ftbelknap.org

<https://earthjustice.org/press/2026/fort-belknap-indian-community-voices-opposition-to-zortman-landusky-settlement>

Malta, MT — The Fort Belknap Indian Community today voiced strong opposition to a consent decree submitted to the court by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to settle its enforcement action against two miners who illegally mined within the Zortman-Landusky Reclamation Area. The settlement agreement filed on Friday would fine Luke Ployhar, Owen Voigt, and their respective companies \$200,000 to be paid over five years and does not re-

quire them to admit any liability or wrongdoing. Fort Belknap, who will soon file official opposition to the consent decree, argues that the agreement does not hold the miners accountable and that it is premature as the full extent of environmental harm associated with the disturbances and ongoing contamination issues has not yet been fully evaluated.

Fort Belknap Indian Community Voices Opposition to Zortman-Landusky Settlement

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“The Fort Belknap Indian Community opposes the proposed settlement because we do not believe it adequately addresses the seriousness and long-term impacts of the environmental issues associated with the Zortman-Landusky site,” said **President Randall Werk Sr. of the Fort Belknap Indian Community**. “This area lies within our ancestral homelands, and we have a responsibility to protect our lands, waters, cultural resources, and future generations. Significant environmental concerns remain unresolved, water treatment continues indefinitely, and important questions regarding the full scope of environmental damages have not yet been fully evaluated. We believe additional accountability, environmental review, and meaningful tribal involvement are necessary before this matter is resolved.”

Fort Belknap Indian Community intervened in the enforcement action in 2023, arguing that the illegal mining activity in the region exacerbated environmental harm to reservation water sources and in areas of profound cultural significance. The Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes have faced an extreme environmental justice burden from the mines for decades. DEQ originally requested \$512,767 in fines and permanent injunctive relief, and to prohibit Ployhar, Voigt, and their companies from future mining until the disturbances are reclaimed and the penalties are paid. The Tribes argue that the proposed settlement fails to adequately account for the seriousness of the violations, the ongoing environmental concerns associated with the Zortman-Landusky site, and the long-term impacts borne by the Fort Belknap Indian Community.

In 2022, DEQ required Ployhar to complete an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the impacts of mining the already-damaged Zortman site, but later discovered that Ployhar and Voigt had already charged forward without the requisite authorization.

“We oppose this consent decree as it fails to hold the miners accountable for a blatant environmental injustice,” said **Emma Shahabi, associate attorney with Earthjustice’s Northern Rockies Office**. “Mining pollution has devastated the Fort Belknap Indian Community’s natural resources and drinking water for decades and the miners’ actions have only exacerbated that harm. The DEQ must ensure appropriate penalties and remediation for the harm done or the cost of this irresponsible mining will once again fall on the Tribes and Montana taxpayers.”

The Zortman mine is part of the broader Zortman-Landusky mining complex in the Little Rocky Mountains. The site has left a legacy of persistent toxic pollution, disproportionately impacting tribal members’ land and water for decades. The Little Rocky Mountains were once entirely within the boundaries of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, but when gold was discovered in the 1880s, the federal government pressured the Tribes to cede the gold-bearing areas to the United States. The Zortman and Landusky mine sites are currently surrounded on three sides by the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

Earthjustice, Indian Law Resource Center, and Matt Law Office serve as counsel for the Fort Belknap Indian Community in the litigation.

EPA Region 8 – Regional Tribal Operations Committee (RTOC) News from the RTOC Executive Committee

By Jason Walker <jwalker@nwbsoshone.com> | March 27, 2026

The Region 8 Tribal Operations Committee (RTOC) held their annual RTOC meeting at the Region 8 regional office in Denver, CO March 17-19, 2026. The first day started with the Denver singers drum group welcoming the group to the event. Bart Powaukee Northern Ute gave the blessing and welcomed everyone to the RTOC. Jason S. Walker, RTOC/NWBSN Chairman provided opening remarks and welcoming

to the meeting. Cyrus Western, Regional Administrator, provided opening remarks and the commitment of working with the Tribal Nations. (Pictured LtoR: Cyrus Western, US EPA R8 Regional Administrator, Jason S. Walker, Chairman RTOC/NWBSN, Cleveland Murray, Councilman, UNO, Julius Murray, Councilman, UNO.

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NEWS FROM THE RTOC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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partners. In addition to being a longstanding contributor to the Region 8 RTOC, Scott currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the National Tribal Caucus, formerly served as an Air Lead on the National Tribal Air Association, and was a member of the former National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. Scott has been actively involved in long-standing efforts against environmental hazards such as the White Mesa uranium mill, where he monitors impacts on tribal water and community health and supports community action efforts. Scott's passionate and sincere dedication to his environmental and Tribal sovereignty work is an inspiration and model to his EPA and Tribal colleagues. (Pictured: Cyrus Western, Scott Clow, UMU and Jason S. Walker, NWBSN)

2026 Don Aragon Award for Scott Clow

For more than 30 years, Scott Clow has been a tireless advocate for environmental protection, environmental justice, sustainable energy development and tribal sovereignty. Scott studied environmental science and chemistry at Lafayette College before joining Ute Mountain Ute Tribe's Environmental Programs Department as a water technician in 1996. Scott was promoted to Environmental Director in 2008 and currently leads the Tribe's transition to clean energy, overseeing projects like the 1 MW Towaoc Community Solar Project with community electrical bill offsets, the White Mesa Solar Homes Initiative and two Commercial Solar Power Farms which involve outside



EPA Launches PFAS Out Initiative to Help Proactively Address PFAS in Drinking Water

Contact Information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov) | April 14, 2026

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-launches-pfas-out-initiative-help-proactively-address-pfas-drinking-water>

WASHINGTON — Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Assistant Administrator for Water Jess Kramer launched a new initiative called PFAS OUTreach—or PFAS OUT. This new effort proactively works with communities and water systems to reduce exposure to PFOA and PFOS in drinking water, years ahead of compliance with federal regulatory requirements. The initiative is central to EPA's commitment to protecting Americans from PFAS contamination and advancing President Trump's Make America

Healthy Again agenda.

“Protecting Americans from exposure to PFAS in drinking water is a priority for EPA. That's why I'm thrilled to launch the PFAS OUT initiative to help water systems accelerate actions to reduce exposure to PFOA and PFOS,” said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Jess Kramer. “These contaminants are well studied, their health impacts are well understood.

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EPA Launches PFAS Out Initiative to Help Proactively Address PFAS in Drinking Water

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Through PFAS OUT, EPA will help protect public health by—for the very first time—proactively engaging with water systems, states, and other partners to address drinking water contamination.”

PFAS OUT is a proactive outreach initiative to provide information on resources, including funding and technical assistance, to drinking water systems with PFAS challenges. This outreach will provide practical, interactive location-specific resources, including webinars and information, on how to access funding and technical assistance to address PFAS.

EPA aims to directly engage about 3,000 drinking water systems nationwide that have known challenges with PFOA and PFOS, ensuring they are aware of the support available to them (approximately 2% of water systems). All water systems will be able to access

PFASOUT resources and can secure technical assistance through EPA’s Real WaterTA.

Small, rural, and disadvantaged water systems often have fewer resources to navigate complex contamination challenges. PFAS OUT is specifically designed to ensure these communities are not left behind, helping every affected system reduce exposure now and position itself for full compliance with enforceable drinking water standards in the coming years.

This initiative reflects EPA's commitment to cooperative federalism, a core pillar of Administrator Zeldin's Powering the Great American Comeback Initiative, by working hand-in-hand with states, utilities, and local partners to deliver durable, science-based solutions that protect public health.

Commodity Issuing Calendar

Calendar is subject to change at any time

June 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 CLOSED Preparing for State Review	2 CLOSED Fy26 State Review	3 CLOSED Fy26 State Review Fresh Truck	4 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	5 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	6
7	8 CLOSED Monthly U.S.D.A. Truck Unloading and counting inventory	9 CLOSED Restocking and organizing food	10 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30 Fresh Truck	11 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	12 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	13
14	15 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	16 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	17 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -3:00 Fresh Truck Inventory 3-5	18 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	19 CLOSED Juneteenth HOLIDAY	20
21	22 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	23 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	24 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30 Fresh Truck	25 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	26 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	27
28	29 8:30 -12:00 1:00 -4:30	30 CLOSED End of the month reports.	FDPIR – Commodity Program Mailing address: 656 Agency Main St Physical Address: 260 New Town Dr Harlem, MT 59526 Phone Numbers: 406-353-8407 / 8403 / 8487 Fax Number: 406-353-2546			

State Contact--Comment & Concerns: Tina Wagner 406.447-4263



Youth Wellness Task Force Promotes Earth Day Stewardship

By Michaela "Kayla" Horn, Family Intervention Specialist I - Tiwahe Initiative

In celebration of Earth Day 2026, the Tiwahe Youth Wellness Task Force took action to help keep their communities clean and beautiful. Youth members came together to paint large garbage cans with colorful designs and positive messages encouraging community members to dispose of their trash properly and take pride in their surroundings.

After completing the project, the painted garbage cans were placed throughout the community in areas where litter is commonly seen. The project not only helped provide convenient places for trash disposal but also raised awareness about the importance of environmental responsibility. Through teamwork, creativity, and community involvement, the Youth Wellness Task Force demonstrated their commitment to protecting the environment and making a positive impact for future generations.

The Tiwahe Youth Wellness Task Force is a community-driven initiative focused on promoting the overall well-being of youth by encouraging healthy lifestyles, cultural connection, and positive personal development. Through a variety of activities such as educational workshops, cultural events, and skill-building opportunities, the task force provides a safe and supportive environment where youth can grow, build confidence, and strengthen their sense of identity. The



program emphasizes the importance of community involvement, leadership, and creating strong support systems for young people.

The task force is supported by local advisors who serve as mentors and points of contact within their communities. Agency advisor Kayla Rising Sun (406-353-8393), Hays/Lodgepole advisor Savana Doney (406-353-8386), and Dodson advisor Amber Belgard (406-353-8367) are available to help youth and families get connected and involved. Individuals are encouraged to reach out to the advisor in their respective area to learn more about upcoming activities and opportunities to participate in the Tiwahe Youth Wellness Task Force.



Keystone XXL makes its debut in northeastern Montana

By Shannon James

This spring, many Montanans experienced a familiar and unwelcome sense of déjà vu. A new tar sands pipeline proposal — the Bridger Pipeline, often dubbed “Keystone 2.0” — has surfaced, presenting the same risks, the same promises, and the same troubling lack of transparency that defined the fight over the Keystone XL pipeline.

The Bridger Pipeline would carry crude oil from Alberta, Canada, south through eastern Montana into Wyoming, terminating in Guernsey. The pipeline’s preferred route would cross the US-Canada border into Montana in Phillips county. While the company initially refused to disclose the type of oil it plans to transport, it later confirmed what many suspected: this pipeline is designed to carry tar sands oil, one of the dirtiest and most environmentally destructive fuel sources on the planet. The company also noted it plans to find a partner to build a subsequent line to either Cushing, Oklahoma, or to the Gulf Coast.

Montana stands to bear the brunt of this project. Unlike Keystone XL, the majority of this pipeline would run through our state, placing our land, water, and communities directly in harm’s way — all for the benefit of filling the pockets of big oil.

And the risks are not abstract. Honor the Earth, an international organization focused on Tribal sovereignty and environmental justice, hosted a power hour in April to educate people about the proposed project and help prepare public comments during the scoping period.

The pipeline could transport up to 1.13 million barrels of oil per day, surpassing Keystone XL’s capacity. Yet critical details including the pipeline’s full route, end destination, and ultimate use of the oil were omitted from the application submitted to state and federal agencies. Without this information, regulators and the public are being asked to evaluate a project without understanding its full scope or consequences.

Transporting tar sands oil introduces additional dangers. Tar sands contain bitumen, a thick, heavy, and

viscous form of petroleum. This raw bitumen must be mixed with lighter petroleum products to make it flow through pipelines. The consequences of a spill are higher because bitumen can sink in water and mix with sediments, making cleanup more challenging and more expensive.

Spills are not hypothetical. Pipeline failures are inevitable over time. True Companies, the parent company behind Bridger, has already been responsible for major incidents, including a 50,000-gallon spill into Montana’s Yellowstone River in 2015 and another 45,000-gallon spill in Wyoming in 2022. For a state whose economy depends heavily on agriculture, hunting, and fishing, even a single spill from the Bridger pipeline could have devastating and long-lasting consequences for both our economy and the health of our waters and wildlife.

The proposed route only heightens these concerns. The preferred alignment would cross three major rivers in Montana, the Yellowstone, the Missouri, and the West Poplar, and intersect streams and waterways more than 150 times on federal lands alone. These are not just lines on a map; they are lifelines for communities, farms, and wildlife.

The construction methods themselves carry risks. The project would rely heavily on horizontal directional drilling (HDD), a technique often marketed as less disruptive but far from risk-free. HDD can result in “frac-outs.” Frac-outs from horizontal drilling are not caused by fracking, but are uncontrolled releases of drilling fluids that can pollute waterways, smother aquatic life, and migrate unpredictably underground.

Beyond water risks, the pipeline threatens air quality, public health, and fragile ecosystems. Construction would bring increased emissions, heavy equipment, and widespread land disturbance. Sensitive habitats would be disrupted, and already vulnerable species — including whooping cranes, northern long-eared bats, pallid sturgeon, and sage grouse — could face further decline.

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Keystone XXL makes its debut in northeastern Montana

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The pipeline could also have profound impacts on Tribal Nations. The pipeline corridor cuts through areas of cultural, historical, and ongoing importance, including unceded hunting territories. These are not just environmental concerns, they are issues of sovereignty, heritage, and treaty rights.

And looming over all of this is the climate crisis.

Expanding tar sands infrastructure is fundamentally incompatible with any serious effort to address climate change. This project would drive increased oil extraction, transportation, and combustion resulting in significant greenhouse gas emissions at every stage. Tar sands crude is especially carbon-intensive, requiring more energy to extract and refine than conventional oil. At a time when communities across Montana are already experiencing the impacts of drought, wildfire, and shifting ecosystems, this project moves us in exactly the wrong direction.

Despite the magnitude of these risks, the project is being fast-tracked. In April, the Trump Administration approved a Presidential Permit for the pipeline's international crossing without consulting Tribal Nations or conducting an environmental review. Meanwhile, the Bureau of Land Management and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality are moving forward with an environmental review process that remains incomplete, even as key project details are still being developed.

Agencies have indicated there may be limited oppor-

tunities for public input, including a short comment period on the forthcoming draft Environmental Impact Statement. But meaningful public participation requires more than checking a procedural box — it requires early Tribal consultation, transparency, time, and a genuine willingness to consider the full range of impacts.

Montanans have been down this road before. We know what is at stake.

The Bridger Pipeline is all risk and no reward for our state. It asks us to endanger our rivers, our livelihoods, our wildlife, and our climate so that the most dangerous type of oil can pass through Montana on its way to distant markets. We are being treated as a corridor, not a community.

We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past. Montanans and Tribal Nations deserve a full and honest accounting of this project's impacts, robust public engagement, upfront Tribal consultation, and decision-making that prioritizes the health of our land, cultural resources, and people over corporate profit.



Shannon James

Campaigns & Advocacy Director

She/Her

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🌐 www.meic.org

Earth Day 2026—An Honor for Mother Earth and Remembrance of a Teacher

By Kermit Snow Jr, BTRP Compliance Officer

Wahey Neetine.

Hello, my relatives, and welcome to another remembrance of honoring Mother Earth. We begin our annual Earth Day activities with the schools of Harlem, Hays-Lodge Pole, Dodson, and the Immersion School on this beautiful day at Snake Butte.

Sadly, we embark on this day without one of our beloved teachers, Cathy Bear. She recently passed

away and has left a tremendous void in both the teaching community and the Fort Belknap community. I believe she had the privilege of teaching at all three area schools on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Throughout the years of



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Earth Day 2026- An Honor for Mother Earth and Remembrance of a Teacher

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our Earth Day events, you could tell she truly loved her students and her profession. She had a wonderful smile, vibrant energy, and a determination to make sure her students learned.

I remember when I was the Indoor Air Quality Coordinator years ago and brought up my good friend, Mansel Nelson, from the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP) at Northern Arizona University (NAU), to conduct indoor air quality training. We provided training for various Tribal departments, Housing, and all the local schools, including Harlem, Hays-Lodge Pole, Dodson, and the Immersion School. At that time, I believe Cathy was teaching at Lodge Pole

Elementary School. You could see how much she believed in educating her students and ensuring they paid attention to what was being taught. She believed in respect

and discipline, values she worked hard to instill in her students.

That is what made her stand out and not only made me like her but also gave me a tremendous amount of respect for her. She wanted her students to become respectful, not only in the classroom and toward one another, but also to prepare them for the next phase of their lives beyond school.

So, this day is not only about honoring Mother Earth but also about honoring Cathy Bear and her love for her students and the profession of teaching.

Although we only had ten stations this year, we made the most of them and did what we could to help our students learn while enjoying this beautiful, sunny day at Snake Butte. We offered a variety of activities at each station. Of course, you cannot get started without registration, and that was taken care of by our Administrative Assistant, Lonette Blackcrow, who also provided each student with a bag of goodies.

It seemed like we had barely started setting up our stations when some of the school buses began arriving. That gave the students some free time to run around, mingle, and enjoy the beautiful morning while we finished our preparations. I think one of the best parts of this day is seeing the students running around and enjoying the outdoors—Mother Earth's playground.

Once all the students had



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Earth Day 2026- An Honor for Mother Earth and Remembrance of a Teacher

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registered, we sent them on their way to visit each station. They learned about upcycling through recycling by building a plant tower with the Brownfields Program and learned about nutrition and healthy foods from the Tribal Health Nutritionist. They learned about micro-metals in streams and how to retrieve them using magnets from the Non-Point Source Program, and they learned about medicinal and natural plants from TIWAHE.

We then broke for lunch. The students enjoyed sack lunches provided by their respective schools, while the presenters and staff shared a potluck-style meal.

The afternoon began with lessons about "Water Is Life" through a cornhole activity presented by Water Quality, as well as a nature hike around Snake Butte. The students learned about native and invasive species from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and about seed pods from MSU Extension. Tobacco Prevention taught the students about the dangers of vaping and commercial tobacco products.

The students also learned about the work of the Montana Environmental Information Center while participating in games of tug-of-war against each other and even against Derf Johnson. The CHRs were also present to discuss their program and provide assistance if needed.

All in all, it was a great day. The weather cooperated, the activities kept the students engaged, the food was excellent, and the environment

provided a wonderful setting for everyone to enjoy.

We would like to thank all the presenters for sharing their knowledge and providing educational activities for the students. We would also like to thank all the vendors, both local and from Havre, for providing prizes for our wonderful students to take home. We could not make this event successful without your support and generosity.

Again, I would like to dedicate this day to honoring a great teacher, Cathy Bear, who will be deeply missed.

We hope to see you all next year at beautiful Mission Canyon in Hays, Montana.

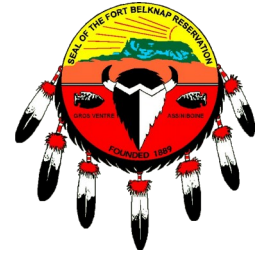
AHO

**See back cover for list of Vendors/People who provided gifts/prizes for all the students.*



Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Launches Assessment and Planning Project in Hays

Submitted by Shelby Main, NPS Coordinator



Mission Creek Restoration Initiative Seeks Community Input For Watershed Improvement Efforts

The Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department's Water Quality and Nonpoint Source Program is beginning a new community-focused initiative to assess and restore wetlands, streams, fisheries, and natural habitats within the Hays area. The project will focus on Mission Creek and associated wetland systems throughout the Peoples Creek Watershed, with the goal of identifying opportunities for future restoration, conservation, recreation, and habitat enhancement projects. Environmental staff will conduct a comprehensive assessment of watershed conditions to better understand how water, wildlife, vegetation, and surrounding landscapes interact throughout the area. Information gathered during this process will help guide future restoration planning efforts and support funding opportunities that benefit both the environment and the community.

Understanding the Watershed



Abandoned beaver dams near Zortman/Landusky Mines reclamation area on reservation lands.

Assessment activities may include stream and wetland evaluations, hydrological and water-flow studies, vegetation and wildlife habitat surveys, soil and erosion assessments, beaver habitat evaluations, fish habitat assessments, watershed analysis, and community outreach efforts.

Mission Creek and the Peoples Creek Watershed play an important role in supporting water quality, wildlife habitat, fisheries, and riparian ecosystems throughout the region. Understanding the current condition of these resources is the first step toward developing effective restoration strategies that can provide lasting environmental and community benefits.

Exploring Restoration Opportunities

As part of the planning effort, the Nonpoint Source Program will evaluate several innovative and nature-based restoration approaches that may help improve watershed health and resilience. Areas of interest may include the following techniques:

Beaver mimicry structures, which are designed to replicate some of the natural functions of beaver dams. These structures can help slow water movement, retain moisture on the landscape, improve wetland conditions, increase groundwater recharge, and create valuable wildlife habitat.

Snow catchment and water retention systems

The project will also explore techniques that can capture seasonal snowfall and runoff, helping to increase water availability in creeks, wetlands, and riparian areas throughout the year. These techniques can be particularly beneficial during dry periods by supporting more consistent stream flows.

Additional planning efforts may include evaluating **road crossings and drainage infrastructure** to identify

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Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Launches Assessment and Planning Project in Hays

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opportunities for reducing sediment runoff into waterways. Improved road crossing design can help protect water quality, reduce erosion, and improve the long-term resilience of transportation infrastructure.

Restoration planning will also consider opportunities to improve **stream connectivity and fish passage** throughout the watershed. Reconnecting aquatic habitats can help support healthy fisheries and allow fish to repopulate and other aquatic species to move more freely through Mission Creek and Peoples Creek systems using traditional permaculture techniques.



Road near Zortman/Landusky reclamation area on reservation lands contributing sedimentation pollution in creeks

Other potential projects may include: wetland enhancement, floodplain reconnection, riparian restoration, native vegetation improvements, and habitat restoration efforts that support wildlife, fisheries, and culturally important natural resources. Traditional practices in all areas will be explored and utilized to minimize spending and increase active restoration efforts; utilizing manpower over machine & equipment production to decrease ground altering activities within the headwaters and the Peoples Creek Watershed.

Why Restoration Matters

Healthy watersheds benefit everyone. Functioning wetlands and streams help filter pollutants, reduce erosion, recharge groundwater, store floodwaters, improve drought resilience, and provide habitat for fish and wildlife.

By restoring natural water processes and strengthening ecosystem health, the project aims to support long-term environmental sustainability while preserv-

ing the cultural, recreational, ecological, and economic values that are important to the Fort Belknap community.

The information gathered during this assessment will serve as a foundation for future restoration projects and environmental investments throughout the watershed.

Community Voices Are Essential

The success of any watershed restoration effort depends on local knowledge and community participation. Landowners, shareholders, residents, and interested stakeholders are encouraged to share their observations, concerns, ideas, and vision for the future of Mission Creek and surrounding wetlands.



One single beaver dam actively holding water for Mission Creek

Get Involved

The Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department invites all interested community members to participate in this important effort to protect and enhance local natural resources.



Photo captures wildland fire near Zortman/Landusky reclamation area

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Together, we can build a healthier, more resilient watershed that supports clean water, healthy fisheries, thriving wildlife habitat, and future generations of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

Community members can contribute by:

- Sharing local knowledge and historical information about the watershed
- Identifying areas of concern or restoration opportunities
- Suggesting recreation, fisheries, and habitat improvement projects
- Volunteering for future restoration activities
- Providing feedback on community priorities

Staying informed about project developments provides that every perspective helps strengthen the planning process and ensures that future restoration efforts reflect the needs and values of the community.



“Devils Kitchen” recreational area in need of vegetation



Alder Gulch water now flows through Zortman rather than Fort Belknap

Supporting Wildfire Resilience and Forest Restoration

As part of the long-term watershed restoration vision, the project may also explore opportunities to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk throughout the Mission Creek and Peoples Creek Watersheds.

Healthy forests play a critical role in protecting water resources, maintaining wildlife habitat, reducing erosion, and supporting resilient ecosystems.

Potential future projects may include forest fuel reduction treatments, strategic thinning of overly dense vegetation, removal of hazardous fuels, prescribed fire planning, riparian forest restoration, and post-fire rehabilitation efforts where appropriate.

These practices can help reduce the severity of wildfires while promoting healthier forest conditions and improving watershed function.

In addition to protecting natural resources, these efforts may support broader Tribal goals of strengthening local capacity for natural resource management and expanding opportunities for community involvement in stewardship activities.

By integrating watershed restoration, habitat enhancement, and wildfire resilience planning, the Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department seeks to support a comprehensive landscape approach that benefits water quality, fisheries, wildlife, forests, and future generations.



“July Fire 2021” picture shows entire Peoples Creek Watershed headwaters area has potential NPS pollution damages and need for restoration efforts.

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Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Launches Assessment and Planning Project in Hays

(Continued from page 12)

Future restoration planning may also identify opportunities for increased Tribal leadership and participation in forest management activities, helping ensure that land stewardship decisions reflect local priorities, traditional knowledge, and long-term community interests.

About the Fort Belknap Nonpoint Source Program

The Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department's Nonpoint Source (NPS) Program works to protect, restore, and enhance the water resources, wetlands, watersheds, fisheries, forests, and natural habitats of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Serving the Peoples Creek Watershed and other watershed systems throughout the Reservation, the program focuses on reducing nonpoint source pollution, improving water quality, restoring ecosystem function, and promoting long-term environmental stewardship through community-driven conservation efforts.

Our mission is to develop and implement sustainable watershed management solutions that protect Tribal natural resources, strengthen ecological resilience, preserve cultural values, and improve environmental conditions for future generations. Through collaboration with Tribal programs, landowners, shareholders, federal and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and community volunteers, the program works to address environmental challenges while creating opportunities for restoration, education, and resource conservation.

The Nonpoint Source Program actively seeks partnerships, technical assistance, and funding opportunities to support watershed restoration, wetland enhancement, stream and fish passage improvements, beaver-based restoration, wildfire resilience and forest health initiatives, erosion and sediment control projects, water quality monitoring, environmental education, climate adaptation planning, recreation development, and habitat restoration efforts throughout the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

For more information, partnership opportunities, or project collaboration, please contact:

Shelby Main

Nonpoint Source Coordinator

Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department

Email: shelby.main@ftbelknap.org

Phone: (406) 353-8416



Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department

Circle Speaker Newsletter Volume 30, Issue 4

(July–September, 2026)

Deadline for Articles:

Friday, September 4th, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.

Articles can be emailed to: lonettebc@ftbelknap.org

To allow time for editing and layout of the newsletter, articles must be submitted on time in order to be considered for publication. Articles received after this deadline will be considered for the following issue. All articles submitted are subject to review and approval.

Radon Resources for Tribal Communities

By Tiffany Belser, Director, Nationwide Health Promotions | Infectious Disease and Immunization | American Lung Association

The National Radon Action Plan's workgroup focused on increasing awareness of radon risk and control strategies has created a list of radon resources to share with tribal communities. As you may know, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer and poses a significant health risk to many communities across the United States. While radon can be found in any home or building, certain populations may be more at-risk to the health impacts of radon due to geographic, structural, and socioeconomic factors. Raising awareness about the risks of radon can help

reduce impact and save lives.

The [National Radon Action Plan](#) (NRAP) serves as a framework to guide nationwide action to eliminate preventable lung cancer from radon in the U.S. by expanding protections for all communities and buildings. NRAP is led by organizations who develop and implement coordinated plans to reduce radon risks. NRAP recognizes that trusted messengers like you are essential for helping to deliver effective radon health risk education within the community.

Please consider sharing the following radon resources with tribal communities within your network. If you have any questions about resources or other initiatives within the National Radon Action Plan, please contact Tiffany Belser at Tiffany.Belser@Lung.org.

American Lung Association

- [Radon | American Lung Association](#)
- [Radon and Lung Health](#) (90 second educational video)
- [Radon Reduction Toolkit for Healthcare Providers](#)

California Department of Public Health

- [Radon Resources to Support Tribal Initiatives](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [Radon | CDC](#)
- [Raising Radon Awareness in Tribal Communities](#)
- [Podcast: Impact of Uranium and Radon in Tribal Communities](#)
- [Radon Activity Book](#)
- [Radon Toolkit](#)
- [Social Media Toolkit](#)

Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors

- [Guidance for Testing with Consumer Digital Radon Monitors](#)
- [Radon Leaders Saving Lives](#)

Environmental Protection Agency

- [Radon | US EPA](#)
- [Radon Publications, Webinars, and Videos](#)
- [Indoor Air Quality in Tribal Communities](#)
- [Tribal Indoor Air Quality Training and Resource Directory](#)
- [Tribal Air and Climate Resources](#)
- [Indoor Air Quality Tribal Partners Program](#)
- [Tribal Indoor Air Quality Programs in the Spotlight](#)

National Tribal Air Association

- [Indoor Air Quality | National Tribal Air Association](#)

Northern Arizona University

- [Indoor Air Quality in Tribal Communities | ITEP](#)
- [Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals](#)
- [Radon Video Series](#)

Tribal Healthy Homes Network

- [Radon | TTHN](#)

Tiwahe FUN PASSPORT

EARN FREE FAIR WRISTBANDS!

Attend Tiwahe Family Activities,
Collect Stamps & Earn Rewards!

HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

- ✓ Sign In with Parent & Child
- ✓ Attend Tiwahe Activities
- ✓ Collect *Stamps* in Your Passport
- ✓ Work Together as a Family!



EARN REWARDS!

◆ 10 Points:

1 FREE
YOUTH WRISTBAND.



◆ 15 Points:

WRISTBANDS
FOR YOUTH & PARENT!



Collect Points by Attending:



Cultural
Classes



Family
Fun Events



Wellness
Activities



Community
Projects

Havre - Great Northern Fair
July 15th - 19th, 2026

Morgan Horn
406-353-8345

Fort Belknap Indian Community
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DEPARTMENT
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Find our newsletters on <https://ftbelknap.org/forms%2Fdocuments> (EPA)

Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department

APPRECIATES YOU!!

Thank you to the following Vendors/People who provided gifts/prizes for all the students during the 2026 Fort Belknap Earth Day Fair at Snake Butte Spring, Harlem, Montana—April 22, 2026

Albertson's—Harlem

Catherine Aragon—Fort Belknap

Dairy Queen—Havre

E-Z Mart—Harlem

Harlem Clothing Co.—Harlem

Kermit Snow Jr—Fort Belknap

Katrese Hammond—Fort Belknap

Liz McClain—Harlem

Margaret Werk—Hays

Shelby Main—Fort Belknap

Short-Term Loan—Fort Belknap

TERC—Fort Belknap

Tribal Health—Fort Belknap

Walmart Supercenter—Havre



Disclaimer: Articles and newsletter content in the Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Circle Speaker Aaniiih & Nakoda Environmental Newsletter are not the official views or opinions of the Fort Belknap Indian Community or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and are not endorsed by either entity.

Mother Earth Takes Care of Us.

Let's Take Care of Her!