

NEZ PERCE TRIBE
INTEGRATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANNING
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)



What is an Integrated Resource Management Plan?

An IRMP is a comprehensive, strategic, and programmatic planning document, developed by Tribes, which integrates and guides a Tribe's natural and cultural resource management activities. It identifies a Tribe's vision for the future state of its resources and establishes a strategy and administrative framework which leads to that future.

What isn't an IRMP?

An IRMP is not:

- A Comprehensive Plan. Comprehensive plans encompass ALL the administrative activities of a Tribe, including housing, education, social services, etc. An IRMP focuses more specifically on how a Tribe intends to manage its natural and cultural resources.
- A Land Use Plan. Land use plans are typically site-specific, dictating management actions on particular parcels or 'zones' within an area. While some IRMPs do establish zones where various management strategies are prioritized, an IRMP is a programmatic document. It is therefore not as prescriptive as a typical land use plan.
- A Land Acquisition Plan. Land Acquisition Plans require a level of detail and confidentiality which would not be appropriate in an IRMP. IRMP development is a public process, and the final document is intended to be freely available to anyone who is interested in Tribal resource management.
- An Economic Development Plan. IRMPs help prioritize and guide a Tribe's economic development, but only in cases where impacts to a Tribe's natural and cultural resources are likely. An Economic Development Plan would typically involve a number of business-related issues and considerations which fall outside the scope of an IRMP.

What are the benefits of an IRMP?

IRMPs provide a number of benefits to Tribes, the broader community, and the resources being managed. These include:

- Greater interdisciplinary coordination when tackling management issues important to the Tribe

- Increased administrative efficiency, i.e. reduced duplication of effort and fewer contradictory directives to staff
- Greater governmental transparency to Tribal members and the general public
- More consistent management of Tribal resources through funding and staff transitions
- Values-driven resource management based on public input
- Enhanced resource sustainability resulting from a vision-driven planning effort
- More focused management on priority management issues
- Enhanced third-party funding based on clear statements of Tribal priorities
- Improved communications with regional partners eager for clear statements of Tribal priorities

What lands and resources is the Nez Perce Tribe including in its IRMP?

An IRMP is a programmatic document intended to integrate and inform Tribal resource management, consistent with the Tribe's vision for the future of its reservation. It is a comprehensive, holistic, and culturally-driven guidance document. As such, the substantive scope of the Nez Perce IRMP will include the air, water, flora, fauna, history, archaeology, living culture, and other natural and cultural resources of the Tribe within the Nez Perce Reservation.

What is the process of developing an IRMP?

The Nez Perce Tribe has elected to develop its IRMP in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA). The Tribe has also elected to separate the planning effort into two sequential tiers: visioning and implementation.

The visioning tier will focus on evaluating a range of alternate resource management strategies, from intensive resource utilization to intensive resource protection, selecting one which best reflects the cultural values and priorities of the Nez Perce Tribe.

The implementation tier will focus on evaluating a range of alternate methods of implementing the previously-chosen vision. These alternate methods may include the establishment of an internal administrative framework for assessing project impacts, developing standards and guidelines against which project proposals are evaluated, or a reallocation of existing resources towards priority issues.

The end result of this effort will be a two-volume Nez Perce IRMP which both describes the vision and management strategy of the Tribe and identifies a series of administrative steps which will implement that strategy.

Development of the IRMP during both tiers will conform to NEPA standards through development of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the IRMP. The actual process of developing the PEIS will involve a series of planning steps:

1. Pre-Scoping discussions within the Tribe in which Tribal managers and members identify their expectations, concerns, and recommendations for the planning effort
2. Scoping discussions within and outside the Tribe in which all private individuals and public groups have an opportunity to identify their expectations, concerns, and recommendations for the planning effort
3. Development of a draft PEIS (including resource assessments, management alternatives, and predicted impact evaluations) by an Interdisciplinary Team of Tribal staff and managers
4. Public review and comments on the draft PEIS
5. Revisions to the draft PEIS based on public feedback
6. Public review and comments on the final PEIS
7. Selection and adoption of a single alternative from among the range of alternatives considered

So what is the actual difference between the IRMP and the PEIS?

The IRMP is the actual planning document, the end product of the overall effort. To develop the IRMP, the Tribe will be following NEPA. For a planning effort such as this, experts recommend that a PEIS be developed to evaluate the environmental impact of the project being proposed, in this case the IRMP. As the PEIS is developed, information and language from that document will be used to construct the growing IRMP document as well. The final IRMP will be similar in many ways to the PEIS but formatted in a way which is more useful as an internal planning document for the Tribe. So the IRMP and PEIS are separate but related documents: the analyses and public input recorded in the PEIS will be used to write a strong, defensible IRMP for the Tribe.

Why is the Tribe doing this now?

Nez Perce Tribal leaders have long recognized a growing need and responsibility to manage the Tribe's natural and cultural resources in a comprehensive, collaborative, and interdisciplinary manner, affording protection for a broad range of values through sustainable management. But funding and other hot-button priorities have, until recently, prevented sustained development of an IRMP. The Tribe is now in a position to prioritize and fund this long-delayed but essential effort.

Why is the Tribe doing this publically? Isn't the IRMP a Tribal plan?

The IRMP is an internal Tribal document. The final decision to select and implement the Tribe's resource management vision rests with the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee (NPTEC). In the interest of developing a broadly-supported, fully-informed, and effective planning document, the Tribe has elected to develop its IRMP in a way which encourages regional dialogue and recommendations from Tribal as well as non-Tribal groups and individuals. By partnering with the BIA and developing the IRMP in a way which is consistent with NEPA, the Tribe is helping to ensure that its IRMP development effort leaves no stone unturned in its search for quality recommendations.

But the Tribe shouldn't be told how to manage its own resources!

The final decision to select and implement the Tribe's resource management vision rests with the NPTEC. It is up to the NPTEC to evaluate the quality and appropriateness of comments received from all public participants (Tribal and non-Tribal) and weigh those suggestions as each Committee member sees fit.

Will the IRMP constrain Tribal economic growth or flexibility to respond to changing circumstances?

The IRMP will be a programmatic document developed through a public involvement process. That process is designed to solicit input from the public on exactly how to balance the Tribe's competing interests in resource utilization and resource protection. The extent to which the selected alternative balances these two interests depends largely on the values of Tribal members expressed through the public involvement process and of the NPTEC. Most Tribal IRMPs are written in a manner which preserves substantial flexibility for Tribal leaders to respond to new management challenges as they arise. In addition, the IRMP will be written as a living document, one which is intended to be updated periodically as needed.

Will the Tribe's IRMP dictate to non-Tribal landowners on the Reservation how to manage their property?

No. The Tribe's IRMP will be an internal planning document intended to guide the Tribe's management of its natural and cultural resources. In addition, as a programmatic document, the Nez Perce IRMP will not dictate specific management practices on any particular lands within the Reservation, Tribal or non-Tribal.

How long will the IRMP development process take?

The current expectation is that the first tier of IRMP development (visioning) will be completed by the middle of 2016. The timing of the second tier of IRMP development (implementation) will depend on future funding and staffing levels.

How is this effort being funded?

IRMP development can be costly in terms of not just direct expenses but also staff time redirected from other projects. Tribal leaders have concluded that the IRMP is essential to the Tribe's future and have directed that staff prioritize IRMP development. Funds to support the effort, including the contracting of a legal consultant with extensive experience in Tribal resource management planning, were secured in 2013 under a competitive grant from the Nez Perce Tribe's Snake River Basin Adjudication fund.

Who authorized IRMP development?

All Nez Perce governmental activities require authorization by the NPTEC. IRMP development has been sanctioned by Nez Perce Tribal Resolutions NP 06-185, NP 12-072 (Amended), NP 13-233, and NP 14-070.

Who should I contact for more information?

The Nez Perce Tribe's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has been tasked by the NPTEC to lead and direct the development of the Tribe's IRMP. Aaron Miles Sr., Manager of the Department of Natural Resources, can be contacted at 208-843-7400 or 2moon@nezperce.org. Kerey K. Barnowe-Meyer, a Tribal wildlife biologist, has been designated as the IRMP Project Manager and is coordinating the details of the planning effort. He can be contacted at 208-843-2162 or kereybm@nezperce.org.