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Executive Summary

The nation's wetlands are vital links between land and water resources. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in partnership with other federal agencies, state, Tribal, and local governments, is responsible for restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. EPA uses both regulatory and nonregulatory programs to further its mission of wetland protection.

The Wetlands Division, a division of the Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds in EPA's Office of Water, prepared this document to encourage Tribes to develop effective wetland programs. Eleven case studies highlight various components of wetland programs of Tribes and Native organizations. In each case study, the description of the wetland programs or projects came directly from the Tribe or Native organization itself. The programs and projects are categorized by general program components, such as wetland and watershed planning or restoration. Where a Tribe or Native organization has developed a unique program to protect its wetlands, such programs are described separately from general program components. Additionally, some of the case studies discuss program components that have a beneficial impact on wetland resources even though they do not have a direct wetland focus.

The case studies provide information about many of the tools and strategies Tribes and Native organizations from around the country are using to address wetland issues so that other Tribes, as well as state and local governments, can learn from their experience. Creative solutions can often emerge from reviewing what others have done, and both failures and successes can be instructive. In some of the case studies presented, Tribes or Native organizations have evaluated the effectiveness of a tool or strategy and adjusted their wetland program to reflect what they have learned.

In addition to the case studies, *Tribal Wetland Program Highlights* includes a comparative analysis of the tools and strategies the 11 Tribes and Native organizations are using to meet their wetland protection goals. It is summarized in a table listing the various program components and cross-referencing them to indicate which Tribes or Native organizations include a program component as part of their wetland protection program. Finally, appendices in the report include a wide range of wetland-related information that Tribes should find useful.

Each Tribe is unique, and the range of possible ways to implement an effective wetland protection program is not limited to what was done in the past. One objective of this report is to demonstrate that every program or project to protect wetlands is a step toward greater understanding and protection of wetland resources.

