
PROTECTION, CONSERVATION, AND RESTORATION OF THE FORT PECK TRIBES' MANNING LAKE WETLAND COMPLEX ON THE FORT PECK INDIAN RESERVATION

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The Manning Lake Wetland Complex (MLWC), located on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, is an incredible and unique landscape providing vital breeding and rearing habitat for a diversity of waterfowl, migratory birds, songbirds and other species, including at least 10 of conservation concern. The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes and their partners have been working toward the protection, conservation, and restoration of the 22,000-ac wetland complex since 2004, when nine natural resource professionals from tribal, state, and federal agencies and programs formed a working group. Since then, thanks in part to grants from USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and Montana Audubon, great progress has been made toward reaching this goal. This presentation will introduce the Manning Lake Wetlands Tribal Wildlife Refuge and share our methods and accomplishments to date which include 1) designation of the Complex by Montana Audubon as An Important Bird Area; 2) Tribal establishment and management of 4000 ac as a Tribal Wildlife Refuge with plans to include additional acres in the future through purchase or long term conservation leases; 3) development of a habitat management plan and a wetland monitoring and assessment plan; 4) creation of a reservation specific wetland rapid assessment method; 5) creation of a baseline macroinvertebrate, bird, and amphibian species list; 6) development of water quality references; and 7) creation of habitat, vegetation associations, and land usage maps.