

**TRIBE:** Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Belknap Reservation

**UPDATE:** January 15, 2003

The State's Fort Belknap cost-share negotiating team met early in 2002 for an initial discussion of funding and authorization of specific mitigation measures necessary for federal legislation. The Tribe and the Governor's office wrote to the U.S. Department of the Interior to request that a federal cost share team be assigned so that the Fort Belknap settlement can move forward to Congress. A federal cost share team has been appointed and the Commission is anticipating a formal written response from Interior approving the compact and authorizing a federal team to begin cost-share talks. A cost share meeting was held in November 2002 with the Tribe, federal and state teams and another meeting will be held in January. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation continues to draft a feasibility study of mitigation alternatives, and Commission and BOR technical staff have met to discuss BOR proposals. The Commission has contracted with three independent engineering firms to develop cost estimates for several mitigation alternatives under consideration.

**TRIBE:** Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Reservation

**UPDATE:** January 15, 2003

No formal negotiating sessions have been held since the last Water Court Report. The Blackfeet Tribe has submitted a proposal to the Commission for Birch Creek on the Reservation. The Tribe, State and United States representatives have continued to focus on exchanging information to allow the parties to examine the impacts of the Tribe's proposed 1997 settlement, which is still on the table. In addition, the Commission will ask the Tribe to support the resumption of claims examination on the Reservation. The Blackfeet continue to oppose moving forward on the Fort Belknap federal legislation. No legal or technical meetings have been scheduled at this time.

**TRIBE:** Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

**UPDATE:** January 15, 2003

The Commission, Tribes, and the United States held negotiation sessions in February, July, and December of 2002. The parties established three working groups to pursue information relevant to the negotiation: claims examination; technical work; and administration/interim plan. These work groups met multiple times throughout 2002, and some progress was made. At the December negotiation session, the Tribes indicated that they wanted to cease joint claims examination and technical work and quantify their rights on their own. The State is currently considering how to proceed with this proposal and whether to proceed with an interim plan as presented by the federal and tribal teams. No meetings are currently scheduled.