

## **CSKT Cultural Waterways Ordinance**

The proposed CSKT Cultural Waterways Ordinance (CWO) is now available for public comment. Two public meetings have been set, the ordinance is posted on CSKT.ORG, and comments may also be submitted via written comment sent through the post office or email.

Tribal Council recently took action to release the CWO for public viewing and comment, which will continue until January 3rd. The ordinance is intended to create a system to formally designate and protect culturally significant areas. The process developed will be used to protect the Lower Flathead River as a Cultural Waterway. It's the culmination of work done by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' two Culture Committees, Natural Resources Department, Lands Department, Forestry Department, Preservation Department, and Legal Department.

To designate a waterway as a Cultural Waterway, the Tribal Council, the Culture Committees, the Natural Resources Department, the Preservation Department, or an individual can nominate a river for designation to Tribal Council for approval. A designation document will be submitted that must contain (1) a statement of purpose for the designation; (2) an overall vision for the Cultural Waterway (3) a timetable for NRD and other tribal departments to develop a management plan and any necessary regulations; and (4) identification of lead staff/departments to carry out the development of the management plan and regulations. Once a waterway is designated, NRD must then develop a new management plan for the waterway or revise an existing management plan and submit the plan to Tribal Council for approval.

The Cultural Waterway Ordinance, CWO, will also serve in making the Lower Flathead River as the first Cultural Waterway. The designation document will include a statement of purpose, which acknowledges that the Lower Flathead River waterway is an area of the highest cultural importance to the Tribes. It lays out a vision for the Lower Flathead River, which includes protecting it in perpetuity. The designation recognizes the threat of climate change, and says that the management plan shall strive to minimize emissions of greenhouse gases whenever possible. It prohibits any additional dams from being constructed on the river, prohibits mining in the watershed except as allowed by regulation, and encourages restoration within the watershed.

While developing the management plan, the departments identified the following tribal land threats to be addressed in further detail in the plan: weeds and invasive species, development, mining, recreational infrastructure, such as roads and campsites, grazing, and climate change. The management plan and regulations would identify prohibited uses, permitted uses, and delineate any necessary boundaries for such uses.

Public information will be shared and comments collected on the CWO at two public events. The first will be at 6 p.m., December 17, in the Arlee Community Center, and at 6 p.m. December 18<sup>th</sup> at the Polson Senior Center. The CWO can be found online at [www.cskt.org](http://www.cskt.org) and written comments can be sent to CSKT Communications director, Robert McDonald, at 36100 2<sup>nd</sup> Street East, Pablo MT 59855 or via email at [Robert.mcdonald@cskt.org](mailto:Robert.mcdonald@cskt.org)