



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fish & Wildlife Management Assistance

Native American Tribal Assistance

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, through the Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance program, strives to fulfill Federal trust responsibilities to Native American Tribes. The program works with Native American Tribes to conserve and manage fish and wildlife resources on Tribal lands and ceded territories.

Native American cultures are closely connected to fish and wildlife resources for sustenance, cultural enrichment, and economic support. Tribal governments manage or have influence over some of the Nation's most important fish and wildlife resources.

There are 572 Federally recognized tribes in the United States, including 224 village groups in Alaska. "Federally recognized" means these tribes and governments have a special, legal relationship with the U.S. government.

The U.S. government is legally obligated to protect tribal trust resources, including fish and wildlife. The *Native American Policy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*, dated June 1994, articulates general principles that guide the Service's government-to-government relationship with Native American governments in the conservation of these resources.



Native Alaskan students and Fish & Wildlife Management Assistance biologists cooperate to conserve fish and habitats by monitoring water quality and fish communities in a local stream.

What are we doing?

The relationship between the Service and Native American Tribes has evolved over time. As Tribal capabilities have developed, the relationship with the Service has changed from one of dependence to one of partnership.

Today, some tribes possess technical capabilities similar to State or Federal agencies. However, many Tribal fish and wildlife programs are still in the development stages and greatly benefit from our assistance. For example, Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance biologists assess fishery resources on Indian reservations, develop fishery management plans, coordinate fish stocking and habitat improvement, and evaluate the results of management actions.

Despite the growth of tribal capabilities, Federal agencies retain trust responsibility for tribal natural resources. Tribes look to the Service's Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance program to provide technical assistance, to supplement tribal capabilities, and to serve as a trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation.

Did you know?

- n There are more than 55 million acres on more than 300 Indian reservations in 32 states.
- n Recreational fisheries potential exists on about 1.5 million acres of lakes and impoundments and over 13,000 miles of rivers and streams.
- n Reservations also support important wildlife resources, including elk, bighorn sheep, bison, mule deer, whitetailed deer, and antelope.



Members of the White Mountain Apache Tribe remove invasive salt cedar to restore natural flows to a de-watered spring.

What have we accomplished?

A few examples:

n Conducted a telemetry study on the Crow Indian Reservation to provide baseline information on a migratory elk herd, and training and educational opportunities for tribal students.

n Assessed walleye fisheries in northern Wisconsin, with tribal, federal, and state biologists, and determined that treaty fishing by Chippewa Indians was not damaging the fishery resource, leading to a resolution of public controversy and long-standing litigation.

n Documented the distribution of Bonneville cutthroat trout on the Goshute Reservation in Utah, rehabilitated two streams and reintroduced Bonneville cutthroats to help restore this imperiled species to Reservation waters.

n Reintroduced lake sturgeon to waters of the Menominee Reservation, Wisconsin, by transferring lake sturgeon from below dams in the Wolf River, and tracked their movements using radiotelemetry.

n Marked 1,800,000 chinook and coho salmon with coded-wire tags for Nez Perce tribal restoration programs in Idaho, and Yakima tribal restoration programs in Washington.

By providing fish and wildlife management and assistance to tribes, the Service fulfills Federal obligations, improves the quality of life for Native Americans and others who use and enjoy these resources, and fulfills the agency's mission to "conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats."

Apache and Gila trout may be removed from the endangered species list within two years due to cooperative restoration efforts of the White Mountain Apache Tribe and the Service.

Activities include (a) reclaiming the stream habitats by removing invasive species that out compete the native trout. Then (b) native trout are reintroduced to the stretch of river by relocation of hatchery stock.



Apache trout



Gila trout

(b)

(a)

