Nez Perce Tribe Water Resources Division Newsletter

CWA §319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention

Nez Perce Reservation Surface and Groundwater Pollutant Reduction Project

Cottonwood Creek

The §319 program was awarded $1,960,754 for a five-year grant by EPA through the Columbia River Basin Restoration Funding Assistance Program. In 2024, the Water Resources Division (WRD) began targeted water quality sampling for pesticide analytes in Reservation waterways and project planning. Broadly, this project aims to eliminate or reduce pollution and improve water quality in the Columbia River Basin by implementing best management practices (BMPs) such as vegetated filter strips and edge-of-field plantings to reduce downstream transport of pesticides and sediment, ultimately enhancing the health of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. This project also proposes to undertake research at the Reservation scale within the Clearwater River watershed to: 1) determine which pesticides are used and the crop types they are applied to; 2) identify the parcels where these crops are grown and whether they are tribally or privately owned; 3) investigate whether specific analytes adhere to soil particles or leach directly into groundwater; 4) evaluate how the pesticide levels found in the Clearwater River watershed compare with aquatic life criteria globally, not just those set by Idaho and the EPA; 5) conduct outreach and education for tribal members, tribal leadership, and private land owners to promote the adoption of appropriate conservation practices.

CWA §319 Lapwai Creek and Spring Creek Wetland Restoration Project

The §319 program was awarded a $125,000 competitive grant for FY25 funded by EPA, which focuses on riparian and wetland restoration on Lapwai and Spring creeks. Implementation efforts for this project include repairing and replacing cattle exclusion fencing, installing offsite water structures, installing beaver dam analogues (BDAs) and large woody debris (LWD), riparian planting, backfilling wetland drainage trenches, and grading dikes. These efforts, conducted within Reservation boundaries, seek to increase habitat diversity, reduce nutrient and bacterial concentrations, lower stream temperatures, and raise the local water table in waterways to benefit all organisms. The proposed project addresses nonpoint source issues within the watershed by planting vegetation that will absorb nutrients produced by non-irrigated crop production and grazing related sources. In addition, the project will prevent further degradation of stream channels and wetlands caused by riparian livestock grazing, reduce channel incision by restricting livestock access to the stream corridor, and enhance wetland function by restoring historical surface and subsurface waterflow.

BDA installation

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