

# Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness

## **A CASE STUDY**

NATIVE LANDS AND WILDERNESS COUNCIL 2005



Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes



PREPARED FOR THE  
**NATIVE LANDS AND  
WILDERNESS COUNCIL**

BY THE  
**CONFEDERATED SALISH  
AND KOOTENAI TRIBES**

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AND KOOTENAI TRIBES  
PABLO, MT

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*The Mission Mountains have served as a guide, passage way, fortification, and vision-seeking grounds as well as a place to gather medicinal herbs, roots, and a place to hunt for food for the Pend d'Oreille, Salish, and Kootenai Indians since they have lived at the foothills of the Missions...*

*They have become for us, the descendants of Indians, sacred grounds. Grounds that should not be disturbed or marred...Lands and landmarks carved through the minds of our ancestors through Coyote stories and actual experiences. Lands, landmarks, trees, mountain tops, crevices that we should look up to with respect.*

Clarence Woodcock  
Salish Culture Committee

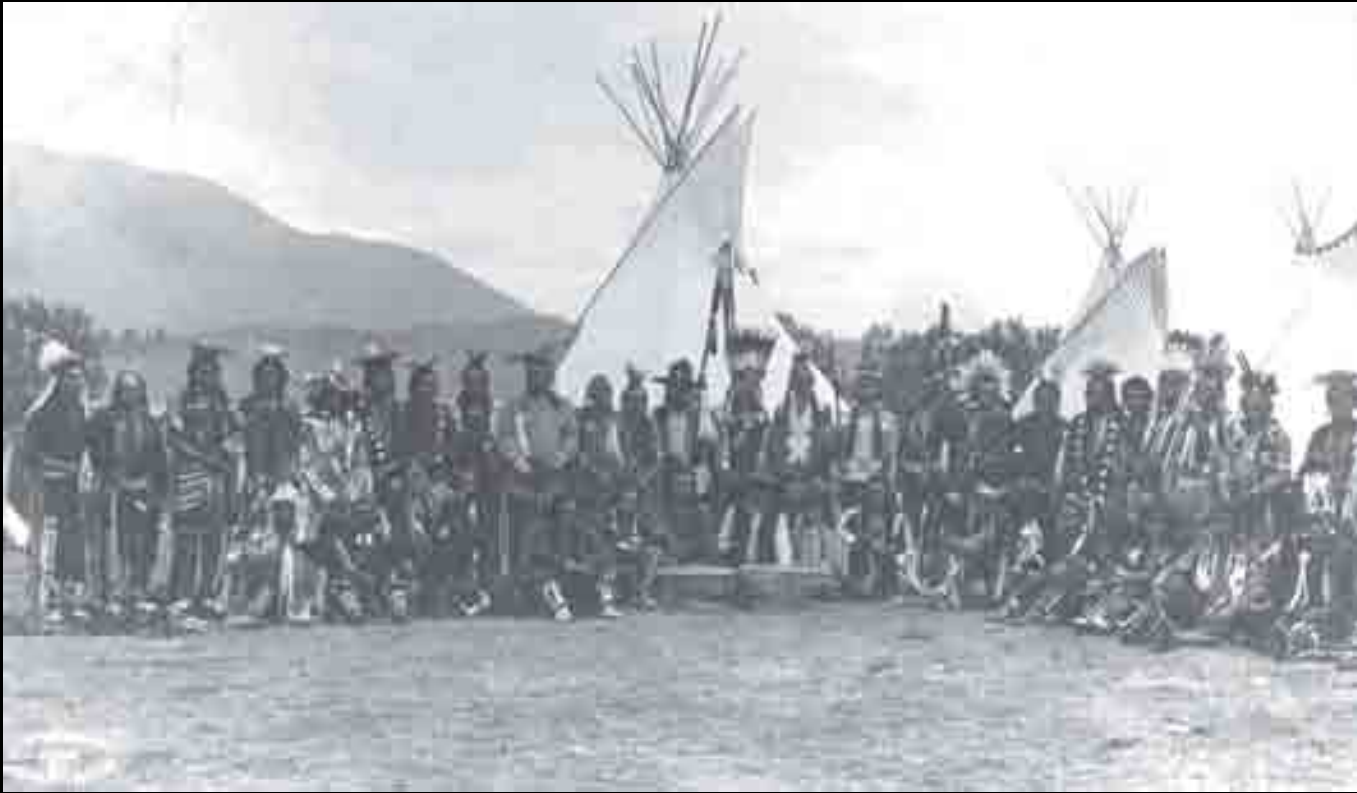




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*Our elders have many stories to tell about experiences in the mountains... They are lands where our people walked and lived... We realize the importance of these mountains to our elders, to ourselves, and for the perpetuation of our Indian culture because of these stories.*

Clarence Woodcock  
Salish Culture Committee



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*These mountains belong to our children, and when our children  
grow old, they will belong to their children. In this way and for  
this reason they are sacred.*

Doug Allard  
Save the Mission Mountains Committee



## FOREWORD

*A long time ago...all over this land, the people's medicine was put here...It was good! Their home life was good, they were growing up in a good way, the children of the long-ago people. The land was clean, the air was clean, everything was good.*

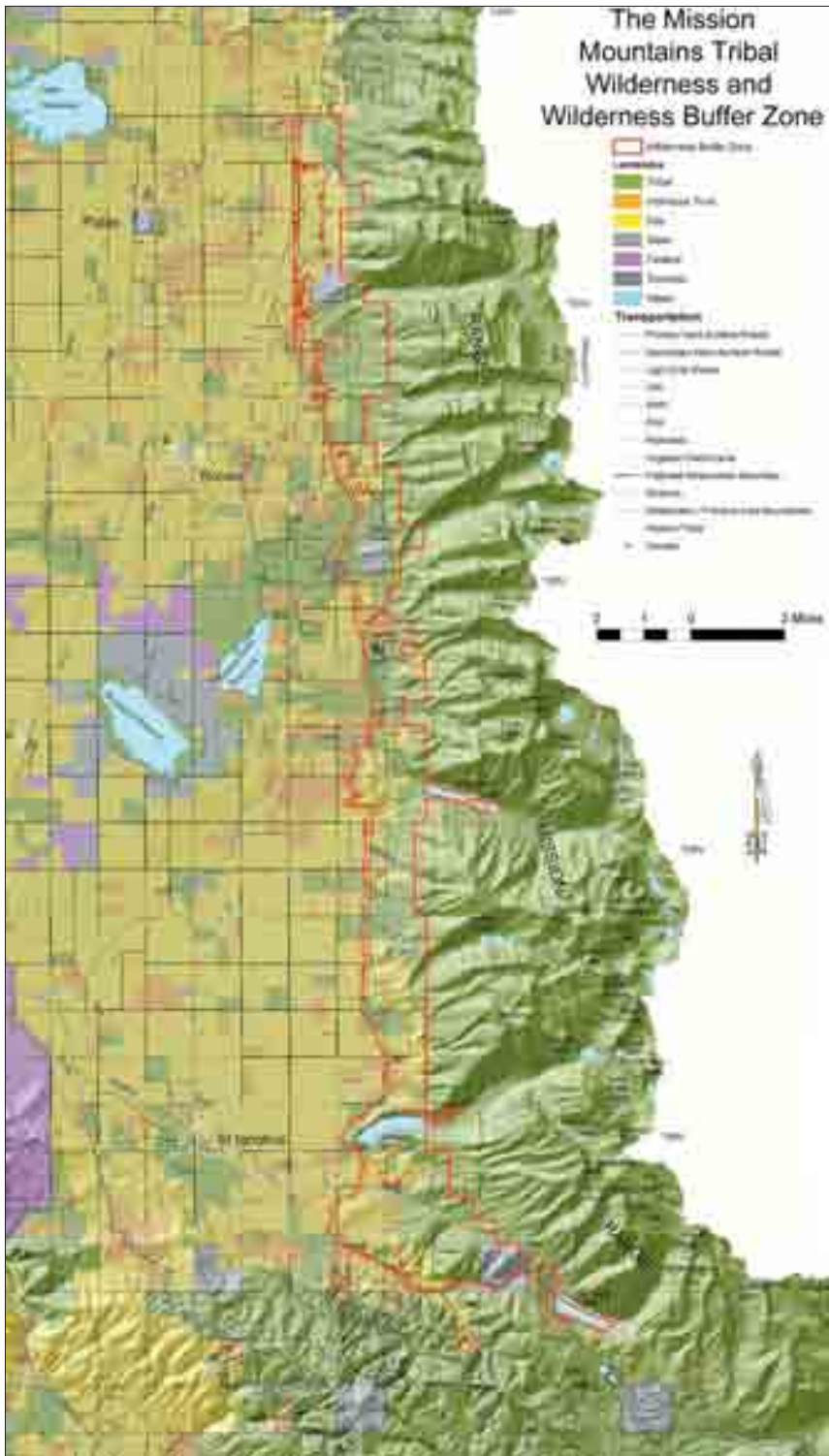
Mitch Smallsalmon  
Pend d'Oreille, 1978

The area known today as the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness was a small part of a vast landscape that our people have taken care of from time immemorial. We were not only connected spiritually and physically to this place, but we enjoyed an intimate relationship with all of the lands in our aboriginal territory. We were tied to this land by our ancestor's and elder's stories that related our oral history and told us of Coyote's travels and activities. John Stanislaw, tribal elder, told me that every drainage, every lake, and every mountain, valley, and prairie had a significant story.

Today we still depend on this land for our game and our fish and our plants. The elders have told us how important it is to protect it. We not only have to protect the Mission Mountains Wilderness, but we have to watch over all of the places in our aboriginal territory. Our ancestors kept our rights to continue our relationship with our homelands in the 1855 Treaty of Hell Gate. We honor our ancestors through our stewardship of the land and by maintaining and exercising the rights we kept in our treaty. This is our generational responsibility that we grow up with as Indian people.

Terry Tanner  
CSKT Wildland Recreation Program  
September 7, 2005

The Mission  
Mountains Tribal  
Wilderness and  
Wilderness Buffer Zone



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## CHAPTER ONE

### **HISTORY: The First Tribal Wilderness**

Before he died, Pete Beaverhead, a tribal elder, said that he would go up into the mountains for weeks at a time and then would be afraid to come back down because “...it was so clear up there. I knew the air down below would be bad. It was the stink from the roads and the other things the white man has made.”



**T**he striking peaks found in the Mission Mountains of Flathead Nation of western Montana crown a wilderness range unique in the United States both in majesty and management. Standing more than a mile above the farm lands and towns of the Mission Valley, the western front of the range provides one of the most spectacular valley landscapes in the Rocky Mountain region. But the range is more than a natural wonder. It is the first place in America in which an Indian nation has matched, and possibly exceeded, the Federal Government in dedicating lands to be managed as wilderness.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes are comprised of descendants of Salish (Flathead), Pend d’Oreille, and Kootenai Indians, tribes that traditionally occupied a twenty million acre area stretching from Central Montana to Eastern Washington and north into Canada.

The signing of the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 ceded the vast majority of those ancestral lands to the United States Government in return for the approximately 1.2 million acres now known as the Flathead Indian Reservation.

In the words of then governor of the Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens, the Treaty gave access to “much valuable land and an inexhaustible supply of timber” and enabled “settlers to secure titles to land and thus the growth of towns and villages.” The loss of this vast wilderness meant the potential loss of traditional Indian society. Every aspect of the Indian culture, from hunting and food gathering to religious practices, was dependent upon a wilderness setting.

To the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai Indians, the Mission Mountains were one part of this wilderness homeland, distinct in its incredible ruggedness and extreme weather but no more wild or primeval than anywhere else. And, like other features of the landscape, the Mission Mountains influenced the culture and economy of the Tribes. The area could be crossed only through certain passes on a network of trails that had been used for thousands of years by the Salish, Pend d’Oreille, Kootenai, and other tribes. They enjoyed the striking natural beauty, fished the lakes, hunted elk, deer, goats, and sheep, and harvested plants from the forests and ridge tops. They also practiced spiritual traditions throughout the area.

The first attempt by the Tribes to officially protect the Mission Range occurred in 1936, during a period of extensive trail construction in the mountainous areas of the

Reservation by the Indian Civilian Conservation Corps. That year, the newly established Tribal Council voted to set aside about 100,000 acres of the western slope of the Mission Mountains as an Indian-maintained national park. The Tribes sought to retain ownership of the lands but planned to parallel the National Park Service in its administration of the area. With support of the local Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Superintendent, the Council wanted to encourage Tribal member use of the park. They envisioned an area of traditional encampments and opportunities for Indian guides to bring visitors into the park.

In a 1936 press release, the BIA Superintendent of the Flathead Agency wrote:

*It is planned to maintain the park in its present natural state. Roads will not be built . . . A complete system of trails will be, and some trails are already constructed. . . These trails will, for the most part, follow old Indian trails. At natural camp places, shelters will be erected for the convenience of the traveler and explorer, with corrals in connection where necessary. Indian guides will be available to conduct parties through the park.*

Nothing ever came of the Tribal Council action requesting establishment of the park. Correspondence suggests the idea died in Washington D.C. in the office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, which has trust responsibilities for Indian lands.

Ironically, just one year later, the then Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier, signed an order drafted by then Chief Forester for the same Office of Indian Affairs, Bob Marshall, that classified the Mission Range as a roadless area.

**40,000 BP** Earliest known Indian presence in North America.

**1804** Jesuits establish a mission at the base of the Mission Mountains.

**1854** Lewis and Clark arrive and are welcomed by the Salish.

**1855** Hellgate Treaty creates Flathead Reservation.

**1891** Bitterroot Salish moved from Bitterroot to Reservation.

**1909** Reservation opened to non-Indian homesteaders.



The order established twelve such roadless areas and four wild areas on twelve reservations across the country. Its stated purpose:

*If on reservations, where the Indians desire privacy, sizeable areas are uninhabited by roads, then it will be possible for the Indians of these tribes to maintain a retreat where they may escape from constant contact with white men.*

A second goal was to preserve some untouched land for future generations. But because the federal government established the areas without consent of the tribes, the affected nations petitioned to have them declassified. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai formally protested the Marshall Order in 1939, and in 1958 they officially requested that the part of the order applying to the Flathead Reservation be withdrawn. The Mission Mountains Roadless area was declassified in the Federal Register in 1959.

During the early 1970s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Flathead Agency proposed to log portions of the remaining roadless area on the western front of the Mission Range on behalf of the Tribes. The proposal, as well as other development activities (clearcuts, roads, poor logging practices, pipelines, dams, etc.) fueled a renewed interest in preserving the Mission Mountains in a natural state and in protecting other reservation areas.

It was about this time that Thurman Trospen, (a Tribal member and retired U.S. Forest Service employee and past president of the Wilderness Society) returned home to the

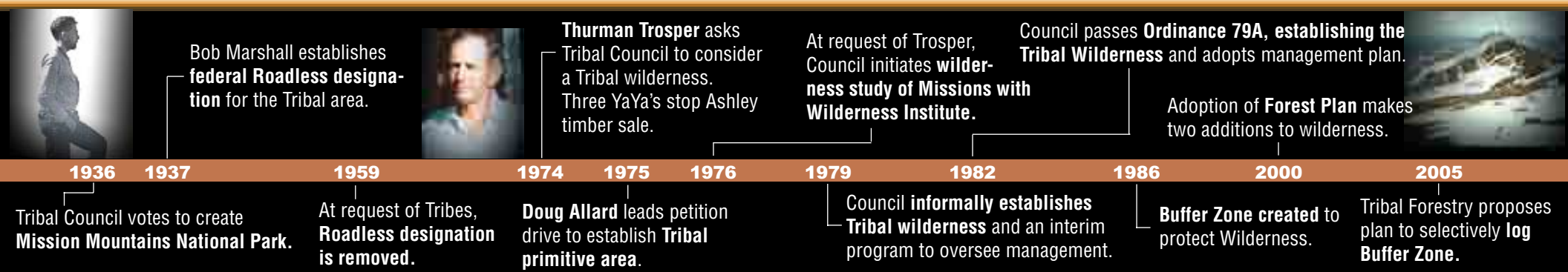


Thurman Trospen was key in gaining the wilderness designation.

Flathead Reservation. He proposed the idea of establishing a tribal wilderness area to the Council. Also at about this time, three greatly respected grandmothers (Yayas)—Annie Pierre, Christine Woodcock, and Louise McDonald—protested the timber sales proposed for the Missions and led the way for other community leaders to organize the Save the Mission Mountains Committee, a group led by Tribal

businessman Doug Allard. Its purpose was to stop the timber sales proposed for the Missions. The Committee circulated a petition in 1975 asking the Council to designate the range a Tribal primitive area in which logging would be banned. Soon after this, the Council seriously began to consider some type of wilderness protection.

Several proposals were advanced, all of which lacked overall management considerations other than prohibiting logging. A proposal containing the least acreage included only those lands unfeasible for timber harvesting. Advocates of this proposal were concerned about loss of income from reductions in commercial timber lands.



Allard's Save the Mission Mountains Committee proposed a boundary that came to the base of the mountain range and included private and roaded lands, which made it politically unfeasible. Their interest centered on protecting aesthetic values and preserving the wilderness character of the area, thereby helping to retain some of the cultural and spiritual values important to most Tribal members.



*Doug Allard led the group Save the Missions.*

In 1976, the Tribal Council, at the recommendation of Thurman Trosper, contracted with the Wilderness Institute of the University of Montana to develop a draft boundary and management proposal for a Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Area. Two years later the Institute presented the drafts, which were a compromise of previous proposals, to the Council for review. The Council took no immediate action, but a year later they approved the draft boundary and decided to create a new Tribal program to oversee the interim management of the area. Called the Wildland Recreation Program, it was also charged with developing a wilderness management plan to meet the specific needs and values of the Tribes.

### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS

The Mission Divide makes up the eastern boundary of the Flathead Reservation, and the east side of the Mission Range is managed by the U.S. Forest Service. In 1931, a portion of this part of the range was classified as a primitive area. Named the "Mission Mountains Primitive Area", it encompassed 67,000 acres. An additional 8,500 acres was added in 1939. Officially classified as wilderness in 1975, the 73,877-acre area is now managed in accordance with the federal Wilderness Act. A high level of cooperation exists between managers of the Tribal and federal areas.

The program completed the plan in the spring of 1982, and on June 15 the council voted overwhelmingly to approve Ordinance 79A, the Tribal Wilderness Ordinance, and adopted the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Management Plan.

### THREE YAYAS

In 1974, as the Tribal Council was considering a proposal to log Ashley Creek, in the heart of the Mission Range, three YaYas (grandmothers) accompanied by Germaine White, went to visit the Council. The chairman greeted them, and the YaYas requested a moment of the council's time to talk about Ashley Creek. The Council agreed, and each of the elders spoke. They said that people are only on earth for a short time, and that it is important to take care of what's here and to pass it on to the children in good condition. They said that that is our responsibility, and they told the Tribal Council that the Missions Mountains were a treasure and that it was important we not destroy them in the short time we are here.



The Tribal Council listened, and when the last of the Yayas had spoken, the chairman thanked the grandmothers and waited for them to sit down. But the Yayas continued to stand. So the chairman asked if there was anything else they wanted to say. One of the Yayas replied, "Well, we'll just wait here until you vote."

According to Germaine, it soon became clear the women were not leaving. The councilmen looked back and forth at each other, until finally the chairman called for a vote. That was the end of the Ashley Logging Unit, and the Ashley Creek sale was the last proposed timber sale for what would become the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness.



## CHAPTER TWO

### **PROTECTION: Tribal Ordinance 79A**

“Wilderness...is the essence of traditional Indian religion and has served the Indian people of these Tribes as a place to hunt, as a place to gather medicinal herbs and roots, as a vision seeking ground, as a sanctuary, and in countless other ways for thousands of years.”



The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness is established by a Tribal ordinance (Ordinance 79A). Article II of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes provides that “all final decisions of the Tribal Council on matters of general and permanent interest to the members of the Confederated Tribes shall be embodied in ordinances.”

But ordinances are not permanent enactments; they can be revised or rescinded by a simple majority vote of the Tribal Council. However, popular support for the wilderness would make it difficult for the Tribal Council to rescind the ordinance or weaken its provisions. The only stronger protection than the current ordinance would be an ordinance passed by the Tribal Council and approved by a referendum vote of the Tribal membership, an option a future Tribal Council may consider.

The Tribal Council's action in 1982 to approve Ordinance 79A was historic: It was the first time that an Indian Tribe had decided on its own accord to protect a sizable portion of its lands as wilderness and provide policy and personnel to fulfill its propose.

The Tribal Wilderness Ordinance states:

*“Wilderness has played a paramount role in shaping the character of the people and the culture of the Salish and Kootenai Tribes; it is the essence of traditional Indian religion and has served the Indian people of these Tribes as a place to hunt, as a place to gather medicinal herbs and roots, as a vision seeking ground, as a sanctuary, and in countless other ways for thousands of years. Because maintaining an enduring resource of wilderness is vitally important to the people of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the perpetuation of their culture, there is hereby established a Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Area and this area, described herein, shall be administered to protect and preserve wilderness values.”*

Because of the precedent-setting nature of the designation, no legal definition of wilderness existed at the time other than that found in the federal Wilderness Act. So much of the language in the Tribal ordinance, particularly the definition of wilderness, matches that found in the federal act:

*“A wilderness is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined as an area of undeveloped tribal land, retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions.”*

*“It is the principal objective of this Ordinance to protect and preserve an area of land in its natural conditions in perpetuity. This Wilderness shall be devoted to the purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, cultural, religious and historical use only insofar as these uses are consistent with the spirit and provisions of this Ordinance.*

*Human use of this area must not interfere with the preservation of the area as wilderness.”*

A significant difference between the Tribal Ordinance and the federal Wilderness Act, however, is that Ordinance 79A states unambiguously that a primary purpose of the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness is the preservation of Tribal culture, and it acknowledges the importance of wilderness to the perpetuation of traditional Indian religion.

In writing the ordinance, the authors reflected upon and borrowed from the federal wilderness language but they also consulted cultural and spiritual leaders in the Tribal community. Although there was a strong belief that traditional Indian culture was and is part of the natural world, the consensus among these leaders was that the value of the Mission Mountains for future Tribal cultural and religious purposes would be substantially diminished if human use was allowed to degrade the area's exceptional natural qualities. They were especially concerned about the impacts of non-Indian use and the potential damaging impacts of twentieth-century technologies. In the end, they decided preservation of the area as wilderness had to take precedence over human use.

In that spirit, the ordinance prohibits permanent the building of roads, in the wilderness, and it states:

*“except as necessary to meet the minimum requirements for administration of the Area for the purpose of this Ordinance (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft or other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within the area.”*



## CHAPTER THREE

### **MANAGEMENT: The Plan and How Management Sets This Wilderness Apart**

“Management is necessary to ensure an enduring wilderness in the Mission Mountains. The manager’s job is to monitor human uses and their influences, to identify how they are affecting or changing natural processes, to define the limits of acceptable human-caused change, and then to act in a manner consistent with the purpose of the Wilderness.”



The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness is located on the western slopes of the Mission Range, and covers approximately 91,778 acres. It ranges in elevation from 4,000 feet to over 10,000 feet at the mountain peaks and is approximately 34 miles long and an average of five miles wide.

On the eastern slopes of the Mission Range, the U.S. Forest Service manages the federally protected Mission Mountains Wilderness, established in 1975. That area covers approximately 75,000 acres. Both wilderness areas combine with the Bob Marshall Wilderness to the east to form one large ecosystem. Geographic features include forested slopes and high mountain valleys, rocky cliffs, rugged rocky peaks, subalpine and alpine lakes, creeks, and some small glaciers.

On the Tribal side, the forest cover is dominated by Douglas-fir and subalpine fir trees mixed with cedar, larch, spruce, and stands of ponderosa pine and lodgepole pine. The Douglas-fir communities on the lower slopes are proceeding toward climax stage, with some stands becoming quite dense. This density has resulted in increasing outbreaks of insect and disease, which has caused high mortality in some stands and resulted in blow down and a build up of fire fuels.

Nine major streams issue from the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness area. In addition, approximately 113 lakes greater than one acre in size can be found in the cirque basins created by the glaciers that formed the landscape. In the past, campsites along these lakes were used when Indians hunted and fished in the Missions, or as rest stops during journeys across the mountains to or from other traditional hunting grounds. For hikers these high mountain lakes provide some of the most breathtaking and memorable sights on the Reservation. Unfortunately, some have been degraded by excessive or inappropriate use, which has caused soil compaction and erosion, litter, multiple fire rings, and horse and human fecal contamination of surface waters.

Most trailheads are located at the Wilderness boundary—some with campground facilities, others marked only by a trailhead sign. Many of the trails were built by members of the Tribes long ago; others were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCCs) in the 1930s during the Great Depression. Trailhead/campground areas contain some facilities, whereas campsites usually consist only of fire rings.

The number of trails and trailheads has varied through the years. A 1941 CCCs inventory counted 26 trailheads and 40 trails, a 1963 inventory 20 trailheads and 20 trails; and a 1972 inventory only 6 trailheads and 8 trails. Today there are 9 developed trailheads and 12 major trails that are



maintained and that receive regular use. An additional 8 trails receive limited use and only “impact” maintenance. The primary season of use of the is summer, from June to September, although higher trails and lakes are not ordinarily used until midsummer, after the snowpack melts. The trails are all located in prime wildlife habitats. Grizzly bears, elk, deer, mountain lions, mountain goats, eagles, black bears and other wildlife use the area with humans, which creates special management needs. Most campgrounds and trailheads are located in the Wilderness Buffer Zone, and they fall under less strict management guidelines than those within the Tribal Wilderness.

Numerous roads access the Wilderness along the foothills of the Mission Range. County roads, private roads, irrigation roads, power line access roads, and old tribal logging roads crisscross the landscape at and near the base of the mountains. Many private and Tribal (BIA logging) roads run within the Buffer Zone and in some cases into the Wilderness. All roads within the Wilderness have been ordered to be closed, however some remain open due to closure logistics. These open roads

are sometimes used for illegal activities such as permit noncompliance, Christmas tree and fuelwood harvest, hunting by non-members, and vehicle use.

The Wilderness is currently managed under the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Management Plan, revised in 1997, for the “protection and preservation of the area’s natural conditions in perpetuity.” Management of the area enables the Tribes to monitor human uses and their influences, define limits of acceptable change, and then act to prevent degradation, or restore impacted areas. The Wilderness Plan is an administrative guide for Tribal staff and the framework for human use of the area.

The Tribal Wilderness Ordinance provides for various human uses as long as they are consistent with the area’s primary purpose: the protection and preservation of natural conditions in perpetuity. The protection of the wilderness resource is the dominant motivation in all management decisions where a choice must be made between wilderness values and visitors or their activities.

Also inherent in the Ordinance is the recognition that, in addition to the benefits derived from the direct use of the Area as wilderness, there are substantial indirect benefits to many tribal members. That is, tribal members draw spiritual and physical refreshment from simply knowing the area and the plants and wild animals it supports are protected as wilderness.

Management is necessary to ensure an enduring wilderness in the Mission Mountains. The manager’s job is to monitor human uses and their influences, to identify how they are affecting or changing natural processes, to define the limits of acceptable human-caused change, and then to act in a manner consistent with the purpose of the Wilderness. The policies contained within the plan help to define the limits of acceptable human-caused change.



Wilderness, as defined by the Ordinance, has many elements and, in managing the area all the elements are considered. Losing one or more elements of the Wilderness can seriously degrade the quality of the overall wilderness resource. Management therefore seeks to treat the Wilderness as a whole and not as a series of separate, distinct parts.

Management strives to maintain or, in special cases, reestablish natural distributions and numbers of plants and animals. Except as specifically provided for in the Ordinance, natural processes, both physical and biological, are allowed to continue without human influence.

Management also seeks to preserve spontaneity of use and as much freedom from regulation as possible while preserving the naturalness of the wilderness area. It emphasizes solitude, physical and mental challenge, and freedom from the intrusion of unnatural sights and sounds. Indirect methods of distributing use are favored over direct regulation.

In addition, management seeks to provide visitors with a spectrum of wilderness opportunities; opportunities range from a good selection of well-maintained trails on one end of the spectrum to an area without trails on the other. Another objective is to prevent the further degradation of naturalness and solitude and to restore heavily impacted, substandard areas to minimum standards.

Management is carried out in the least obtrusive manner. Tools used in the administration of the area are the minimum necessary to safely and successfully do the work. The tool, equipment, or structure chosen is the one that least degrades wilderness values temporarily or permanently.

The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness is managed as a tribal wilderness; the needs and values of tribal members take precedent over those of non-tribal members. A common thread through all management considerations is the Tribes' cultural and spiritual ties to wilderness.

Although wilderness use trends may vary, the simple existence of wilderness in a region has economic benefits. Population growth over the past 15 years in counties located adjacent to wilderness areas has been 2 to 3.5 times higher than in other counties, according to a study of 277 U.S. counties. In Montana during the 1980s, nine of the top 12 counties in population growth were located next to wilderness areas. These "wilderness counties" became "magnets to business and population because of the high quality local environmental resources, many of which are preserved and protected by wilderness" (Rudzitis, 1987). These counties grew economically in spite of severe

fluctuations in the economy because the natural landscape "drew people there, kept them there, and helped them permanently sustain the local communities and economies" (Power, 1988).

Continuous impacts on the limited wilderness resources by human and stock use have made it necessary to restrict certain activities in certain parts of the wilderness. Several 'zones' in the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness receive special management considerations:

1. *Special Grizzly Bear Management Zone* - Established in 1982 along with and within the Tribal Wilderness, it covers approximately 10,000 acres surrounding McDonald Peak and Ashley Lakes drainage. It is where, during the summer months, a number of grizzly bears gather to feed on insects. Each year the entire area is closed to human use from July 15 (earlier if the situation warrants it) to October 1 (later if the situation warrants it) to both minimize disturbance to bears and to provide for the safety of people.



Jay Sumner © 2005



2. *Ashley Lakes Day Use Area* - The Ashley Lakes area and trail, located within the Special Grizzly Bear Management Zone, is restricted to day use only when the area is open to recreational use (when the Grizzly Bear Closure is in effect, this area is closed). During spring and fall this area may receive heavy grizzly bear use and there is a potential for human-bear conflicts. This restriction is designed to both minimize disturbance to bears and to provide for the safety of people.
3. *Trailless Area* - When the Tribal Wilderness was established, this area, with a few minor exceptions, was trailless. Not only was it not economically feasible to develop new trails in this rugged and rocky terrain, the country was open enough where in most cases trails were not needed. In addition, for recreationists, the Trailless Area provides a wider spectrum of opportunities in cross-country travel, a greater chance to experience solitude, and a generally more primitive and wild camping and hiking experience.
4. *Spring Stock Use Closure* - Since 1989 the entire Tribal Wilderness area is closed to all livestock use (including all pack and riding stock) from March 1 through June 30. This closure came about due to the damage and erosion problems to the trails and campsites caused by stock when the soils are most vulnerable .
5. *North Fork Post Creek Fishing Closure* - Enacted in 1989 to protect naturally reproducing trout populations in the Summit Basin area from fishing harvest, this regulation affords protection to spawning runs in the tributary streams of Moon, Long, Frog, and Summit Lakes.



The following areas and resources are given special consideration when decisions are made regarding management of wilderness resources:

1. *Grizzly Bear Management Zone* and grizzly bear habitats for a sustainable grizzly population.
2. *Other endangered species* and habitats for maintenance of biological diversity.
3. *Cultural site* protection.
4. *Maintenance of fragile alpinetundra* ecosystem.
5. *Sensitivity of riparian zones* for water quality and wildlife protection.
6. *Municipal watershed* protection.
7. *Trailless area* maintenance.
8. *Wilderness Buffer Zone*.
9. *Trails and campsites* (locations, environmental impacts, and history of visitor use).

10. *Fisheries* management is weighted to give special attention to waters containing native West Slope Cutthroat Trout and native Bull Trout.

The following provisions govern use principally by Non-Tribal members:

1. *Use of any Tribal lands or waters by non-Tribal members* requires the purchase of a Tribal conservation license and the appropriate activity stamp (fish, bird hunt, or camp), this is a requirement for use of wilderness lands.
2. *A group size limit* of 8 persons and 8 head of livestock is in place for wilderness lands.
3. *Use of a campsite* for longer than 3 consecutive days is prohibited.
4. It is illegal to carry or use a *firearm*.
5. *Any commercial use* of the Tribal Wilderness is not allowed (no outfitting or guides).

The following plans, policies, codes and resolutions affect the Wilderness:

1. Ordinance 79A, Tribal Resolution 82-137, which approved the plan to protect wilderness as a valuable resource.
2. Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Management Plan.
3. Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan.
4. Grizzly Bear Management Plan for the Flathead Reservation

5. Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Fire Management Plan
6. Fisheries Management Plan of the Flathead Indian Reservation
7. Reservation Class I Airshed Designation (See Chapter 9, Air.)
8. Ronan municipal water supply lease (Middle Crow Creek)
9. Snow Survey Measurement Agreement (See Chapter 10, Water.)
10. Ordinance 44D subject to Joint Tribal/State Hunting & Fishing agreement

In addition to the policies established by the Tribes and BIA, other agencies involved in the management of similar resources adjacent to the Tribal Wilderness and Buffer Zone make an effort to standardize management goals. For example, the U.S. Forest Service is attempting to adopt the Tribes' wilderness regulation which limits group sizes.

In 1992, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes and USDA Flathead National Forest developed a joint wilderness map for the Mission Mountains wilderness complex. The purpose of the development of this map was to increase visitor awareness of the tribal wilderness regulations and wildlife protection zones and to reduce visitor pressure at high-use areas.

The first Flathead Nation wilderness manager stated: "Wilderness is, to a segment of the Tribal population, vitally important. It is one part of the Indian culture that remains as it was. Preservation then, expresses reverence for the land and its community of life, as well as respect for Indian culture."

## **The Buffer Zone**

Currently, the management goals of wilderness differ dramatically from the management goal(s) of non-wilderness. Management strategies change abruptly at the Tribal Wilderness boundary, with impacts from activities occurring outside the Tribal Wilderness encroaching, at least to some degree, on the Tribal Wilderness. Accordingly, the Tribal Council decided to establish a buffer zone to act as a “cushion” to the Tribal Wilderness to protect it from outside influences.

In January 1986, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council approved Resolution 86-47 which established the Wilderness Buffer Zone Committee and charged it with drawing up a Buffer Zone boundary and management plan. Following Council direction, the Committee developed the following overall goal for the Buffer Zone: “to protect and preserve the integrity of the Tribal Wilderness.”

In 1987, the Tribal Council adopted the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan. In 1990, the Tribal Council approved Resolution 90-73 reestablishing the Buffer Zone Administrative Use Committee, which revised the 1987 Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan. The Tribal Council adopted the plan in 1993.

The Buffer Zone is designed to control, to the extent possible, those activities that may adversely impact the Tribal Wilderness and erode its primary purpose. The intent of the plan is to establish interim Tribal management practices for natural resources. It is not intended to represent an ultimate Tribal governmental position on any aspect of natural resource management. Rather, it was enacted to deal with immediate management concerns in the least confrontational method possible and to encourage other jurisdictions and interested individuals to offer advice and suggestions on how to more fully address, on an ecosystems basis, holistic natural resource management.

The Buffer Zone encompasses approximately 22,833 acres in the Mission Mountains foothills. The lower foothills are used for a multitude of purposes including, but not limited to, cultural uses, livestock grazing, timber harvest, recreation, homesites, Christmas tree harvest, and post and pole harvest.

The objective of the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan is the development of an administrative process that ensures that management of the Buffer Zone will be conducted using an interdisciplinary approach so planning and decision-making will consider all the resources within the area. Additionally, the Management Plan provides resource managers with clear guidelines to follow when considering activities within the Buffer Zone. It includes the following policies:

1. All Tribal, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and other federal government programs conducting activities within the Buffer Zone will be governed by the guidelines set forth in the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan.
2. Private landowners and all non-Tribal governmental entities conducting activities within the Buffer Zone are encouraged to follow the guidelines in the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan.
3. The Administrative Use Oversight Committee (AUO) will be responsible for implementation and monitoring of the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan. The AUO will use the interdisciplinary approach to decision-making and will call upon experts in appropriate fields as needs arise.
4. The Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Plan will be updated and amended as needed.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **BENEFITS: What has been Gained Through Wilderness Designation**

Tony Incashola, a cultural leader of our Tribes, has said we protect these area not for us, but for our ancestors, our elders, and our children. So protecting the Wilderness is a way of honoring our ancestors and elders. It is also a way of telling our children that we care about them and their future.



In our Comprehensive Resources Plan, our Tribes have identified the following fundamental values, which are based on long-held cultural attitudes toward the land and its historical use of resources by our ancestors:

- Respect and live in harmony with each other and with the land, the latter of which we are borrowing from our children.
- Act on a spiritual basis when dealing with the environment.
- Preserve the abundance of animals, plants, and fish.
- Maintain hunting and fishing based on need and traditional use.

By establishing and maintaining the Tribal Wilderness, we help to sustain these deep-seated values, which are key to preserving our culture.

Other, related benefits include:

- The Tribal Wilderness serves as an important retreat from roads, motorized vehicles, media, and all the other technologies and noises of our modern society. In so doing, it provides our children and us with an appropriate place to connect with our ancestors and our traditional cultural and spiritual practices.
- For many Tribal people, wilderness is a peaceful sanctuary that provides much-needed solitude and an opportunity for spiritual renewal. For other Tribal members, who may never visit the area, it puts their mind at peace to know that one of the most beautiful places on the Reservation is protected in its natural condition for this and future generations of Tribal members and for the plant and animal communities that live in the mountains.
- Our Tribal communities depend on opportunities for subsistence hunting and fishing close to home. Our spiritual traditions depend on sensitive species like grizzly bear, elk, mountain goat, wolf, lynx, and native trout. Those species in turn require undisturbed habitat to survive and thrive. Maintaining the Tribal Wilderness helps to preserve the diverse plant and animal life needed to keep Tribal communities healthy.
- The Reservation's cleanliest water begins in the Tribal wilderness and primitive areas. Tribal communities depend on that clean water for drinking, fishing, spiritual and cultural traditions, agriculture, and a host of other uses.
- The Tribal Wilderness provides our youth with healthy alternatives for recreation. It is a place free

of pressures like drugs and alcohol, a place where our young people can have extraordinary, even life-changing experiences while learn in a concrete way about their cultural and spiritual traditions.

- Tony Incashola, a cultural leader of our Tribes, has said we protect these area not for us, but for our ancestors, our elders, and our children. So protecting the Wilderness is a way of honoring our ancestors and elders and a way of telling our children that we care about them and their future. For our Tribes, honoring our elders and our children are two of the most important cultural traditions we have.
- Designation of the Tribal Wilderness has made the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes a national leader in the conservation movement and brought international respect and acclaim to the Tribes. The recognition undoubtedly helped the Tribes in its endeavor to assume management responsibility of the National Bison Range.
- The Tribal Wilderness brings thousands of visitors to the Reservation, many of whom spend money at Tribal businesses.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### **CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS: Issues and Threats, Solutions and Approaches**

Only by staying true to our values, only by remembering in our hearts who we are as Indian people and reflecting that in the way we protect and treat this place we call the Tribal wilderness, will we be successful in passing on to our children something of value that is unique to our culture.



After the Tribal Council designated the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness and adopted a management plan, managers realized the many of greatest threats to the integrity of the wilderness were coming from activities occurring outside of the boundary on lands adjacent or contiguous to the wilderness. They identified the following issues for areas both within and outside of the Tribal wilderness boundary:

1. Homesite development on Tribal and private lands.
2. Methods of fire control and fuel management (i.e. wildfire prevention/protection by landowners and associated fuels reduction timber harvesting activities).
3. Shifts in tree species composition and increasing forest density due to 100 years of fire exclusion.

4. Impacts of recreation and other uses on fisheries and riparian zones.
5. Livestock use and grazing practices including: seasons of use, stocking rates, sensitive areas (riparian habitats and wetlands), competition with wildlife, and the placement and maintenance of fencing.
6. Commercial outfitting within the wilderness.
7. Forest pest, disease, and weed management.
8. Protection of sensitive grizzly bear habitats from overuse by recreationists.
9. Roads leading up to or entering the wilderness.
10. Regulation and enhancement of recreational use and opportunities for the development and management of facilities.
11. Protection of cultural, spiritual and historical sites.
12. Water quality for valley watershed.

Working closely with the Tribal Council and the Tribal membership, managers have taken several approaches to addressing these issues. The most significant of these approaches include:

1. Developing and supporting a strong wilderness management program that monitors use and restores impacted areas and that coordinates the activities of all Tribal programs and departments in the wilderness.
2. Establishing the Mission Mountains Wilderness Buffer Zone to address threats to the wilderness from adjacent and contiguous lands.

3. Coordinating with Lake County's land use planning efforts so that activities on private lands adjacent to the wilderness are compatible with the purposes of the wilderness.
4. Working closely with and the U.S. Forest Service on how it manages use in the adjacent, federally protected Mission Mountains Wilderness so that Tribal policies, regulations, and closures can be adequately respected and enforced.
5. Developing a wilderness fire management plan and a Reservation fire management plan, both of which take into consideration the special management needs of the Tribal Wilderness.
6. Creating a ten-thousand-acre Grizzly Bear Conservation Area in the heart of the Mission Mountains to protect feeding grizzly bears. This twenty-year-old conservation area, which is closed to all human use for much of the summer, was one of the first of its kind in the nation. At the time it was created, other agencies were closing areas for short periods of time to protect hikers. This area is closed for an extended period on annual basis to protect bears.
7. Developing a strong education program focused on residents living near the wilderness and visitors to the wilderness.
8. Acquiring land adjacent to the wilderness as opportunities arise to protect sensitive species like grizzly bears.
9. Making additions to the wilderness through the forest planning process.





