

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center's
Wilderness Investigations
High School

Wilderness Profile #5
Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness

Common Core Standard Connections

Standards addressed will vary depending on how the teacher chooses to approach the lesson and/or activities.

Teacher background:

This incredible mountain landscape, within the boundaries of the Flathead Reservation in western Montana, is the first Tribal Wilderness ever set aside. While the ordinance that created the wilderness in 1982 (as well as its management plan) follows federal wilderness guidelines, the focus on wilderness as a place to sustain cultural values is unique. Students will be interested in its wilderness features but will also find the story of its creation to be inspiring and interesting.

Instructions for the teacher:

To help students become familiar with the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness choose one or more of the following:

- Use information from *Teacher Background* and the *Student Information Sheet* to prepare and present a mini-lesson.
- If students have already started their *U.S. Wilderness Area Field Guide* (started in Wilderness Profile #1) have them add entries for the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness by choosing items from the list below:
 - Photocopy the *Student Information Sheet*, have students go through it and then conduct a discussion.
 - Using the *Student Information Sheet*, have students choose one of the following creative projects:
 - The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness is the first tribal wilderness ever set aside. Have students research the history and culture of the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d'Oreille Tribes.
 - Have students prepare an oral presentation focused on one or more of the tribes.
 - Write a persuasive proposal to parents, teachers and/or school administrators that outlines why you

- would like to visit the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness.
- Use the wilderness map, included with *Wilderness Investigations*, and have students locate Montana, the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness, the Mission Mountains Wilderness, and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Provide blackline maps of the state. Have students identify and label important state features and draw in/label this wilderness.
 - Have students choose one of the common animals of the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness (found on the *Student Information Sheet*) and have them research information about the animal. Next, using their research findings have them prepare a podcast or short film to share learning.
- There are 9 developed trailheads and 12 major trails in the Mission Mountain Tribal Wilderness. Backpacking and horse packing are two ways of using these trails for extended visits. Have students choose one method and then come up with an equipment list for items needed using that mode of wilderness transportation.
 - Plan a trip into the wilderness. Include itinerary, menus, equipment needs, travel arrangements, costs, etc.
 - Create a *U.S. Wilderness Area* classroom display or place on class webpage. Continue to add information as new areas are focused on.
 - Just a few wilderness areas are focused on as part of *Wilderness Investigations*. Have students choose non-focused areas to research, present and post on the bulletin board.
 - For more information about the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness:
 - Go to www.cskt.org.
 - *Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness: A Case Study*; Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; 2005; available for free download at www.wilderness.net.



Historic photo from near the wilderness
(Salish Culture Committee; *MMTW A Case Study* page 3)

Wilderness Profile #5
Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness
Student Information Sheet



Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Scene
(from *MMTW: A Case Study*; page 1)

What's the story?

- The first place in the United States where an Indian nation designated lands to be managed as wilderness.
- Managed by the Tribal Council as the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness since being set aside in 1982 under the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Management Plan.
- This wilderness set aside to preserve and protect wilderness values that include the need for wilderness as a component of cultural preservation.
 - The Tribal Wilderness Ordinance states:

Wilderness has played a paramount role in shaping the character of the people and culture of the Salish and Kootenai Tribes; it is the essence of traditional Indian religion and has served the 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 Tribal Wilderness covers approximately 91,778 acres with an additional 22,833 acres in a designated wilderness buffer zone.
- Wilderness covers an area that is approximately 34 miles long and about 5 miles wide.
- Located on western slopes of the Mission Mountain Range with elevations between 4,000 to over 10,000 feet above sea level.
- Landscape features include high mountain valleys, rocky peaks, forested slopes, lakes (113 greater than 1 acre in size) and creeks, as well as some small glaciers.

- Some of the wilderness wildlife are grizzly bear, black bear, white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, mountain lion, bald eagle, and mountain goat.
- Forests consist mainly of Douglas fir and subalpine fir but also include cedar, larch, spruce, ponderosa pine and lodgepole pine.
- The wilderness can receive snow any month of the year especially at higher elevations. Spring rain/snow and summer thunderstorms round out the precipitation picture. Hot days and cool nights are common in summer.
- Because it is a Tribal Wilderness, tribal members have wilderness access rights before non-tribal members.
- Some of the main players in the effort to set aside and manage the Mission Mountain Tribal Wilderness were:
 - Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes;
 - Thurman Trosper (Tribal member, retired U.S. Forest Service employee; past president of the Wilderness Society);
 - The Three Yayas (Grandmothers): Annie Pierre, Christine Woodcock, and Louise McDonald (see story that follows);
 - Doug Allard (Tribal businessman and leader of the *Save the Mission Mountains Committee*);
 - The University of Montana Wilderness Institute (under the direction of the Tribal Council developed a draft boundary and management plan);
 - David Rockwell (first wilderness manager);
 - Tom McDonald (longest serving wilderness manager);
 - Les Bigcrane (current wilderness manager--2011);
 - Many other tribal members and supporters.
- The Mission Mountain Tribal Wilderness uses similar management guidelines as those applied to federally designated wilderness.

Tribal Wilderness Heroes--A story

A plan to log in the Ashley Creek area of the Mission Mountains in 1974 stimulated three tribal Grandmothers to speak out in opposition to the logging. These three Elders, joined by friend and supporter Germaine White, met with the Tribal Council to voice their concerns. One after another the three women spoke of the need to *care for the earth and pass it on to the children in good condition*. They made a case for not logging the precious Mission Mountains.

When finished the women waited respectfully and unexpectedly for the Council to vote. Finally the Council did vote and the logging plan was cancelled. These three determined Grandmothers helped preserve a piece of what would soon become the Mission Mountain Tribal Wilderness.