Volume 29
Issue 2

Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department

Circle Speaker

JANUARY—MARCH, 2025

Aaniiih & Nakoda Environmental Newsletter

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

Milk River Project

The Lifeline of the Hi-Line

https://www.milkriverproject.com/

What is the Milk River Project?

The Milk River Project is beyond remarkable. With over a century of successful operation, this engineering feat diverts water from the St. Mary River on the Blackfeet Reservation, flowing through northern Montana and Glacier National Park, and across southern Alberta, Canada. This project is a testament to the intricate canals, siphons, and diversions designed for a seamless flow of water. The Milk River Project is essential to fulfill Montana's water demands, catering to eight irrigation districts, Reclamation pump contracts, private contracts, the Blackfeet and Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, and other living communities along the Milk River. The project has created numerous recreational opportunities for the surrounding inhabitants, contributing to the ecosystem's prosperity and wildlife habitats. With such a prominent and successful project, the Milk River Project has proven to be a symbol of limitless possibilities.

Benefits to Montana's Economy

How the Milk River Project has been providing to Northern Montana for over 100 years.

18,000
Residents provided drinking water

1,000,000
People fed annually

140,000
Acres of irrigated lands

700+
Farms

729
River miles of wildlife habitat and recreation

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

From Our Social Media

The Milk River Project is in Montana

Facebook tells us it's World Compliment Day, and we couldn't let it pass without giving a huge shoutout to the incredible crews working onsite and the dedicated teams behind the scenes pushing the replacement of the St. Mary Siphon Project forward. Your hard work and commitment keep this project moving—thank you for everything you do!

Enjoy this bird's-eye view from last week—progress looks great from every angle!

Fun Fact Friday!

This week's highlight from the St. Mary Siphon Project is all about the Siphon Inlet, which is gearing up for a major concrete pour for Sletten Construction Company starting the week of March 10th!

The first pour lift will form the bottom perimeter section, reaching 16 feet high. This phase alone will require approximately 400 cubic yards of concrete and 118,000 pounds of rebar—a massive undertaking!

The entire structure will be poured in three separate lifts, ensuring strength and stability for this critical piece of infrastructure for years to come.

Exciting progress continues on the hill at the St. Mary Siphon site! Pro-Pipe Corporation and NW Construction crews are making steady strides—one pipe at a time. With warmer days ahead, NW Construction is ramping back up with river restoration, setting grades to the bridge, backfilling, and reviving the surrounding roads and landscapes.

According to Pro-Pipe, a total of 114 joints have been welded to date. With each weld covering 180 linear feet and requiring 40 pounds of welding rod, this amounts to approximately 20,520 linear feet of weld passes—nearly 3.9 miles—and a total of 4,560 pounds of welding rod used. It's adding up quickly!

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Montana Area Office

St. Mary Siphon Briefing

February 2025 Update

Project Briefing

NW Construction has installed all pipe on the west side of the bridge up to the inlet and are installing the pipes on the east side of the bridge. 120 of the 190 sections of pipe has been installed.

The inlet structure rebar is being tied and the first significant placement of concrete will be the week of March 10th.

Sletten Construction is installing the girders for the bridge crossing. Girder installation is expected to be completed next month and the final concrete placements for the backwall will follow.

River restoration will begin early next month.

Schedule

- Completed Tasks
  - Project Start: June 17, 2024
  - Qualified EXM Determination: July 3, 2024
  - FONSI: July 31, 2024
  - Biological Opinion: August 2, 2024
  - Bridge and Pipe Removal: August 29, 2024
  - Start of Pipe Production: September 3, 2024
  - Pipe Delivery: October 16, 2024
- Upcoming Milestones
  - Girder Installation: March 2025
  - Bridge Complete: May 2025
  - Inlet/Outlet Construction: June 2025
  - Project Completion: September 2025

Operations

2025 Water Supply

- Irrigation water supply projections range from none to a partial irrigation through a portion of July
- The supply will depend on natural runoff from snow and rain in the Milk River Basin. Runoff will be stored in Fresno and Nelson reservoirs prior to irrigation.
- Some storage in Fresno will be reserved for municipalities to ensure a minimum release of 40 cfs. The reserved storage target will vary depending on the certainty of St. Mary Siphon completion and time of year.
- Fort Belknap Indian Irrigation Project natural flow and storage rights will be released from Fresno until depleted.

Costs

Estimated cost of $70 million to replace both St. Mary ($51.6M) and Halls Coulee ($18.4M) Siphons.

- Reclamation:
  - Aging Infrastructure Account: $36,351,000
  - Disaster Supplement: $33,649,000
- River Restoration:
  - NRCS EWP Grant (MRJBOC): $876,571
  - DNRC RDG Grant (MRJBOC): $100,000

Task based project budget summary is available on request:

- Total Baseline Project Estimate = $70,000,000
- Total Project Spent = $29,450,000
- % Spent = 42%

Project Team

Project Stakeholders:
Bureau of Reclamation
Milk River Joint Board of Control
Blackfeet Tribe
State of Montana

Project Sponsors:
Ryan Newman (BOR)
Wade Jones (Joint Board)

Technical Team Lead:
Stan Schweissing (HDR)

Primary Contractors:
Sletten Construction
NW Construction

Project Managers:
Steven Darlinton (BOR)
Jennifer Patrick (Joint Board)

Website: Milk River Project

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Lee M. Zeldin Sworn in as 17th EPA Administrator

Contact Information EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov) | January 30, 2025
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/lee-m-zeldin-sworn-17th-epa-administrator

WASHINGTON – On January 29, 2025, Lee Zeldin was sworn in as the 17th Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Administrator Zeldin will work closely with the dedicated career officials at the agency to fulfill the agency's mission to protect human health and the environment.

Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh swears in Lee Zeldin as EPA Administrator

"It is my honor to serve as the 17th Environmental Protection Agency Administrator. Under President Trump's leadership, we will take great strides to defend every American's access to clean air, clean water, and clean land. We will maintain and expand the gold standard of environmental stewardship and conservation that President Trump set forth in his first administration while also prioritizing economic prosperity. I look forward to working with the agency's talented staff and scientists to deliver results for the American people. It's time to get to work," **said EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin**.

Administrator Zeldin has dedicated his life to public service. He is currently in his 22nd year in the United States military, having deployed to Iraq in 2006 with the Army's Elite 82nd Airborne Division and continues to serve as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve. He served in the New York State Senate from 2011-2014 and later represented New York's 1st Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives from 2015-2023.

During his eight years in Congress, Zeldin worked across party lines to preserve the Long Island Sound and Plum Island. He supported key legislation that became historic, bipartisan success stories like the Great American Outdoors Act and Save our Seas Act to clean up plastics from our oceans. He also led the fight for Sea Grant, combated per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water, voted for the Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act, and supported clean energy projects on Long Island.

At just 23, Lee became the youngest attorney in New York State at the time.

Born and raised in Suffolk County, New York, Lee and his wife Diana are proud parents to their twin daughters, Mikayla and Arianna.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin Announces EPA's "Powering the Great American Comeback" Initiative

Contact Information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov) | February 4, 2025
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-administrator-lee-zeldin-announces-epas-powering-great-american-comeback

WASHINGTON – On February 4, 2025, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin announced the agency's Powering the Great American Comeback Initiative, to achieve the agency's mission while energizing the greatness of the American economy. This plan outlines the agency's priorities under the leadership of President Trump and Administrator Zeldin. The newly announced Powering the Great American Comeback initiative consists of five pillars that will guide the EPA's work over the first 100 days and beyond:

Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American

"Every American should have access to clean air, land, and water. I will ensure the EPA is fulfilling its mission to protect human health and the environment. In his first term, President Trump advanced conservation, reduced toxic emissions in the air, and cleaned up hazardous sites, while fostering economic growth for families across the country. We remain committed to these priorities in this administration, as well as ensuring emergency response efforts are helping Americans get back on their feet in the quickest and safest way possible. We will do so while remaining good stewards of tax dollars and ensuring that every penny spent is going towards advancing this mission," said Administrator Zeldin.

Pillar 2: Restore American Energy Dominance

"Pursuing energy independence and energy dominance will cut energy costs for everyday Americans who are simply trying to heat their homes and put gas in their cars. This will also allow our nation to stop relying on energy sources from adversaries, while lowering costs for hardworking middle-income families, farmers, and small business owners. I look forward to working with the greatest minds driving American innovation, to ensure we are producing and developing the cleanest energy on the planet," said Administrator Zeldin.

Pillar 3: Permitting Reform, Cooperative Federalism, and Cross-Agency Partnership

"Any business that wants to invest in America should be able to do so without having to face years-long, uncertain, and costly permitting processes that deter them from doing business in our country in the first place. It will be important for the EPA to work with our partners at the state and federal levels to ensure projects are being approved and companies can invest billions of dollars into our nation. Streamlining these processes, while partnering with businesses to follow the necessary steps to safeguard our environment, will incentivize investment into our economy and create American jobs," said Administrator Zeldin.

Pillar 4: Make the United States the Artificial Intelligence Capital of the World

"As we rapidly advance into this new age of AI, it is important that the United States lead the world in this field. Those looking to invest in and develop AI should be able to do so in the U.S., while we work to ensure data centers and related facilities can be powered and operated in a clean manner with American-made energy. Under President Trump's leadership, I have no doubt that we will become the AI capital of the world," said Administrator Zeldin.

Pillar 5: Protecting and Bringing Back American Auto Jobs

"Our American auto industry is hurting because of the burdensome policies of the past. Under President Trump, we will bring back American auto jobs and invest in domestic manufacturing to revitalize a quintessential American industry. We will partner with leaders to streamline and develop smart regulations that will allow for American workers to lead the great comeback of the auto industry," said Administrator Zeldin.

Cyrus M. Western appointed as EPA Mountains and Plains Regional Administrator

Contact Information: Melissa Walther (walther.melissa@epa.gov) | March 17, 2025
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/cyrus-m-western-appointed-epa-mountains-and-plains-regional-administrator

DENVER (Feb. 17, 2025) - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin announced that President Donald J. Trump has appointed Cyrus M. Western to serve as the EPA Region 8 administrator. As regional administrator, Western will lead the implementation of the administration's environmental agenda priorities in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and with 28 federally-recognized Tribes.

"As we work to Power the Great American Comeback at EPA, we continue to assemble a fantastic team," **said Administrator Zeldin**. "I am grateful Cyrus Western is joining EPA as our Regional Administrator for Region 8. I know with Cyrus' experience in the Wyoming State House of Representatives championing energy and wildlife conservation, he will work non-stop to implement President Trump's policies across the Region," continued Zeldin.

Prior to joining the EPA, Western served as the House Majority Whip in the Wyoming State House of Representatives, serving District 51. While there, he served on the Minerals, Business and Economic Development Committee, chaired the Oil and Gas Bonding Working Group and was vice chair of the Tourism, Recreation and Wildlife Committee.

"I'm honored to be appointed to lead EPA Region 8 under Administrator Lee Zeldin and President Trump," **said EPA Region 8 Administrator Cyrus Western**. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of the region and foster human health and environmental protection while encouraging sound economic growth. As a Wyoming native, I understand some of the unique challenges and opportunities this region faces and am committed to ensuring we meet the needs of the people while implementing the Administrator's 'Powering the Great American Comeback' Initiative."

Western holds a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies from Washington and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania, as well as a Master of Liberal Arts in Environmental Studies from the Harvard Extension School in Massachusetts.

Here's what people are saying about Western's presidential appointment:

"Cyrus Western will be an incredible partner for Wyoming and the West in this new role at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)," **said Sen. John Barrasso**. "As a seasoned Wyoming legislator, Cyrus knows firsthand how we can protect America's air, water, and land without suffocating our economy. I look forward to working with Cyrus and EPA Administrator Zeldin to roll back punishing regulations and protect our environment."

"I am delighted to see Cyrus Western appointed as the new Region 8 Regional Administrator for the EPA," **said Sen. Cynthia M. Lummis**. "Having someone like Cyrus who truly understands Wyoming and will restore the EPA's commitment to cooperative federalism is a significant win for western states. I look forward to collaborating with Cyrus and Administrator Zeldin to advance President Trump's American energy resurgence."

"Cyrus is a great pick to lead EPA's Region 8 office," **said Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality Director Todd Parfitt**. "I have had the pleasure of working with Cyrus for several years during his time with the Wyoming state legislature. He understands the importance of common-sense approaches and cooperative federalism in implementing our environmental programs. I look forward to working with Cyrus as we implement effective programs to address the priorities of the EPA, the state of Wyoming, and the Region."

Tribal TAS 401 Certification and Water Quality Standards

By Mitchell Healy, Water Quality Program | February 28, 2025

The Water Quality (WQ) Program was established in 1994, initially to monitor for pollution originating from the Zortman and Landusky mines. Since then, monitoring strategies and water quality goals have progressed into more enhanced and technical efforts to further protect our tribal waterbodies.

With this effort, the WQ Program has been developing Tribal Water Quality Standards (TWQS), to one day, be federally-approved. This is very significant in that we can use them to evaluate proposed federal projects and make a determination if the projects meet our environmental requirements. However, obtaining Federally-approved TWQS is a time-consuming process due to the comprehensive and technical structure, and legalities.

The following are a brief description of what is required for Tribes.

Clean Water Act Section 401:

This section of the CWA requires any entity seeking a federal permit for activities that may discharge into waters of the United States to obtain a water quality certification from the state or authorized tribe where the discharge will occur.

How to obtain Treatment as a State (TAS):

Tribes can apply to the EPA to gain TAS status specifically for Section 401 certification under the Clean Water Act.

This designation allows eligible tribes to exercise the same regulatory authority over water quality within their reservation as a state government. Allows tribes to issue water quality certifications for projects within their reservation boundaries, giving them the authority to review and deny federal permits that could impact their water quality from potential discharges into their waters.

Tribal Water Quality Standards:

When a tribe has TAS status, they can establish their own water quality standards and use them to evaluate whether a proposed federal project meets their environmental requirements before issuing a 401 certification.

Tribes can review proposed federal permits for activities within their reservation that may affect water quality and decide whether to grant, deny, or condition the permit to ensure compliance with their water quality standards.

It's definitely a time-worthy and necessary effort to ensure the protection of our tribal waters for future generations. In our area, there really is no major industrial activities resulting in direct discharges into our waters, but further upstream from the Reservation, along the hi-line, there are discharge sources into the Milk River, which is the Northern boundary of Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. The State Water Quality Standards apply to these sources and it would be ideal and necessary for Fort Belknap to have Tribal Water Quality Standards and TAS Authority to ensure the water quality flowing onto the Reservation complies with our water regulations.

This is a great opportunity to provide a brief description of what the WQ Program is funded for. The primary purpose is for surface water monitoring. Surface waters are rivers, lakes, streams, reservoirs, lakes, wetlands. Water samples are collected in these sources of surface water and analyzed in an off -site laboratory for various parameters such as heavy metals, nutrients, ions. The funding is not for private wells. WQ Program conducts data assessments on tribal waters and is heavily involved with the Zortman and Landusky mines. Possibly for next Circle Speaker issue, I may prepare a general information article on the mines and what has been and is going on as far as water treatment goes and projects. Until then, there's a lot of work to make progress on and continuous goal planning to ensure our tribal waters are protected. Hope this reading was helpful and informational.

2025 Fort Environmental Protection Department's

Preschool Poster Coloring Contest

Submitted by Lonette Blackcrow, FBEPD Administrative Assistant

The Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department hosted it's annual Preschool Poster Coloring Contest. Deadline to turn in the coloring posters was January 30th, 2025. All of the posters were displayed and judged by the community at the Fort Belknap Mid Winter Fair on February 6th and 7th, 2025, at the Fort Belknap Agency Bingo Hall. Community members of all ages were delighted to see the little kids' colorings. It's a great way for community engagement and a time for us to celebrate our little ones.

Each community's Head Start was represented well with an estimated 60 students from the three centers: Gilbert Horn, Sr. Early Childhood Center, Fort Belknap Agency; Ramona King Center, Hays, MT; and Three Strikes Center, Lodge Pole, MT.

It's fun to see what creativity our young artist's come up with. Each has their own unique way of bringing out their personality in their colorings. They are all great pieces of art and are judged subjectively by all who came out and participated. We also have to commend the Teacher's for helping us out and letting the children participate in our endeavor.

Certificates and prizes for the top three scored for 1st, 2nd & 3rd place were awarded to the students in their respective Centers. All the kids did an amazing job and we are extremely grateful for the communities' help in picking out winners. The prizes were delivered to each center on February 13th and 14th, 2025.

Congratulations to the Winners of the 2025 Head Start Poster Coloring Contest! **Gilbert Horn Sr Early Childhood Center (GHSECC):** 1st—Aubree Siers, 2nd—Adaya Stiffarm, 3rd—Kehlani Hawley. **Ramona King Center (RKC):** 1st—Raelah Helgeson, 2nd—Breslyn Allen, 3rd—Ava Parker. **Three Strikes Center (TSC):** 1st—Zaxston Walking Eagle, 2nd—Braison Wing, 3rd—Kade Strike.

Update on Brownfields Cleanup Activities

By Ina Nez Perce, Environmental Manager

In 2020, the Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) was awarded a Brownfields Cleanup Grant from EPA to cleanup four sites on the Fort Belknap Reservation. These sites include three abandoned properties and an old dump site. The work was advertised through a Request for Proposals (RFP) with three environmental firms submitting proposals. Granite Peak Environmental was chosen as the contractor for the cleanup project. The Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternative (ABCA's), Community Relations Plans, Public Meetings at all four sites were completed by the contractor. Clearance Sampling and Analysis Plans (SAPs) were completed and approved for 2 sites – former Fort Belknap Agency Water Treatment Plant and Old Agency Dump. SAPs for the former Lodge Pole Elementary School and old Sacred Heart Catholic Church "Pink Church" have been submitted to FBIC and EPA for review/approval.

On November 19-20, 2024, Land Revitalization Technical Assistance (LRTA) meetings were held at the Lodge Pole District Office/Medicine Bear Lodge in Lodge Pole for the former Lodge Pole Elementary School. On the first day, the meetings focused on a Kick-off meeting, visioning/programming, and alternative concept development, and on the second and final day, the meeting focused on the preferred concept design and preferred concept design refinement for the school building. In late February 2025, the LRTA team submitted their draft LRTA design brochure for their future project design of the school and funding resources information document for review by EPA and FBIC. The documents are currently under review.

Excavation Bid Specification documents have been drafted and are currently under review by the Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department and EPA. Abatement Bid Specification documents for the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, former Lodge Pole Elementary School, and former Fort Belknap Agency Water Treatment Plan will be finalized after Clearance SAPs for the church and school are approved by EPA.

The past few months, FBIC worked diligently with the Diocese of Great Falls, Montana, to work out the details of final ownership of the old Sacred Heart Church or Pink Church. The Diocese relinquished ownership of the church building together with any and all facilities associated with the adjoining cemetery to FBIC. The FBIC is now recognized as the owner of the old Sacred Heart Church. This will allow the FBIC and contractor to continue with cleanup and restoration of the church.

The contractor anticipates that cleanup activities will commence at all 4 sites in the spring and continue through the summer of 2025, with a completion date set for Fall 2025.

In September 2024, the Fort Belknap Indian Community was awarded a Brownfields 128(a) Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) grant to cleanup 10+ housing units on the Fort Belknap Reservation. An RFP was advertised with one environmental firm submitting a proposal. Granite Peak Environmental was selected as the contractor to cleanup 10 housing units by the end of November 2025. The Brownfields staff is working in collaboration with the Fort Belknap Tribal Housing Authority (FBTHA) to complete the project. The Scope of Work has been agreed upon by both parties, and Access Agreements for the sites have been completed and are in the process of being approved by FBIC and individual home owners. Check out our next newsletter for updates on our cleanup projects.

Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Presents

Our Home Our Planet Our Future

EARTH DAY FAIR

Tuesday — April 22nd, 2025

10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Wasay Wakpa Wachi powwow grounds, Lodgepole, MT

Inviting student's in Grades 4th - 6th

from Hays/Lodgepole Elementary, Dodson School, Harlem Elementary and the White Clay Language Immersion School to participate.

We invite ALL Programs and/or Departments to set up booths or activities to do with the youth.

If the powwow grounds are inaccessible, the Chief Nosey Recreation Center will be an alternate site.

Schools are encouraged to provide each student with a sack lunch. A potluck for the Presenters will be held during the lunch hour.

The Environmental Department is also collecting incentives to use as door prizes for the students. If you would like to donate any prizes, please contact Kermit Snow, Jr. at (406) 353-8368 or ksnow@ftbelknap.org; or Dennis Longknife, Jr. at (406) 353-8348 or dlongknife@ftbelknap.org.

For more information,
contact the Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department
Phone (406) 353-8384 or email
lonettebc@ftbelknap.org

Brownfields in Fort Belknap!

What up?

By Kermit Snow Jr, BTRP Compliance Officer

Wahey Neetine, hello my relatives. Well, it's been awhile, things are getting interesting around since we last talked. The environmental world is wondering what is going to happen, with all the shake up in the new administration and certain cuts that affect all our work helping Mother Earth. So, with that hanging over everybody's thoughts, here is a brief shot of what we have been up to.

We have been slowly working on all our grants and had completed one cleanup project over the summer of 2024. We have been working with Granite Peak, who has been doing an excellent job, keeping us in the loop with what they are doing, holding meetings with all stakeholders, and working with EPA. It is a good partnership, we help each other with whatever is needed to stay on top of our grants, especially as the end of the contract nears. We went through all the checks and balances on one portion of our cleanup grant and RFP, as we got ready for the cleanup of the airstrip homes, which houses had been sitting on the airstrip for over 10 years. As we began to tackle the cleanup in August 2024, Granite Peak showed up with Sullivan Bros. Construction and we had a brief safety meeting and talked about what we would be doing as the cleanup gets under way. Granite Peak had done all the soil sampling weeks before, to see if there was any contamination on each side of the runway. They had come prepared and got right to work after the meeting. The first week went by and Sullivan Bros. were doing a great job. We had a community member come by and seen what they were doing, he even asked if they were spraying down the burn piles as they were loading into bins. I assured him that they were, as we were using the Fort Belknap Volunteer Fire Dept. truck, until theirs arrived. They hauled all the bins to the Havre Landfill, which had doubled their tipping fees, causing us to have to do an amendment to cover the added cost. We were gone the following week, to attend the Tribal Lands Environment Forum in Eugene, Oregon, but they carried on. We returned for day 9 of cleanup and site was looking really good. On day 11, they finished on the last few piles and cleaning up the site. We then did a walkthrough with Christin (Granite Peak) and Chris (Sullivan Bros.) of the airstrip, they all did a great job. Adrian (Brownfield Coord.) then signed off on the project. With this project under our belt, we were now free to concentrate on other cleanup projects and daily duties.

We then started looking at what we needed to do, to get started on cleaning up the Former Lodge Pole Elementary School, that's where we asked EPA for some help. We applied for some assistance with the Land Revitalization Technical Assistance (LRTA) group to come in and see what they can do. We held a Public Meeting/Workshop with them in Lodge Pole for two days to get

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Brownfields in Fort Belknap! What up?

(Continued from page 10)

some input from the community. It was amazing to see what these guys can do, after getting comments from what the people want to see done with this abandoned building. They came back on the second day with a great conceptual design of what this building can look like, after cleanup and abatement, then the work needed to make their design come to life. We just received paperwork on the Sacred Heart Church (Pink Church), giving ownership back to the Tribe, so we can add this site to our cleanup this year. Like I said before, we have been working to get things done with EPA concerning the cleanup of these sites this summer. The RFP was advertised and everyone was hired to get this job started. I believe, first to be tackled will be the Old Agency Dump, as we have Granite Peak hired to get this project going. I just got my 8-Hour Hazwoper Refresher Course completed and am certified to be on site, thanks to ITEP at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, AZ., for the online course. We will also be tackling the cleanup concerning the Old Water Treatment building. Our cleanup for all these sites is starting to come together, we hope to have these done by November.

We have also been working with Prairie Mountain Utilities (PMU) and EPA on getting the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan amended with input from PMU and our Environmental Department, it's a work in progress.

We have been in meetings with the Council on the Old BOO's Gas Station property and looking at that site, as one of our Brownfields sites. It has been sitting there abandoned since the late 70's and the Council would like to see that property utilized to help the Tribe. I have been researching that site for years and am worried about possible contamination. There is no record of the Underground Storage Tanks (UST's) being removed. We have been in touch with EPA, to see what we need to do to get this site assessed. This site is one I have been very interested in seeing redeveloped, as it sits at the intersection of two main highways. Once you have a site cleaned up, EPA likes to see how you are going to use it, once it is ready for redevelopment.

We are looking at the Old Agency Dump and its possible use as a small solar farm. We have been working with Ezra Wells of LEMA Technologies, to get this endeavor off the ground. It's exciting to see what we do with all these properties, once we get them cleaned up.

In the future, we're also looking at getting the Junk Vehicle & Abandoned Mobile Homes Code completed. Other than that, I am keeping up with my Transfer Site Inspections, UST Monthly Walkthrough Inspections, Incident investigations, complaints, working with community in different activities (i.e., Mid-Winter Fair, Head Start Color Contest, Earth Day…).

Well, that's all for now. I hope to see you guys somewhere down the line and if not, you can read about what I am up to in the next edition of the Circle Speaker. A'HO

Rain Gardens

Submitted by Shelby Main, NPS Coordinator

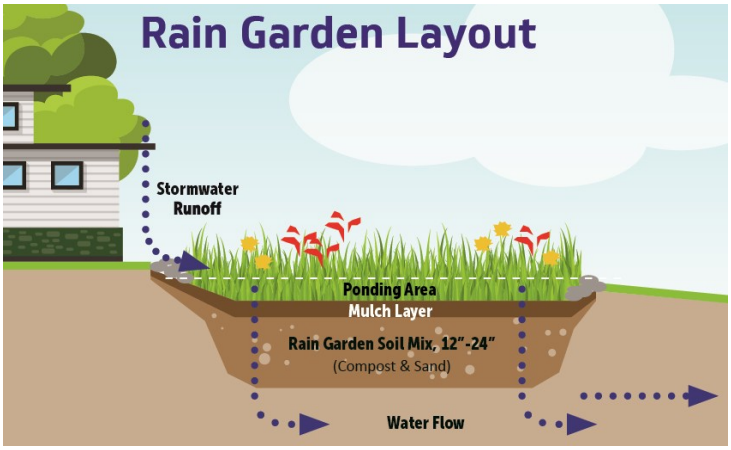
Rain gardens are shallow depressions that are planted with deep-rooted native plants and grasses. They're great for collecting water that runs off of rooftops or lawns. Rain gardens capture the runoff water, allowing it to soak into the ground. This recharges groundwater and naturally filters out pollutants. Plus, they can be a beautiful addition to your home significantly increasing property value, also improving the water supply you use in your homes for drinking, cooking, showering, and cleaning. Overall reducing the amount of maintenance needed to supply clean water and maintain your homes and businesses.

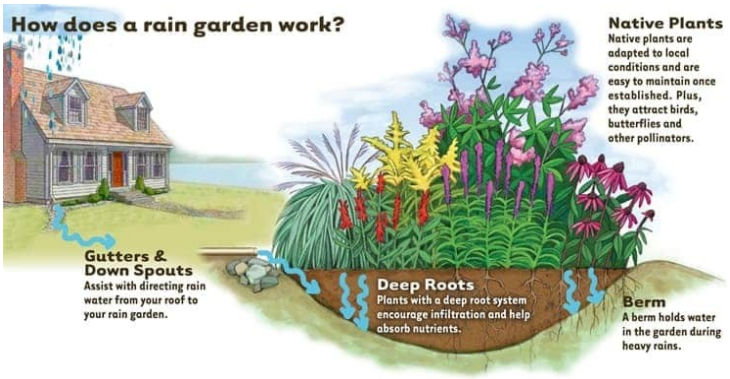
5 steps for creating a rain garden

1. Pick the spot
   - Contact local utilities by calling 811 to have them mark locations of underground wires, cables, or pipes.
   - A rain garden should be at least 10 feet from foundations and fence posts, and 25 feet from septic system drain fields and well heads.
2. Outline the garden and determine depth
   - The average size of a home rain garden is 70 square feet (7 x 10 feet), but the size can vary based on how much water you want to catch.
   - Gardens should be no more than 6 to 12 inches deep.
   - Make sure the garden is not flat because you need a depression to capture water.
3. Select the plants
   - Select Florida native and non-native adaptive plants that can tolerate "wet feet" in the lowest places.
   - Contact your County UF/IFAS Extension office for suggestions on plants suited to your location.
   - Determine how many plants are needed based on your rain garden size and the mature plant dimensions.
4. Dig in
   - The depression should be marked and dug to the depth you determined in Step 2.
   - Without a depression, the rain garden will not work.
   - Make sure not to compact the soil – this is the leading cause of failed gardens.
   - Place each plant at its minimum distance from other plants.
5. Finish up
   - Install mulch or sphagnum moss to keep weeds out and retain moisture.
   - Water the garden each day for the first week, and then gradually reduce watering over the next three weeks. After a month, normal rain should be enough to keep plants healthy.
   - Regular maintenance is required to keep your rain garden looking good and functioning well.

Tips on how to manage your rain garden

Don't worry about mosquitoes. The area should not retain water long enough for mosquitoes to have an opportunity to breed. You can direct your downspout to the rain garden by digging a shallow swale or by routing it through a drainpipe. If your soil lacks organic material, you may dig the depression an additional 2 to 3 inches and fill in with peat moss or compost.





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Rain Gardens

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Rain gardens benefit everyone!

- Rain gardens reduce polluted storm water runoff.
- Reduce flooding & recharge the groundwater.
- Enhance the beauty of your yard & community.
- Provide places for wildlife to live.

Materials:

- Shovel & pick
- Ruler, stick or wood scrap
- Pencil or marker
- Compost, sand or gravel
- Moisture-loving native plants
- Shredded hard wood mulch
- Decorative rock

A Rain Garden will:

- Filter pollutants from storm/ rain water runoff
- Recharge groundwater
- Conserve water
- Protect guts, ponds and coastal waters
- Remove standing water in your yard
- Reduce mosquito breeding
- Increase beneficial insects that eliminate pests
- Reduce potential of home flooding
- Create habitat for birds & butterflies
- Survive drought seasons
- Reduce garden maintenance
- Increase property value

Fort Belknap Brownfields Program

Submitted by Adrian Kulbeck, Brownfields Coordinator

What Are Brownfields?

A brownfield is a property, where the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department Brownfields Program aims to address these properties to alleviate the tribe in reinvesting in these properties to facilitate job growth, utilize existing infrastructure, and take development pressures off of undeveloped, open land, and both improve and protect the environment.

Why report suspected brownfields?

Reporting brownfields is crucial because it allows for the Fort Belknap Brownfields Program to identify if the property is a "Brownfields" and enter it into the FBIC Hazardous Site Inventory. This allows the Brownfields Program to rank & prioritize these sites to address contamination and promote sustainable redevelopment, ultimately benefiting public health and the local economy.

How to report?

A comment form can be found on the tribal website & submitted to the Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department. Or contact the Fort Belknap Brownfields Program at (406) 353-8368 or (406) 353-8411.

FBIC Tribal website Link;
https://ftbelknap.org/forms%2Fdocuments

6TH ANNUAL NIC?-MNI (WATER) FORUM

WHEN
WEDNESDAY
APRIL 23, 2025 9 AM - 4:00 PM
Coffee Bar/Breakfast/Lunch served
Registration will begin at 9:00 AM

Where
Returning Buffalo Building
Room 213
Aaniiih Nakoda College
Fort Belknap, MT

QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT
DAN KINSEY
WATER PROJECT MANAGER
Aaniiih Nakoda College
406-353-3915/
dkinsey@ancollege.edu
or Rebecca Bishop
406-353-3921

TOPICS:

NIC?MNI (CENTER) UPDATES

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

HOW WELL IS YOUR WATER? PERSONAL WELL TESTING

WATER SETTLEMENT UPDATE / WATER SUPPLY FOR THE MILK AND ST. MARY RIVER BASINS

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ISSUES ABOUT WATER AND ENVIRONMENT.

Returning Home: Carole Falcon-Chandler, 1939-2024

By Scott Friskics | August 21, 2024
https://tribalcollegejournal.org/returning-home-carole-falcon-chandler-1939-2024/

Carole Falcon-Chandler, long-time president of Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC), died on April 23, 2024. For more than two decades, Carole guided the college through a period of unprecedented stability and growth. During those years, she was a prominent figure in the Tribal College Movement and a champion of Native language revitalization efforts. She will long be remembered as a compassionate and generous leader who engendered trust and loyalty among her many friends and colleagues.

Carole Falcon (Bitéθaaʔ – Dancing Woman) was born January 23, 1939, to George and Mae (DeCelles) Falcon. Born and raised at Fort Belknap Agency, Carole was the youngest of three children, following her brother, Ron, and sister, Carmen Jean. Their parents both worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs—George as a maintenance man and Mae as a secretary. When Carole was eight years old, her mother died, and Carole was raised by her father with help from her aunts (Theresa Decelles-Delorme and Carmen Falcon) and grandparents (August and Nancy Decelles).

After graduating from Harlem High School, Carole enrolled in the Commercial Program at the Haskell Institute (now Haskell Indian Nations University) to study secretarial skills. In 1958, she earned her AAS degree in business (with honors). Along with seven fellow Haskell graduates, she entered the BIA's Indian Relocation Program and moved to Oakland, California, where she held several jobs in the Bay Area working as a secretary. Eventually, she worked her way up to the position of executive assistant and director of protocol for the chief of staff and commanding general at Oakland Army Base.

It was during her time in Oakland that Carole married Al Chandler (ʔíístʔuhúhkʔi – Good Strike). Although Al too grew up on Fort Belknap, the two did not meet until they crossed paths at Flandreau Indian Boarding School, where Carole attended her first year of high school. When they unexpectedly reconnected in the Bay Area, where Al was serving in the Air Force, they started dating and eventually married. During their years in the Bay Area, Carole worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Army, while Al launched a long and successful career with the Xerox Corporation. It was also during this time that their three children, Scott, Dawn, and Sean, were born. The family made their home in the town of San Leandro.

In 1971, Al was granted a transfer from Xerox and the family moved to Glendive, Montana. It was here that Carole started her career in higher education, working as a tutor and counselor for American Indian students and, later, as the project director for the

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Returning Home: Carole Falcon-Chandler, 1939-2024

(Continued from page 14)

Student Support Services (TRIO) Program at Dawson Community College. During her 17 years in Glendive, Carole mentored the college's few Indian students, while becoming a fierce student advocate and raising awareness about Indian issues in the local community.

When the family relocated to Billings in 1988, Carole, with Al's full support, made the life-changing decision to go back to college—just four months shy of her 50th birthday! Three years later, she graduated from Eastern Montana College (now Montana State University-Billings) with a BS degree in human services.

With degree in hand, Carole and Al moved back home to Harlem in 1992 when Al retired from Xerox. Carole was hired as the dean of students at Aaniiih Nakoda College (then Fort Belknap College), which at that time was just getting off the ground and still in candidacy status for accreditation. When Carole arrived at work, she discovered that her office in the college's "administrative trailer" was located on the exact site of the house where she grew up in the 1940s and 1950s. For Carole, her work at ANC was a homecoming in the most literal sense of the term, returning to the very spot of her childhood home.

For the next eight years, Carole served as a champion for her students and continued to develop her keen leadership skills, while gradually assuming greater duties as a top administrator. When the college began searching for a new president in 1999, Carole, at the urging of numerous colleagues and community members, decided to apply for the position. In January 2000, the Fort Belknap College Board of Directors hired Carole as the college's new president.

Carole held the position of college president for more than 20 years prior to her retirement on September 30, 2020. During that time, Carole had an incredible impact on the college, and it is impossible to overstate the legacy she leaves behind. She may not have been the founder, but she nurtured the young college as it navigated some serious growing pains, established its identity, and matured into adulthood.

As president of ANC, Carole compiled a long list of achievements—a list far too long to include here. She established long-term financial stability at the college, expanded campus facilities through the construction of five new buildings, created a professional development program that helped dozens of college staff and faculty earn advanced degrees, and significantly increased the number of American Indian instructors teaching at the college. Regarding this last achievement, it should be noted that when Carole began her tenure as president, there were no full-time Native faculty; when she retired, 75% of ANC's full-time faculty were American Indian. Perhaps most importantly, ANC awarded certificates and degrees to more than 600 graduates during her tenure as president.

Current ANC president, Dr. Sean Chandler, presents his mother with a star quilt during the college's silver anniversary celebration.

Current ANC president, Dr. Sean Chandler, presents his mother with a star quilt during the college's silver anniversary celebration.

Many of Carole's greatest accomplishments at ANC focused on a common theme: her unwavering commitment to uphold the college's mission of "maintaining and revitalizing the indigenous lifeways of the Aaniinen and Nakoda nations." For example, in 2002, Carole and her son, Sean (Níiθʔuwʔɔ□ɔkʔi – Two Capture), established the college's American Indian Studies Department. Then, in 2003, Carole, along with Sean and his wife, Dr. Lynette (Stein) Chandler (Bitéθaaʔ), established the White Clay Language Immersion School, which was the first full-day Native language immersion school in the nation housed on a tribal college campus. Under Carole's leadership, Fort Belknap College changed its name to Aaniiih Nakoda College during a historic ceremony in September 2011. The current name not only recognizes the two tribal nations the college serves but

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Returning Home: Carole Falcon-Chandler, 1939-2024

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marks an important step in celebrating tribal identity and embracing educational self-determination.

Carole's lasting mark on ANC can also be seen in several significant additions to the college's curricular offerings. In 2016, Carole spearheaded the establishment of ANC's Associate of Science in Nursing-Registered Nursing Program. Based on the medicine wheel paradigm, the nationally accredited "Grow Our Own" Nursing Program trains local nurses to provide culturally safe healthcare for residents of Fort Belknap and communities across Montana's Hi-Line. Then, in 2020, Carole presided over the establishment of ANC's first bachelor's degree program—a BS degree in Aaniiih Nakoda ecology. This place-based, Indigenous ecology program prepares graduates to become responsible caretakers and stewards of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation and surrounding ancestral homelands.

These accomplishments directly express Carole's vision of high-quality, culturally grounded postsecondary education for, and by, the Aaniinen and Nakoda Nations of Fort Belknap. In recognition of "her outstanding leadership at Fort Belknap College, her contribution to tribal colleges, and her efforts to preserve the Aaniiih language," Carole was awarded an honorary doctorate in education from Montana State University. In 2009, she was also recognized as the Tribal College Leader of the Year by the American Indian College Fund. She served on the College Fund's board of trustees (including terms as president and vice president), the Montana State University Council of Elders, the executive committee of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, the American Council on Education's Commission on Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Equity, and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Carole's many accomplishments only tell part of the story of what made her such a great leader. They do not convey the profound personal impact she had on the lives of colleagues, staff, and students. Those impacts and that legacy of compassion, kindness, loyalty, and wisdom are the most important of all.

When Carole retired in 2020, she could rest assured that her vision for the college would be carried forward under the next president, her son, Dr. Sean Chandler. One of Carole's greatest gifts to ANC and the people of Fort Belknap was the foresight she showed in preparing future leaders like Sean. With this legacy firmly in place, she positioned the college for long-term success that will last far beyond her two-decade tenure as president. In retirement, Carole enjoyed her final years in Harlem surrounded by family and friends. She is survived by her husband, Al; children, Scott, Dawn, and Sean; adopted son, Ferlin Clark (Diné); adopted sister, Elaine (Charles) McLaughlin of North Dakota; grandchildren, Hayes, Hunter, Roam, Wozek, and Serena; and great-grandchildren, Blaze and Ember. She was preceded in death by her parents, George and May (Decelles) Falcon; siblings, Ron and Carmen Jean; adopted mother, Regina Brave Bull; and daughter-in-law, Lynette Chandler.

US EPA: 2025 NTC Executive Committee

By Andrew Byrne, Senior Advisor, Policy & Partnership Team
https://www.epa.gov/tribal/national-tribal-caucus-ntc

On behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO), I am pleased to announce that the National Tribal Caucus (NTC), a Tribal advisory group and EPA partner, has elected a new NTC Executive Committee for 2025! Tabitha Langston, Deputy Environmental Director for the Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma, has been elected as NTC Chair; Scott Clow, Environmental Programs Director for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, has been elected NTC Vice Chair; and Shavonne Smith, Environmental Director for the Shinnecock Indian Nation, has been elected as NTC Secretary. The NTC is a national body of high-level Tribal representatives who work with the EPA to exchange views, information, and advice on EPA's Tribal programs. Their primary focus is to identify and address Tribal environmental issues that are national in scope, cross-agency or cross-media in nature, or that may be emerging or urgent. The EPA greatly looks forward to working with the NTC and the NTC Executive Committee in 2025 on our mutual goal to protect the environmental and public health in Indian country.

Request for Applications

Now Open Until May 1st

Native American Agriculture Fund <media-nativeamericanagriculturefund.org@shared1.ccsend.com>

The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) announces its seventh year of grantmaking. Starting on March 1, 2025, and closing on May 1, 2025, the fund will open a pool of $10 million.

"Tribal sovereignty, food sovereignty, and economic development are deeply interconnected for Indigenous and rural communities. As sovereign nations with inherent rights to self-governance, Tribal Nations have the authority to shape their food systems in a way that supports local and regional economies and maintains cultural connections to food and land," says NAAF CEO Toni Stanger-McLaughlin. "The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) supports these efforts by investing in Tribal agriculture and grant projects that directly impact Native farmers and ranchers working daily to strengthen economies and feed our communities. NAAF grant funding is open to all eligible entities that support Native agriculture -- the Request for Applications is open from March 1 through May 1, and we encourage all eligible entities to apply."

Per Trust Agreement Section 8, eligible grant recipients are:

- 501(c)(3) organizations and nonprofit organizations with a Fiscal Sponsor
- Educational organizations
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and Native CDFIs
- Tribal governments (state and federally recognized) and their instrumentalities

NAAF will also host a series of webinars to support the grant application process on the following four (4) dates. The webinars will provide an overview of the application process and then transition to a question-and-answer period. All webinar recordings will be posted and archived on the NAAF website. The dates for each webinar are found below, and registration is required to participate. The webinars will offer technical assistance to applicants and provide clarification concerning applicant eligibility or focus areas for applications during this grant cycle.

Register Below

Webinars

- Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 2 pm - 4 pm Central
- Thursday, March 27, 2025, at 2 pm - 4 pm Central
- Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 2 pm - 4 pm Central
- Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 2 pm - 4 pm Central

Webinars Registration:
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_6gOCjT-yT-Ox5WGPxEzZ3w#/registration

All the details about the RFA, eligible entities, and webinar registration can be found on the NAAF website starting March 1, 2025.

Contact grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org with questions.

Click Here for the 2025 RFA:
https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/2025-rfa/

Studying the Diatoms of the Milk River: A Multi-Year Research Effort at Aaniiih Nakoda College, Montana

By Wease Bollman, Heera Malik, and Dan Kinsey

Diatoms under the microscope. These diatoms have been cleaned, a process that removes organic material, leaving only the glass frustules behind. They are mounted on a slide and ready for identification.

Between 2012 and 2020, students and faculty at Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC), located on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Northern Montana, conducted a study on diatoms – some of the smallest yet most vital aquatic organisms. Their research focused on a 23-mile stretch of the Milk River, which forms the northern boundary of the reservation, the sovereign homeland of the Aaniiih and Assiniboine Tribes. The Milk River originates in Glacier National Park and flows for 729 miles through parts of Canada and Montana before joining the Missouri River. Fort Belknap Agency, the nearby hamlet of Harlem, and 10 other communities have historically relied on – and continue to rely on – the Milk River as their source of drinking water.

The Milk River was named by Lewis and Clark, who noted its milky appearance. Its whitish color comes from fine silty sediments eroded from the badlands of Alberta, Canada. Natural erosion also adds nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus to the water, making the river naturally enriched. In addition to these natural processes, the river is altered by human interventions. A cross-basin diversion supplements its flow, and it passes through dams and reservoirs, regulating the flow for irrigation. Spanning over 23,000 square miles of semi-arid watershed, the Milk River receives irrigation return flows, inputs from wastewater treatment facilities, and other nutrient sources from human activities. While these activities sustain agricultural and municipal needs, they also affect water quality. Excess nutrients and sediment can disrupt ecological balance, influencing the river's aquatic life and the natural processes that keep it healthy.

One way to understand these impacts is by studying diatoms, tiny organisms that not only serve as indicators of water quality, but also play a foundational role in aquatic ecosystems. What are diatoms? What did the ANC researchers discover about the diatoms of the Milk River? And why are diatoms so important?

Diatoms: Algal cells in sculptured glass cases

Diatoms are a unique group of microscopic, single-celled algae found in nearly every aquatic environment, from lakes and rivers to wetlands and oceans. Exceptionally adaptable, they thrive in diverse freshwater and marine systems. Over 15,000 species have been formally described, but estimates suggest there may be hundreds of thousands more, with new species discovered each year. Diatoms are incredibly small—most are far smaller than a grain of pollen—and were unknown until the development of sufficiently powerful microscopes in the 17th century. Despite their tiny size, they are among the most successful aquatic organisms on Earth, abundant rather than rare.

What truly sets diatoms apart is their cell walls, which are made of glass. Each cell is encased in a beautifully intricate silica shell called a frustule, which the diatom itself generates. Viewed under a microscope, these frustules reveal an astonishing variety of

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sculpted patterns—pores, ridges, striae, slits, and other specialized structures. Each species produces a uniquely patterned frustule. By carefully studying the intricate patterns under a microscope, scientists can identify diatom species.

In rivers, most diatoms attach to submerged surfaces such as rocks, aquatic plants, logs, and debris. Some exist as solitary cells, while others form colonies or filaments. Along with other organisms such as bacteria and fungi, diatoms form complex structured communities called biofilms. In rocky-bottomed streams, these biofilms create the slippery surfaces that can send unwary waders tumbling into the water.

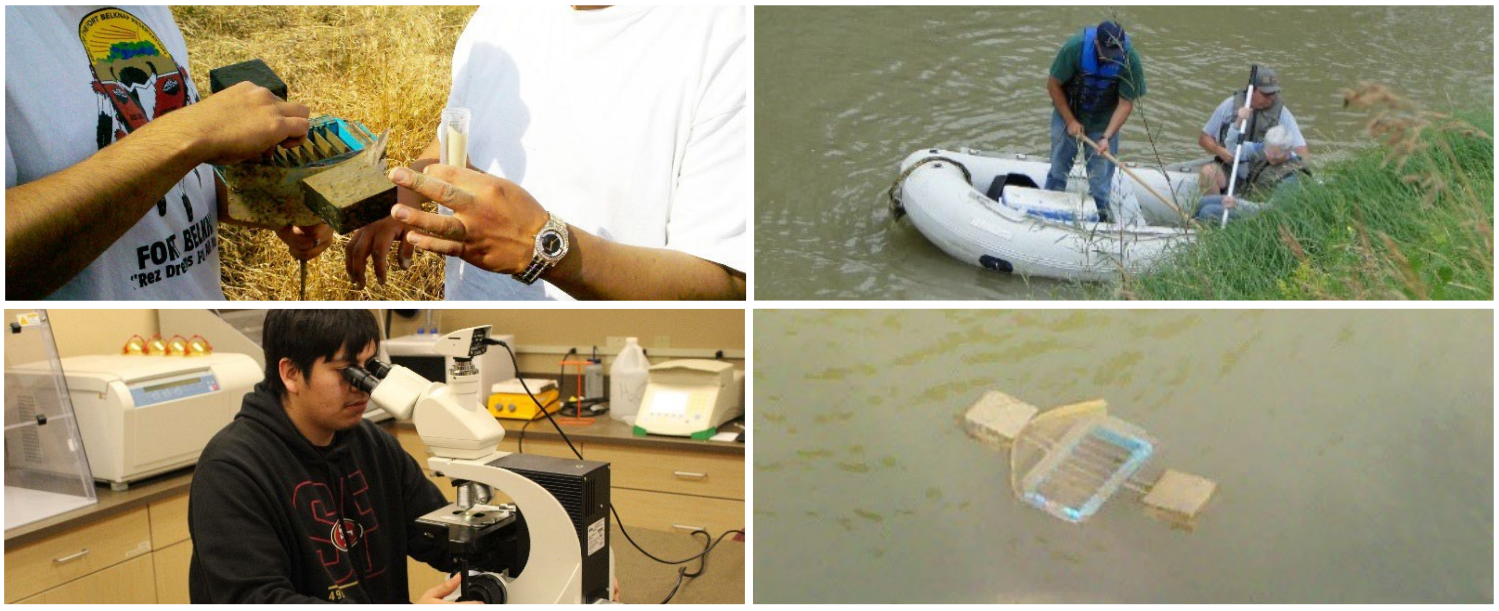
Living diatoms are golden-brown due to their photosynthetic pigments, which enable them to convert sunlight and carbon dioxide into energy. However, before they are studied under the microscope, they are typically "cleaned" in the laboratory, a process that removes organic material and leaves only their glass-like frustules behind.

The ANC study

Aaniiih Nakoda College was able to undertake this study thanks to funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Tribal College Research Program and a National Science Foundation water center grant. This support enabled a team of researchers to conduct a multi-year study of the Milk River's diatom communities.

The research team included Dan Kinsey, ANC Environmental Science Instructor, along with Truan Yellow Stone, Sonny Gray, and Weslyn Shilling, all Water Project Technicians at the Aaniiih Nakoda Nić? Mni (Water) Center. Victor Gone, former research coordinator at the Nić? Mni Center, also contributed to the study. Together, they undertook a systematic sampling of diatoms at five sites along the northern boundary of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Between 2012 and 2015, and again from 2019 to 2020, the team collected diatoms in each year between late July and early September, ultimately amassing 19 collections over six discontinuous years. This effort appears to represent the most comprehensive study of diatoms in any segment of the Milk River to date.

In rivers with stable, rocky substrates, diatoms are typically collected by scraping biofilms off submerged rocks. However, the Milk River presented a challenge—its bed is mostly muddy, and the water at the study sites was too deep for direct sampling. To overcome this, the researchers used artificial substrates: glass slides mounted within a specialized frame known as a periphytometer. These frames were submerged and left in place, allowing diatoms to colonize the slides naturally over time.



Clockwise from top left: Truan Yellow Stone and Victor Gone load a periphytometer with glass slides. The slides serve as artificial substrates; diatoms and other biofilm components will colonize the slides after they are deployed in the river. Top right: An ANC research crew deploys periphytometers in the Milk River. Bottom right: A loaded periphytometer in the river. Diatoms and other biofilm components will colonize the artificial substrates in the frame. Bottom left: Sonny Gray, Nic?Mni Water Project Technician, examines slide-mounted diatoms under the microscope.

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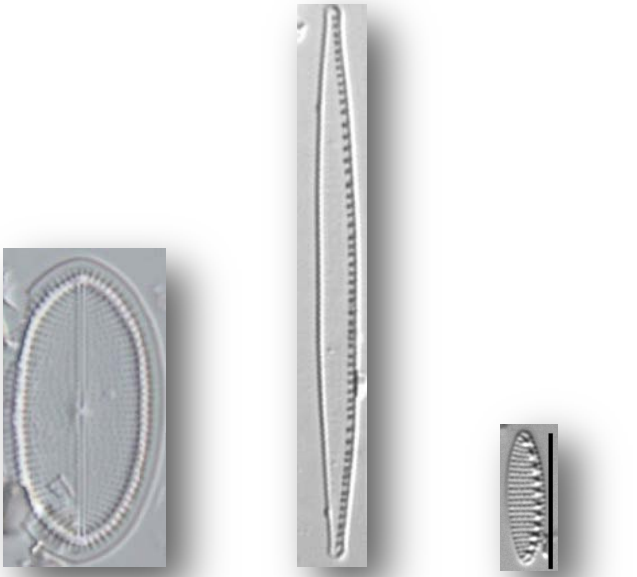
Over time, biofilms developed on the slides— complex mixtures of diatoms, sediment, algae, and fungi. To isolate the diatoms for study, the samples underwent a rigorous cleaning process involving high heat, pressure, and strong acids. This treatment removed all organic material, leaving behind only the diatoms' intricate, glass-like cell walls. Under a microscope, these structures revealed remarkable detail, enabling researchers to identify species based on their unique patterns.

The goal of this research was to document which diatom species inhabit the Milk River, their abundance and diversity, and how different species are distributed across the sampled reaches. However, the study's significance extends beyond simple identification. By establishing a baseline dataset of diatom assemblages, researchers can track changes over time. Are diatom populations shifting? If so, do these shifts correlate with changes in water quality, water quantity, land use, or features of weather or broader climate patterns?

What did the ANC researchers find?

The Milk River hosts a moderately diverse assemblage of diatoms—over the course of the study, more than 200 distinct species were identified. One key finding from the multi-year study was that within each year, diatom communities were remarkably similar across all 5 sampling sites. However, when comparing different years, the communities showed significant variation. This suggests that local environmental conditions within a given year remained relatively stable along the studied section of the Milk River, which seems consistent with the regulated nature of the river. However, broader factors that may change from year to year, such as differences in water flow, temperature, nutrient levels, or weather patterns, had a strong influence on the composition of the diatom assemblages. The timing of sampling also played a role, as the 2012 samples, collected in mid-September rather than early August, contained significantly more species than in other years.

It was not surprising to discover that many of the diatoms present in the Milk River samples were species known to be tolerant of mild-to-moderate nutrient enrichment. The diatom species Cocconeis placentula, Nitzschia palea, and Nitzschia inconspicua were present in nearly all of the samples collected; they were common in every year. Each of these taxa requires relatively high concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorus to thrive.



Microscopic images of three common diatoms collected from the Milk River. From left to right: Cocconeis placentula, Nitzschia palea, Nitzschia inconspicua. The diatom frustules shown are magnified about 1000 times. The dark line at far right represents a length of 10 microns, about the width of a strand of spider silk.

Why are diatoms important?

Diatoms play a fundamental role in sustaining life on earth. They are not only a crucial component of freshwater and marine ecosystems, but they are also major contributors to the global carbon cycle. Despite their small size, diatoms have a huge impact, influencing everything from local aquatic food webs to global climate regulation. In the Milk River and other aquatic systems, diatoms serve as primary producers, forming the base of the food web. Through photosynthesis, they convert sunlight into energy, by using carbon – a fundamental element that forms the building blocks of life. Diatoms obtain carbon by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO2) and using it to produce carbohydrates (sugars), lipids (fats and oils), and proteins. Besides these macronutrients, another product of photosynthesis is oxygen (O2). Diatoms are among the most efficient photosynthetic organisms, producing nearly 20% of the oxygen we breathe – a staggering contribution for creatures invisible to the naked eye.

While diatoms are present in the oceans mostly as free-floating plankton, in the river, the majority of diatoms form biofilms, slimy microbial communities that adhere to submerged surfaces like rocks, plants, sub-

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Studying the Diatoms of the Milk River

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strates, and woody debris. These biofilms are nutrient hotspots, attracting invertebrates such as insect larvae and small crustaceans, which graze on the diatoms as a primary food source. In turn, these grazers support fish populations. Without diatoms, the entire riverine food web would collapse, affecting not just aquatic organisms, but also humans who rely on freshwater ecosystems for food and livelihoods.

Beyond their role in the food web, diatoms are also key players in the carbon cycle, which is the larger global process wherein carbon moves between the atmosphere, living organisms, and long-term storage. The food web and the carbon cycle are 2 sides of the same coin, both driven by the movement of energy and nutrients through living organisms and the environment. The process of converting carbon to nutrients is called carbon fixation. Macronutrients formed by carbon fixation are passed through the ecosystem when diatoms are eaten by zooplankton, fish, and other organisms, sustaining life at every level. Uneaten diatoms eventually die and sink, carrying carbon with them into deep water and sediments, where it can be stored for decades to millennia, a process called carbon sequestration. Over time, layers of buried diatoms, especially in the oceans, contribute to the formation of carbon-rich deposits, some of which can persist for millions of years. This dual role – cycling carbon as nutrients through life forms (carbon fixation) and transporting it as elemental carbon to long-term storage (carbon sequestration) - is also known as the biological carbon pump. These processes make diatoms essential not only to aquatic ecosystems, but also to global climate regulation.

However, while diatoms and other natural processes have regulated carbon levels for millions of years, human activities are now adding carbon to the atmosphere at a rate far exceeding what these systems can absorb. The burning of fossil fuels—coal, oil, and natural gas—releases vast amounts of carbon dioxide that had been locked away in geologic storage for millions of years. Deforestation further amplifies the problem by reducing the capacity of forests to absorb CO_2. As a result, atmospheric carbon levels are rising rapidly, trapping heat and destabilizing the climate. This disruption intensifies extreme weather events, alters global ocean and atmospheric circulation, and threatens ecosystems worldwide. While diatoms continue to play a role in mitigating some of this excess carbon, their ability to offset human-driven emissions is limited. Protecting natural carbon sinks—including freshwater and marine ecosystems—remains crucial.

In summary, the role of diatoms in cycling and redistributing carbon is indispensable. Even short-term sequestration – removing CO2 from the air for months, years, or decades via interconnected food webs – has a stabilizing effect on the climate, helping to buffer the planet from more extreme carbon fluctuations. Meanwhile, the fraction of carbon that does reach long-term sequestration remains a critical mechanism for removing atmospheric CO2 over geological timescales. Together, these processes make diatoms one of the earth's most effective natural carbon regulators, proving that even organisms too small to see are shaping the planet's future.

Diatoms and their biofilms also contribute to water quality regulation. By binding organic materials and trapping excess nutrients, biofilms help filter the water, preventing excessive algal blooms that can degrade ecosystems. Biofilms provide surfaces where beneficial microorganisms thrive, stabilizing sediment and supporting a diverse aquatic community. This not only improves habitat conditions for fish and invertebrates, but also helps maintain clean water for human use, benefitting drinking water supplies, agriculture, and recreation.

Diatoms face growing threats from pollution, climate change, and habitat disruption. Excess nutrient inputs from agriculture and industry can shift diatom communities in ways that reduce their effectiveness in maintaining ecosystem balance. Warmer temperatures and altered river flow patterns may also disrupt biofilm formation and carbon cycling, weakening diatoms' ability to support biodiversity and store carbon.

Protecting the fundamental organisms, such as diatoms, that are at the basis of aquatic life, is not just an environmental concern – it is a human necessity. Their role in oxygen production, food security, climate regulation, and water quality directly impacts people and economies around the world. Thus, for the researchers who contributed to the Aaniiih Nakoda College diatom study, understanding and safeguarding the diatoms of the Milk River are essential. Protecting the functioning ecology of the river ensures the sovereignty of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Whether in the ocean or in a river like the Milk, diatoms are an invisible force shaping the planet's future, demonstrating that even the smallest organisms can have a global impact.

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Studying the Diatoms of the Milk River

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Studying the Diatoms of the Milk River

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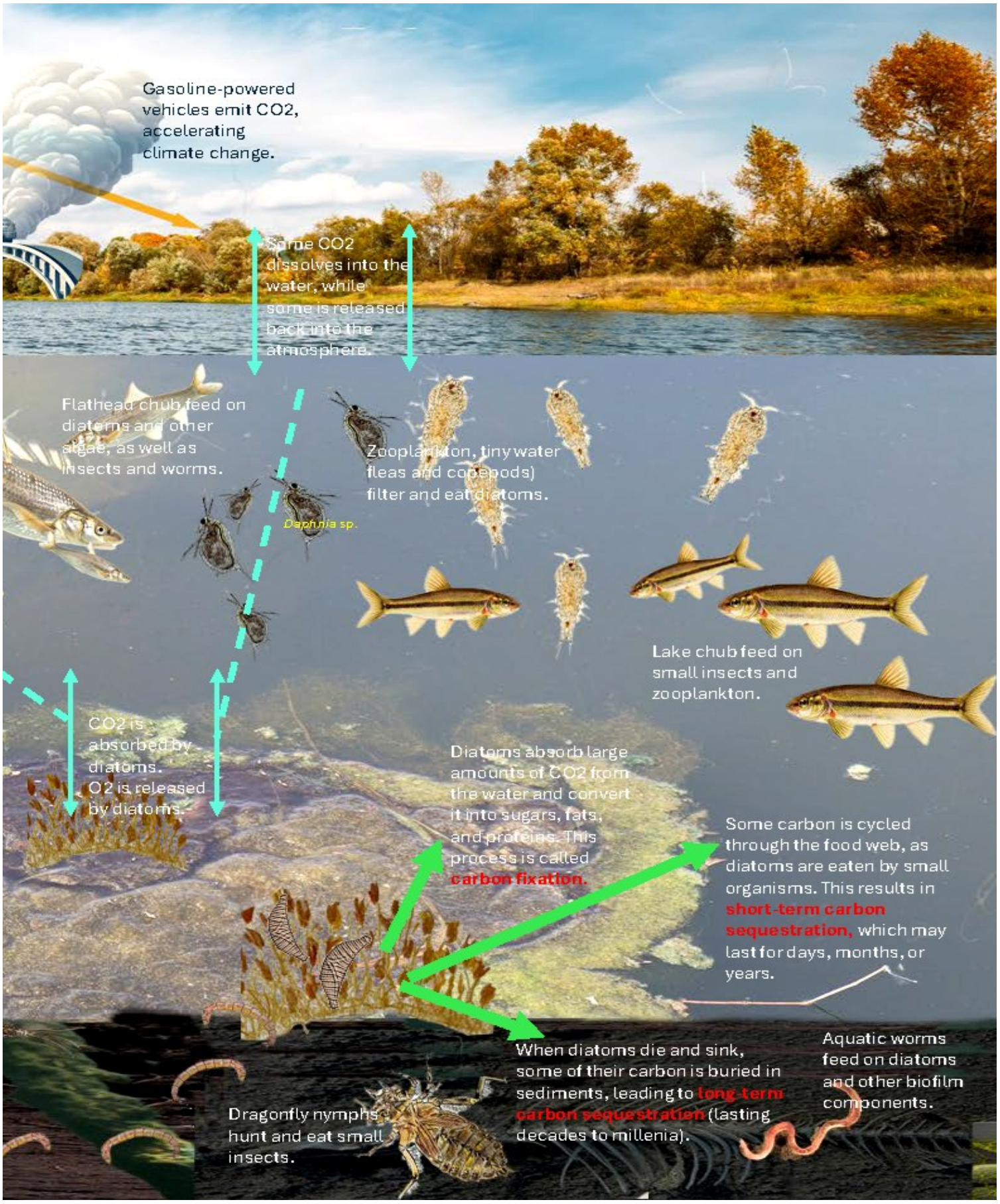


Food Sovereignty: A Wellspring of Grass Roots Updates for the Fort Belknap Indian Community!

Submitted By Liz McClain

'The right to food is an important tool for indigenous peoples to bring about real change in their lives and to negotiate power structures' (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

It all started with a casual chat to Ina for including something on Food Sovereignty to be included in the next Issue of Circle Speaker. Guess the best way to start is to find out what's going on here in the community. And it took only a nanosecond to find out. Attending a seed event in the library last week, I was overwhelmed not only with the community participation but the knowledge and hands-on activities that we did. Learned that Grass roots activities are going on all over the reservation and have been for some time. An incredible network of Elders, community members dedicated 'plant and garden' professionals, gardeners, folks from various Tribal Offices and departments, volunteers, students and others constitute a wellspring, an inexhaustible, devotion to Food Sovereignty. And now the planting season is on the horizon. As I met with various people it was apparent there is a commitment to Food Sovereignty, it is ongoing, with ideas, projects and plans in place. The following are some I managed to chat to in the short time available and can only imagine the huge number of community members engaged in helping to bring the various aspects of food sovereignty (culturally appropriate use of land, grazing, water, seeds, livestock, fish) as a public good, to fruition.

Hillary Maxwell: 'Food is Power'- devoted to all seeds, years as a gardener mentor, circuit rider, a force of good, associated with the MSU–Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program. 'Everything you ever wanted to know about a garden or the seeds to plant but were afraid to ask' person to consult. Has extensive network through the state with other like-minded people and activities related to gardens and food sovereignty. (406) 390-1085 hillary.maxwell@montana.edu .

Liz Werk: MSU–Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program, coordinator, administrator, like Hillary works throughout the reservation with anything to do with gardens and gardening with emphasis, of course, on food sovereignty. Cell: (406) 390-3080. Office: (406) 353-2656 elizabeth.werk@montana.edu.

McKenzie McCaleb: 'Can't say you are sovereign if you can't feed yourself' also works with outreach from MSU–Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program here on Fort Belknap. Her working paradigm is like, Hillary's and Liz's is the cultivation of Food Sovereignty. (405) 885-8775 mckenzie.mccaleb@montana.edu.

Lee Blackcrow: Aaniiih Nakoda College, USDA Extension Program Director. In charge of the ANC garden, greenhouse, supervisor of extension program assistant and student interns. He is just getting the community garden ready for planting. Has a keen interest in Food Sovereignty. (406) 353-3911) jlblackcrow24@ancollege.edu.

Sage Lone Bear: Aaniiih Nakoda College, USDA Extension Program Assistant. As he says, the USDA extension program is an Agriculture based program that solely focuses on growing plants and harvesting them. It can be any kind of plant from traditional and medicinal plants to vegetables and fruits. The program pertains to food sovereignty because of its focus on growing these vegetables, fruits and other nourishing plants, that meet the needs of the Fort Belknap Indian Community'. (406) 353-3911 stlonebear@ancollege.edu.

Kristie Runsabove: Traditional Ecological Knowledge Coordinator. Kristie is the outreach coordinator for finding out and collecting knowledge and practices that people here have developed over years and years about their environment and Life Way. It is all about the on-going accumulation of relationships that Elders and others know. It goes across many disciplines, biological, spiritual, physical, social, cultural -all interrelated. Food Sovereignty is a part of these relationships. And through her community work she has established relationships with others who are repositories of this knowledge. (406) 353-3920 klrunsabove@ancollege.edu.

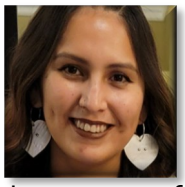
(Continued on page 25)

Food Sovereignty: A Wellspring Of Grass Roots Updates For The Fort Belknap Indian Community!

(Continued from page 24)

Lynette Svingen: Director of the 'Grow Our Own' nursing education program, here at Aaniiih Nakoda College. As the new director of the program Lynette has 'bought in' to how the Nursing program and its new cohort of students can help facilitate Food Sovereignty here on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. "By engaging in sustainable agriculture projects in the greenhouse, or at the farm, supporting the beekeeping activities, and various aspects of the buffalo project. Importantly, working alongside others, by offering nutrition education programs focused on traditional foods, (buffalo, wild plants, and indigenous grains." (406) 353-3931 lsvingen@ancollege.edu.

The buffalo on Fort Belknap, commonly known as "Ee-da-nawn"(Aaniiih) or "Ta-tonka" (Nakoda) brings cultural significance through ceremony and/or food sovereignty.

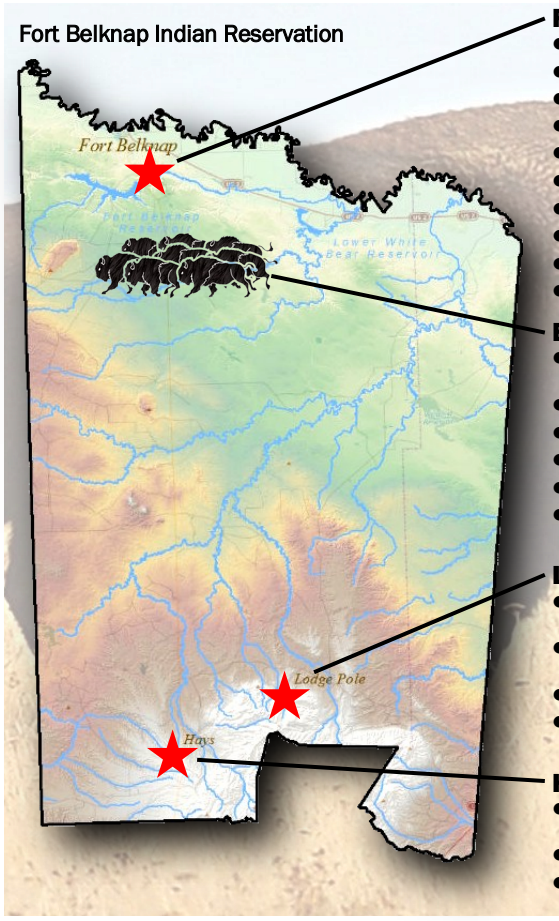


Dawn Thomas & Katelyne Goes Ahead: recent graduates of the Aaniiih Nakoda Ecology 4-year program, have worked with the buffalo program for a long time. Their ANC curriculum was unique as it was focused on Place Based themes on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation with the goal of the graduates assuming responsibilities for the resources and continued Sovereignty of their home place. Two elaborating points and details therein are 1. Being able to have access to healthy and culturally appropriate food and 2. Community engagement in sustainable food production.

(Continued on page 26)

The right to food as a collective right

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that indigenous peoples have the right to fully enjoy as a collective or as individuals, all human rights and fundamental freedoms. With particular regard to the right to food, indigenous representatives on the occasion of the 2002 Global Consultation signed the Declaration of Atitlan, stating that they were: "...in agreement that the content of the right to food of indigenous peoples is a collective right". *~The Right to Food and Indigenous Peoples*



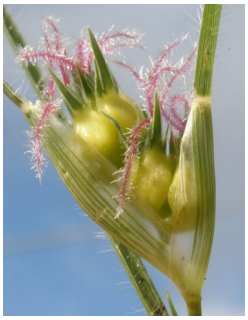
Fort Belknap Agency—ANC Offices
- Hillary Maxwell—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program
- Liz Werk—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program
- McKenzie McCaleb—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program
- Kristie Runsabove—Traditional Ecological Knowledge Coordinator
- Katelyn Goes Ahead—Returning Buffalo Program
- Dawn Thomas—Returning Buffalo Program
- Teri Harper—Buffalo Project Research Coordinator
- Amber Harris—ANC Library
- Lynette Svingen—Nursing, Returning Buffalo Program
- Lee Blackcrow—USDA Program Director

Buffalo Pastures
- Wilson "Bronc" Speakthunder—Buffalo Program Coordinator (406) 399-4939.
- Yvonne Ball—Grants/Management Specialist.
- Buffalo Tech I & II.
- Teri Harper—Buffalo Project Research Coordinator
- Dawn Thomas—Returning Buffalo Program
- Katelyn Goes Ahead—Returning Buffalo Program

LodgePole, Montana
- Leslie Cliff—Pilot Project for Geothermal Greenhouse to be constructed this spring.
- Hillary Maxwell—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program, Gardening Project
- Liz Werk—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program, Gardening Project
- McKenzie McCaleb—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program, Gardening Project

Hays, Montana
- Hillary Maxwell—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program, Gardening Project
- Liz Werk—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program, Gardening Project
- McKenzie McCaleb—Fort Belknap Tribal Extension Program, Gardening Project

Sweetgrass and seeds



Buffalo Grass and Seed

Food Sovereignty: A Wellspring Of Grass Roots Updates For The Fort Belknap Indian Community!

(Continued from page 25)

Teri Harper, Buffalo Project Research Coordinator has worked with these two enrolled members. 'Our goal is to keep the buffalo healthy and available for community members, whether through harvests or simply to appreciate their presence. Food sovereignty encompasses more than just food; it involves education and ensuring that our tribal communities understand the research and the reasons behind our efforts to maintain the health of these keystone species.' Dawn Thomas (406)-353-2607 Ext. 3967 dmthomas@ancollege.edu, Teri Harper (406) 353-3965 tcharper@ancollege.edu.

Wilson "Bronc" Speakthunder is the Buffalo Program Manager for the Fort Belknap. He manages a significant buffalo program with two herds of buffalo, Snake Butte Buffalo herd and a pure genetic buffalo herd from Yellowstone National Park, grazing on the reservation's lands. The tribes have been actively involved in rebuilding their buffalo herd since 1974, initially starting with 27 buffalo and now managing a herd of 500+. The reservation features the Snake Butte Buffalo Pasture, a large pasture encompassing approximately 22,000 acres, and a pure genetic buffalo herd from Yellowstone National Park, that grazes a smaller pasture centrally located on the reservation. This is all part of the tribes' efforts to restore the bison to their traditional lands. The buffalo hold immense cultural and historical importance for the Gros Ventre (Aaniiih) and Assiniboine (Nakoda) tribes, who relied on the buffalo for sustenance, clothing, shelter, cultural practices, and ceremony. Before the buffalo were almost driven into extinction, they were intertwined in the everyday lives of the Plains Indian tribes. Today their remarkable survival through the tribes' buffalo programs strengthens the tribes' food sovereignty goals.

Leslie "Josie" Cliff: Executive Director, Nakoda Aaniiih Economic Development Corporation Geothermal Greenhouse Pilot Project will be constructed in Spring and Lodgepole Community Garden. All of her work is to ensure sovereignty and considers herself a 'seed advocate'. (406) 301-3005 (cell), (406) 673-3031 (office) Leslie.cliff@fbcedc.org.

Amber Harris: Aaniiih Nakoda College Library Services Director. There is a room in the library at ANC for gatherings of purpose. One gathering was for all those involved in Food Sovereignty, gardening, how to organize a home garden, learn everything about seeds, sort them for 'giveaways', and network with others throughout the community. The library now will be a focal point for the repository for seeds, a site for seed selection for the new gardener a focal place for meetings to help in uplifting all in the continued pursuit of Food Sovereignty! (406) 353-3936 aharris@ancollege.edu.

Gardening books on display in the ANC Library. The card catalog will be holding tiny packets of seeds. Contact Amber Harris, ANC Library Services Director.

LANDBACK: Spirit Lake Nation regains land from Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. government returns 680 acres to the North Dakota tribe

By Stewart Huntington, ICT producer/reporter | Mar 1, 2025
https://ictnews.org/news/landback-spirit-lake-nation-regains-land-from-fish-and-wildlife-service

The Spirit Lake Nation is celebrating the return of 680 acres of land that was stripped away more than a century ago from its original treaty territory.

The transfer on Feb. 10 marked the culmination of a multi-generation effort by the nation to reclaim lands from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's White Horse Hill National Game Preserve in North Dakota.

"This return of land is a significant step towards healing and reconciliation," said Spirit Lake Chairwoman Lonna Jackson-Street. "After decades of effort, we are grateful for the support of our partners in the gov-

(Continued on page 27)

(Continued from page 26)

ernment and the recognition of our rightful claim to these lands."

The land was carved from the tribe's 1867 treaty territory by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905. In the late 1950s, it was deemed "submarginal lands" and and was designated to be excess to the needs of the game preserve. The Spirit Lake Nation formally sought the return of the lands as part of a broader movement by Congress to return submarginal lands to Indian nations.

Despite the widespread effort, the Fish and Wildlife Service retained the lands for hay production to support the buffalo population at White Horse Hill.

In the past decade, however, Fish and Wildlife did not use the land. This month, the General Services Administration, which manages the federal government's real estate portfolio, transferred the property to Spirit Lake.

"The community is excited and thankful for the leadership of the tribe, along with U.S. Fish and Wildlife (Service), Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Department of the Interior, who worked collaboratively getting our land back," said Spirit Lake Tribal Councilmember Darren Walking Eagle. The returned property all lies within the original 1867 reservation boundaries and includes areas with native and medicinal plants the tribe intends to preserve. The returned land also offers some development opportunities the tribe may explore.

Yellow lines wrap around a 680 acre parcel of land recently returned to the Spirit Lake Nation in North Dakota from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. (Map via the U.S. General Services Administration)

"It does offer the potential to expand our medical facility and build housing, but there are no definite plans at this time," said Jackson-Street.

In addition, there are 300 other acres of federal game preserve land that the tribe seeks to have returned. "Our leadership and community are hopeful regarding the return of lands back to the tribe," Jackson-Street said.

Multiple emails and voicemails left to representatives from the Fish and Wildlife Service seeking details about the land transfer were not returned.

Administrator Zeldin Announces EPA Will Revise Waters of the United States Rule

Clearer, streamlined permitting will cut compliance costs, reduce cost of living, follow Supreme Court rulings

Contact Information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov) | March 12, 2025
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/administrator-zeldin-announces-epa-will-revise-waters-united-states-rule

WASHINGTON – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin announced today that EPA will work with the United States Army Corps of Engineers to deliver on President's Trump's promise to review the definition of "waters of the United States." The agencies will move quickly to ensure that a revised definition follows the law, reduces red-tape, cuts overall permitting costs, and lowers the cost of doing business in communities across the country while protecting the nation's navigable waters from pollution. Given the U.S. Supreme Court's watershed decision in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, it is time for EPA to finally address this issue once and for all in a way that provides American farmers, landowners, businesses, and states with clear and simplified direction. Administrator Zeldin was joined by Senate Agriculture Chairman John Boozman (R-AR), Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA), Senator Katie Britt (R-AL), Western Caucus Chairman Doug LaMalfa (R-CA-01), Representative Derrick Van Orden (R-WI-03), and Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall for the announcement.

*"We want clean water for all Americans supported by clear and consistent rules for all states, farmers, and small businesses," **said EPA Administrator Zeldin.***

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Administrator Zeldin Announces EPA Will Revise Waters of the United States Rule

(Continued from page 27)

"The previous Administration's definition of 'waters of the United States' placed unfair burdens on the American people and drove up the cost of doing business. Our goal is to protect America's water resources consistent with the law of the land while empowering American farmers, landowners, entrepreneurs, and families to help Power the Great American Comeback."

"Farmers and ranchers are the best stewards of the land and need water regulations that are clear and practical, not burdensome," said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins. "Thank you, Administrator Zeldin, for your leadership on this critical rule. USDA supports EPA's revisions to WOTUS that provide certainty and recognize the key role that agriculture plays in protecting our natural resources. We'll keep pushing for policies that let producers focus on what they do best—feeding, fueling and clothing our nation."

The definition of "waters of the United States" guides Clean Water Act implementation, including whether farmers, landowners and businesses must secure costly permits before they can pursue a project. To date, EPA has failed to follow the law and implement the Supreme Court's clear holding in Sackett. It is critical that Americans know which waters are subject to federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act to grow our economy and lower costs for American families while protecting human health and the environment.

EPA will start its review by expeditiously obtaining input from stakeholders who were sidelined during the previous administration. The agency will seek targeted information on the key challenges that Americans are facing. The agency will also undertake a rulemaking process to revise the 2023 definition of "waters of the United States" with a focus on clarity, simplicity and improvements that will stand the test of time. While this rulemaking process proceeds, the agency will provide guidance to those states implementing the pre-2015 definition of "waters of the United States" to ensure consistency with the law of the land.

A priority for the Trump Administration will be working cooperatively with state partners, empowering them and local officials to protect their treasured water bodies while accelerating economic opportunity. As a result, decisions will be made efficiently and effectively while benefiting from local knowledge and expertise.

EPA's review will be guided by the Supreme Court's decision in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, which stated that the Clean Water Act's use of "waters" encompasses only those relatively permanent, standing or continuously flowing bodies of water forming streams, oceans, rivers and lakes. The Sackett decision also clarified that wetlands would only be covered when having a continuous surface connection to waterbodies that are "waters of the United States" in their own right.

Announcements

(Taken from: EPA Weekly Announcements for NTC – Week of March 10-14, 2025)
For information on ongoing consultations, please visit the Tribal Consultation Opportunities Tracking System (TCOTS) websiteat https://tcots.epa.gov/.

Notification: Administrator Zeldin Announces EPA Will Revise Waters of the United States Rule

[Daniel Vaught note: this announcement has previously been shared by Andy Byrne to the NTC via email on 03/12/2025]

To the National Tribal Caucus,

Today, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced that EPA will work with the United States Army Corps of Engineers to deliver on President's Trump's promise to review the definition of "waters of the United States." The agencies will move quickly to ensure that a revised definition follows the law, reduces red-tape, cuts overall permitting costs, and lowers the cost of doing business in communities across the country while protecting the nation's navigable waters from pollution. The EPA and Department of the Army announced a joint memorandum issuing guidance to field staff on implementation of "continuous surface connection" consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's May 25, 2023, decision in the case of *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency.*

The agencies announced a *Federal Register* notice publicizing a series of six listening sessions and a 30-day recommendations docket to solicit feedback on

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key aspects of the definition of "waters of the United States." The six listening sessions will be held in-person with a virtual option for States, Tribes, industry and agricultural stakeholders, environmental and conservation stakeholders, and the general public. The agencies are committed to obtaining targeted input from a full spectrum of co-regulators and stakeholders on key topic areas related to the definition of "waters of the United States" in light of *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, regarding "continuous surface connection," "relatively permanent," and jurisdictional versus non-jurisdictional ditches. The agencies also seek input on implementation challenges related to those key topic areas. This webpage will be updated with information about the upcoming listening sessions.

https://www.epa.gov/wotus

Please see below for more information. Reach out with any questions.

Holly Galavotti, Office of Water's Tribal Program Coordinator
Office of Program Analysis, Regulatory, and Management Support (OPARMS)
Office of Water – Office of the Assistant Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
(202) 564-1489 | galavotti.holly@epa.gov

Press Release: EPA Will Revise Wastewater Regulations for Oil and Gas Extraction to Help Unleash American Energy (ELGs: Oil and Gas)
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-will-revise-wastewater-regulations-oil-and-gas-extraction-help-unleash-american

Press Release: EPA Announces Action to Implement POTUS's Termination of Biden-Harris Electric Vehicle Mandate
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-announces-action-implement-potuss-termination-biden-harris-electric-vehicle

Press Release: Trump EPA Kicks Off Formal Reconsideration of Endangerment Finding with Agency Partners
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/trump-epa-kicks-formal-reconsideration-endangerment-finding-agency-partners

Press Release: Administrator Zeldin Takes Action to Prioritize Cooperative Federalism, Improve Air Quality Faster
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/administrator-zeldin-takes-action-prioritize-cooperative-federalism-improve-air

Press Release: Administrator Zeldin Directs Enforcement Resources to Align with Executive Orders and EPA's Core Mission
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/administrator-zeldin-directs-enforcement-resources-align-executive-orders-and-epas

Press Release: EPA Terminates Biden's Environmental Justice, DEI Arms of Agency
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-terminates-bidens-environmental-justice-dei-arms-agency

Press Release: EPA Launches Biggest Deregulatory Action in U.S. History
https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-launches-biggest-deregulatory-action-us-history

Fact Sheet:
President Donald J. Trump Takes Immediate Action to Increase American Mineral Production

The White House | March 20, 2025
https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/03/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-takes-immediate-action-to-increase-american-mineral-production/

INCREASING AMERICAN MINERAL PRODUCTION: Today, President Donald J. Trump signed an Executive Order to boost American mineral production, streamline permitting, and enhance national security.

- Agencies shall compile a list of all mineral production projects that have submitted a plan of operations, permit application, or any other approval request to that agency in order to expedite the review and advancement of those projects in coordination with the National Energy Dominance Council (NEDC).
  - Additional mineral production projects will be considered for FAST-41 status to streamline permitting.
- New recommendations will be provided to Congress regarding treatment of waste rock, tailings, and mine waste disposal under the Mining Act of 1872.
- The Secretary of the Interior will prioritize mineral production activities over other types of activities on Federal lands that hold critical mineral deposits.
  - The Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Energy, Secretary of Agriculture, and Secretary of the

(Continued on page 30)

President Donald J. Trump Takes Immediate Action to Increase American Mineral Production

(Continued from page 29)

Interior shall identify additional sites that might be suitable for mineral production activities that can be permitted as soon as possible.
- The Defense Production Act (DPA) will be used to expand domestic mineral production capacity.
- Financing, loans, and investment support will be provided for new mineral production projects, including a dedicated critical minerals fund established through the United States International Development Finance Corporation in collaboration with the Department of Defense.
- The Trump Administration will coordinate with private industry to ensure a stable and resilient domestic supply chain for critical materials, including critical minerals.
- "Minerals" covered by the order include critical minerals, uranium, copper, potash, gold, and any other element, compound, or material as determined by the Chair of the NEDC, such as coal.

SECURING AMERICA'S MINERAL FUTURE: President Trump is boosting domestic mineral production to reduce U.S. reliance on foreign minerals, enhance national security, and create jobs.

- Demand for critical minerals has been dubbed the "gold rush of the 21st century" due to their importance in emerging technologies.
- The United States currently imports a significant portion of its minerals from foreign countries, creating economic and security risks, despite possessing a vast supply of critical minerals.
  - The United States is 100% import-reliant on at least 15 critical minerals, and imports of non-fuel mineral commodities make up more than half of U.S. consumption.
  - U.S. capacity utilization for the metal mining industry has declined for years.
- China, Iran, and Russia control large deposits of several minerals critical to the U.S., posing a national security risk.
  - 70% of U.S. imports of rare earths come from China.
- A strong domestic mineral production industry would ensure U.S. companies can compete globally without overly relying on foreign supply chains.
- Critical minerals are essential for U.S. military readiness, as they are key components in fighter jets, satellites, submarines, smart bombs, and missile guidance systems.

PRIORITIZING U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY: President Trump is committed to ending American dependence on hostile foreign powers for critical minerals.

- Immediately upon returning to office, President Trump signed an Executive Order to make the U.S. "the leading producer and processor of non-fuel minerals, including rare earth minerals."
- President Trump also signed an Executive Order advancing the Ambler Access Project, a 211-mile industrial road through Northwest Alaska that enables commercial mining for copper, zinc and other materials.
- This builds on actions President Trump took in his first term:
  - In 2017, President Trump implemented a Federal strategy to ensure secure and reliable supplies of critical minerals.
  - In 2019, President Trump signed five Presidential Determinations finding that domestic production of rare earth elements and materials is essential to the national defense.
  - In 2020, President Trump declared a National Emergency to expand the domestic mining industry, support mining jobs, alleviate unnecessary permitting delays, and reduce our Nation's dependence on China for critical minerals.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning – Learn the Facts!

Protect Your Family and Yourself

https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEPAIAQ/bulletins/3c5fce3

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health, length of exposure and the concentration of CO to which the person is exposed.

Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning!

(Continued on page 31)

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning – Learn the Facts!

(Continued from page 30)

Carbon monoxide symptoms can be flu-like (generally without fever) or may look like other health problems.

Carbon monoxide exposure can cause:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion or fainting

At high levels, carbon monoxide can be deadly.

Sources of carbon monoxide inside the home

Any fuel-fired appliances not properly installed, maintained or operated, including without adequate ventilation, can be a source of carbon monoxide. Some common indoor sources include:

- Fuel-fired heating and cooking appliances, like unvented kerosene heaters, gas space heaters, gas stoves, gas or charcoal grills
- Gas water heaters
- Wood stoves
- Improperly vented fireplaces
- Leaking chimneys and furnaces

Actions you can take to reduce exposure

- Vent fuel-fired combustion appliances to the outdoors, including stoves, heaters and furnaces.
- Avoid the use of unvented stoves, fireplaces or space heaters indoors, if possible. If you must use unvented appliances indoors, follow the manufacturer's instructions, especially related to ventilation.
- Install and use an exhaust fan vented to the outdoors over gas stoves.
- Open flue dampers when using fireplaces.
- Choose properly sized woodstoves for the space you'll be heating, and make sure the stove is certified to meet EPA emission standards.
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune-up central heating systems (furnace, flues and chimneys) annually. Repair any leaks properly.
- **Never** use gas or charcoal grills indoors – only use them outside.

Run vehicles outside your garage

Never run a vehicle inside a garage, not even with the garage door open. If you need to warm up your vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it.

Run fuel-powered, portable generators outdoors

Never use fuel-powered portable generators indoors.

- Use portable generators outside and at least 20 feet away from buildings.
- Consider using portable generators powered by batteries or solar power stations to power small appliances, lights and fans.

Install carbon monoxide alarms in your home

Install carbon monoxide alarms to prevent CO poisoning. Ensure they are working properly, and check or replace the battery at least once a year.

- CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home and in other locations where required by applicable laws, codes or standards. For the best protection, interconnect all CO alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for placement and mounting height.
- Choose a CO alarm that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Test CO alarms at least once a month; and replace them according to the manufacturer's instructions.

MEIC Staff Participate in Western Mining Action Network Conference

By Katy Spence, kspence@meic.org

Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC) staff recently attended the biennial Western Mining Action Network (WMAN) Conference in Montreal Canada along with advocates from across North America.

See link to article: https://meic.org/down-to-earth-december-2024/ (Pages 18 & 19)

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Find our newsletters on https://**ftbelknap.org**/forms%2Fdocuments (EPA)

Circle Speaker

Aaniiih & Nakoda Environmental Newsletter

VOLUME 29; ISSUE 3 (April-June)

Deadline for Articles is
Friday, June 6th, 2025 @ 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.

Inviting All Programs!

The Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department will be hosting it's Annual Earth Day Fair on Tuesday, April 22, 2025 with area students in grades 4-6 in Lodgepole, MT this year. If your Program is interested in setting up a Learning Station, call (406) 353-8384, or for more information, please refer to flier on page 9.