

Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan Finalized and Submitted to EPA

COEUR d'ALENE — Coeur d'Alene Tribe Chairman Chief J. Allan and Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter have sent the long awaited Lake Management Plan (LMP), designed to address metals contamination in Coeur d'Alene Lake, to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The plan is a product of a six-year long effort by the Tribe and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to develop a collaborative plan for protecting lake water quality.

"It's taken a lot of hard work to get here, and I think we have a good result. I would like to thank the local, tribal and state people who participated in this process," Governor Otter said. "Now we need to move forward together, with efforts to protect water quality in Coeur d'Alene Lake and the economy of the surrounding area."

Chairman Allan said the plan is only the first step in protecting the lake for future generations.

"This is an important day for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe," Allan said. "Our ancestors who fought to protect the lake are looking down on us right now, pleased with the effort we are making to preserve and enhance the lake for generations to come," Allan said. "This is the beginning of a long journey, but with sufficient resources, hard work and collaboration from all stakeholders, we can overcome the challenges we face in improving and protecting our most sacred gem."

The final version of LMP has some significant changes from the draft, including the addition of county advisory meetings in the coordination of the plan, a needs assessment for public education, and the prioritization of bank stabilization work along the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe rivers.

"There are no new regulations in the plan," said Phillip Cernera, the Tribe's Lake Management Director. "It's adaptive management. At the end of the day, the plan is a companion document to the EPA's record of decision."

In a letter to EPA's Acting Regional Administrator for Region 10, Otter and Allan said, "the final LMP is consistent with EPA's approach to addressing mining-related metals contamination in the basin."

The EPA's 2002 Superfund Record of Decision deferred a remedial decision on Coeur d'Alene Lake pending development and implementation of a joint State/Tribe Lake Management Plan that effectively manages contaminated lake bed sediments.

The joint plan provides a roadmap to improve and protect water quality in Coeur d'Alene Lake and achieve this goal using authorities outside of the Superfund process. The four main courses of action in the final plan include; coordination with numerous watershed partners to conduct nutrient reduction projects, establishment of routine water quality monitoring, development of a nutrient source inventory, and education and outreach to citizens on ways to protect lake water quality.

"The Tribe and the State are committed to implementing the 2009 LMP with EPA's continued support in moving forward toward that end," said Allan and Otter.

Transmittal of the LMP to EPA and key stakeholders is occurring this week. The Tribe and DEQ will also post the LMP on their websites at www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/lake and www.deq.idaho.gov.