WATERSHED WRAP

Quarterly Newsletter from the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Fish & Wildlife Program describing watershed management efforts. Offering readers food for conversation and paper for wrapping!

Spring Equinox 2006 (Vol. 10 No. 1)

The Coeur d'Alene Tribal Fish, and Wildlife Programs work in a variety of cooperative, governmental and educational arenas in efforts to protect, enhance and restore our fish, and wildlife resources. This publication is intended to provide all people interested in Fish, and Wildlife of the Coeur d'Alene Reservation information about our program, and to solicit your support as well as constructive criticism. Thank you for your interest.

Respectfully,

Mark H. Stanger, Fish, and Wildlife Outreach Specialist

Spring Events Happening

We are again looking for some volunteers to help with the small children & youth that are participating in the upcoming activities. Call for times, dates and schedule specific.

- Mother Earth Day planting trees with the Coeur d'Alene Tribal and Worley schools on April 12,19.
- Arbor Day Celebration with St. Maries and Kootenai High schools on April 17-20.
- Earth Day Celebration at North Idaho College on Friday April 29. Talk about all the Ecology projects in Cd'A Basin area & tree planting.
- Mother Earth & Arbor Day observed April 24-28 The Fish & Wildlife program will plant trees with local schools & community.
- Annual Observance of Water Awareness Week May 8-12 at Lake Creek. Interested schools need to sign–up ASAP.
- Natural Resource Camp at Worley, Id. June 26-July 1 in cooperation with the Forest Service and other local Tribes. Age groups 15-19 Need student's applications turned in by Friday May 12, 2006.
- Fisheries Interns applicants for summer employment only one session 8 weeks 2-3 positions. Interested students fill out Tribal application with TERO office.

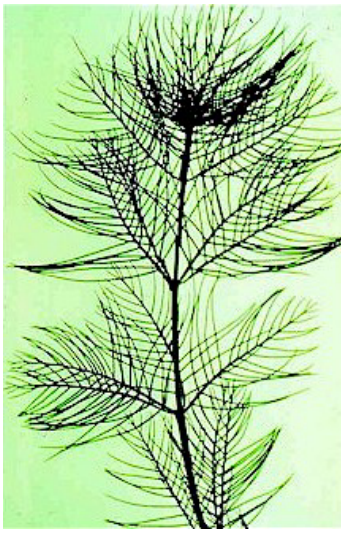
If you have any question regarding these events Posted, call Mark 208-686-0131

Eurasian milfoil problems and solutions

By Dave Lamb, Lake Ecologist

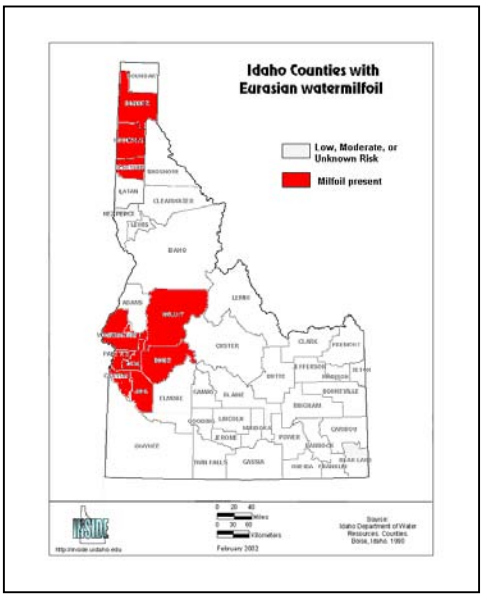
Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*, referred to simply as milfoil, see photo) is a beautiful but very invasive, non-native aquatic plant that can form very dense mats of vegetation in lakes, ponds and rivers. This growth can interfere with water recreation and commerce, fish and wildlife usage and inhibit water flow. Milfoil has been blamed for several human deaths, causing drowning after people get tangled up in the dense growth. Because Eurasian watermilfoil is easily spread by fragments, transport on boats and boating equipment is believed to be the main method of dispersal.

Once milfoil becomes well established within a lake or river, it is difficult or impossible to remove. In smaller waterbodies (350 acres or less), there has been some limited success using aquatic herbicides to eradicate milfoil but in larger lakes, and especially rivers, control is the only option and this can be costly. Other control methods include: harvesting, rotovation (underwater rototilling), installation of bottom barriers, diver hand pulling, diver dredging, and in some very limited situations the use of triploid (sterile) grass carp. Scientists are investigating other possible



Eurasian watermilfoil plant

biological controls such as the milfoil weevil. In Washington State, private and government sources spend over $1million a year on Eurasian watermilfoil control. Other states and provinces (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Vermont, New York, and British Columbia) spend similar amounts a year to control milfoil infestations.



The importance of milfoil awareness cannot be overstated if milfoil is to be prevented from taking over and spoiling the waters of Idaho and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Monitoring, whether by specially trained SCUBA divers or by County Weed Department personnel, or by lake residents and users is critical to this control. Treatment utilizing the best available techniques, especially the principals of Integrated Pest Management must be instituted as soon as milfoil is identified in a waterbody. Having trained, licensed aquatic herbicide applicators and experienced aquatic weed control companies available is another part of the "cure" for milfoil.

The State Legislature in Idaho is currently considering proposals to jump-start the treatment of milfoil in the State. This effort deserves the strong support of all County and local governments because milfoil is not yet widespread in this state (see map). In addition, for the long-term, an Aquatic Nuisance Species Management plan needs to be prepared to guide implementation of control efforts. It is hoped that the heightened awareness of the potential impacts of milfoil will give sufficient impetus to lake and river managers and users alike to become actively involved in this important issue.

Coeur d'Alene Fish Habitat Acquisition
By Gerald I. Green

On Wednesday, February 22, 2006, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council voted to approve a within-year budget modification request to fund conservation easement acquisitions in Benewah Creek. In response to the approval the Bonneville Power Administration will provide funding to purchase the easements to protect important trout streams and habitats within approximately 200 feet of either side of those streams. The conservation easements will be designed to protect stream habitats that are essential to the Westslope cutthroat trout populations that the Coeur d'Alene Tribe has worked to restore. Wetlands that provide waters to the fish bearing streams could also be protected through the purchase of conservation easements.

The funds are available until the end of this coming September to purchase easements on priority properties in Benewah Creek. However, there is a great deal of preparation to be completed before the conservation easements can be purchased. Parcels must be identified and the value of the conservation easement must be established. The value of an easement is defined by subtracting the value of a parcel with an easement from the value of that parcel without an easement. A conservation easement basically purchases from a landowner his ability to conduct certain activities on his property. In this case, trout streams flow through timbered habitats and the Tribe will purchase the landowners right to harvest the timber along a corridor of sufficient width to protect the stream. Additional restraints can be included in the easement, such as the right to subdivide, or to build a road cross the property. Each parcel will be reviewed to identify what aspects of that property need to be protected in order to provide habitats for native trout.

This funding provides a new tool to the Fish and Wildlife Programs and will enhance the prospects for recovering fish populations. This tool will protect streams that can readily be degraded under the current legal mandates. It can also provide access to streams by Natural Resource staff for the purpose of enhancing habitats for fish. This is a tool that the Fish and Wildlife Programs are hoping to make quick use of and negotiations with landowners interested in selling easements have already been started.

If there are any questions about this new easement tool, feel free to contact Gerald Green (208-686-0312) or Cameron Heusser (208-686-0312)

Limnologist turns Restoration Coordinator
By Mike Beckwith

After almost a year and a half as the Water Resources Program Limnologist (lake scientist), in late October 2005, I accepted the position of Restoration Coordinator in the Hazardous Waste Management Program Office of the Lake Management Department. Located in an office in Coeur d'Alene since the early 1990s, this position was formerly held by Phillip Cernera who is now Director of the recently-restructured Lake Management Department. In this role I will: 1) continue to advance the Tribe's interests and objectives in Superfund environmental remediation actions throughout the Coeur d'Alene Lake / Spokane River Basin; 2) in partnership with the State of Idaho and the Environmental Protection Agency, seek to develop and implement an effective Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan to safely manage mining-associated hazardous substances in Lake waters and bed sediments (using resource management and regulatory mechanisms outside of the formal Superfund process); 3) oversee clean-up at the St. Maries Creosote Site; 4) assist Tribal attorneys and technical staff in pending litigation seeking compensation and/or restoration for damages to natural resources from past mining activities; and 5) be involved in other issues related to environmental restoration and hazardous substance management throughout the Basin.

I am very familiar with the scientific aspects of environmental contamination in the Basin (having conducted and/or participated in many of the key lake and watershed studies of the early and mid 1990s while with the U.S. Geological Survey). However, likely I will find myself in a more technically challenging and potentially contentious realm. I believe the Tribe is well-positioned to be the driving force for environmental restoration and sound resource management throughout the Coeur d'Alene Basin. I look forward to serving the Tribe in this role and ask for your continued support and collective efforts.

***hnt'k'wi̲pn* update**
By Gerald I. Green

The management plan for *hnt'k'wi̲pn*, the Tribe's mitigation properties near DeSmet, is scheduled to be drafted this coming summer. Currently, however, assessments are being completed and monitoring plans are being drawn up. Also, there are some management actions to protect the property and remaining native habitat that must be undertaken prior to completion of the management plan. Among the management actions that will be completed this year is the removal of "ladder fuels" that could carry wildfire into the canopy of the forest on the property. The forest is close to the old growth characteristics that were prevalent in the open woodland pine habitats prior to the widespread clearing for agriculture in the region. If a wildfire were to reach the canopy of the forest the development of old growth characteristics for this forest could be delayed by as much as a century.

Felix Aripa talking to the students about taking care of our lands!

Dense pine seedlings and saplings make up the majority of the ladder fuels that pose a risk to the forest overstory. These young pines will be thinned and a big advantage to this thinning is that more sunlight will reach the forest floor, which will allow more robust growth of grasses and forbs, which in turn will provide more forage for wildlife. Also, the available space will allow for the establishment of a greater diversity of shrubs and tree species, again providing more diverse forage options for the area's wildlife. While the main intent of the thinning is to prevent the possibility of wildfire, thinning will also improve wildlife habitats.
The Tribe's Fuels Management Program will complete the thinning this year. The work will be done either before or after the bird nesting season to minimize the losses to song bird and waterfowl reproduction. The Tribal Wildlife Program and the Forestry Program are working up an Inter-Program Memorandum of Agreement so that both programs have a complete understanding of exactly what is to be accomplished and on what specific time schedule.

If there are any questions about the *hnt'k'wi̲pn* property or about the management actions that will be implemented on that property please feel free to call Gerald Green at 208-686-0312 or Cameron Heusser at 208-686-5521.

Windy Bay update
By Gerald I. Green

Similar to the *hnt'k'wipn* property near DeSmet, the Windy Bay Property at the mouth of Lake Creek has a potential to produce an excess of forest fuels. The Windy Bay Property was purchased for its wetland and streams that are at or near the stages that provide maximum habitat for wildlife that are adapted to wetland conditions. However, the forests of the uplands on the property were harvested in the last decade and a dense stand of shrubs have grown where a thick forest once stood. Shrubs are thick enough that thinning would not only reduce the forest fuels but would allow a more rapid re-establishment of the forest. The upper elevations of the property are more suited to the open woodland forest types where trees are widely dispersed with good ground cover and patchy shrubs underneath the trees. The lower elevations, near the periphery of the wetlands and particularly on the south side of the wetlands, are suited to more dense timber stands that provide little room for undergrowth. The different forest types that can develop on the property will need to be managed to provide the maximum amount of wildlife habitat while minimizing the amount of forest fuels that could contribute to wildfires.

The wetlands on the property may, at some point, be burned to enhance their productivity. But if fire is employed it must be well controlled to prevent any threat to the croplands and homes that can be found on the more even topography above the steep slopes of the property. In the meantime, those same croplands and homes must be protected from the threat of an uncontrolled, unintended burn. The management of the Windy Bay property must be proactive in reducing forest fuel loads so that conditions favorable to wildfire do not develop on the property. The Tribe's Wildlife Program that manages the property is coordinating with the Forestry Program's Fuels Management to thin out the forest fuels in a way that will maximize the use of management funding and minimize the potential for the spread of uncontrolled fire on the Windy Bay Property.

If you have any questions or comments about the management of the Windy Bay Property, feel free to contact Gerald Green (208-686-0312) or Cameron Heusser (208-686-5521) of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Wildlife Program.