



# **CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE FLATHEAD LAKE AND RIVER CO- MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**NEWSLETTER NO. 3**

**MARCH 31, 2000**

## **Third Advisory Committee Meeting Held March 28**



*Darrel Clairmont (left) and Cindy Foster listen while Tom McDonald makes a point about Flathead Lake fisheries.*

The third meeting of the Citizen Advisory Committee for the Flathead Lake and River Fisheries Co-management plan was held Tuesday, March 28 at the Outlaw Inn in Kalispell. At the session, the 12 advisors talked about their views of the lake and river fisheries, discussed a

framework to build management alternatives, composed a vital issues list, and listed some potential 10-year vision statements of future fisheries conditions.

## **Management Alternatives**

The core of the draft fisheries co-management plan is the set of alternatives and strategies. Alternatives consist of four parts: philosophy statement; goals and objectives; strategies (actions to achieve goals); and monitoring (tracks progress towards goals). The Committee did preliminary work to set the stage for alternative building at the next meeting.

## **Vital Issues List**

The Committee composed a list of six vital issues and concerns, and agreed that they will be addressed in each fisheries management alternative. The list includes:

- **Water quality/ecology of the lake and river system:** This issue

includes nutrient loading to Flathead Lake, PCBs and mercury levels in fish, *Mysis* shrimp concerns, stream water quality, and water quality monitoring.

- **Habitat manipulation and management:** The issue includes introduction of aquatic species, or attempts to reduce or remove species; dam operations; protection of stream habitat in fish spawning areas; steps to reduce illegal fish introductions.
- **Native/non-native fish management:** Native fish will be emphasized; address the educational challenge and difficulty of identifying native and non-native fish; risk assessment and status of the fish populations; level of effort needed to increase native fish; unique importance of the native fish community; state Species of Special Concern designation for bull trout and westslope cutthroat, and federal designation of threatened for bull trout requires that no actions will be taken to harm these species.
- **Economic Values:** Need to consider economic impacts of actions that could reduce recreational fishing; level of acceptable economic loss; what could replace the recreational lake trout fishery if it is reduced; can the charter boat industry survive a reduction in lake trout; commercial single-line fishery; value of jobs as compared to native species heritage; consider other commercial uses on the lake.
- **Angling and Recreation:** Many people would prefer to fish for

native fish if a fishery were available; could enough be done for bull trout to bring back a recreational fishery; people have cultural differences in the way they view fishing; other species concerns and their contribution to a future fishery.

- **Access:** Most people believe that there is not enough access for boats on Flathead Lake; boating is limited by the parking area at the existing accesses; access particularly hard for larger boats in the fall, winter and spring when the lake level is lower; need more and improved access; more access would mean more fishing pressure on non-native fish; Flathead Lake has the least amount of public shoreline of lakes its size.

The Committee recognized that many of these vital issues are interrelated. Advisors agreed that the co-management plan must include aspects of each one to be successful.

## Other Information

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representative Wade Fredenberg addressed the group regarding his view of the fisheries situation. He was not able to make a previous meeting where the USFWS presented their position.



***USFWS representative Wade Fredenberg addresses the Advisory Committee.***

He speculated that a diversified fishery could be reestablished in Flathead Lake if lake trout were greatly reduced. He indicated that the incompatibility of the Flathead Lake food web for kokanee is just a theory, and that he believed kokanee could be restored.

He stated that the present fishery, although number one in regional use, is not as popular as it may seem, and that a more diverse fishery like the 1970s (with kokanee, bull trout, and cutthroat) would be more popular. He questioned that there is any improvement in bull trout numbers in recent years.

He also confirmed the fact that the federal bull trout recovery plan was not written yet but could be available this summer; the recovery plan applies to federal agencies only, and not to this management plan; and that the USFWS will not prepare a biological opinion on this Flathead Lake and River Co-management Plan.

**Next Advisory Committee Meeting**

The next Advisory Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 19. The public is invited to attend and observe all Advisory Committee meetings. Most of the time advisors will be in working groups and in discussion. The public will be able to visit with advisors at breaks, lunch, and for a period after the working meeting concludes.



Advisors include: Tom Branson (above photo) Philip Catalfomo, Darrel Clairmont, Cindy Foster, George Hover, Jim Landwehr, Patrick Lefthand, Jr., Tom McDonald, Ron Mohn, Dan Paschke, Arlen Roll, and Patty Swaney Stevens. The advisors hail from Columbia Falls around the lake to Polson and south to Lolo.



***The Advisory Committee takes part in a frank discussion about the sensitive fisheries issues in the lake and river.***

## **For More Information**

For more information on the Advisory Committee or the co-management plan process, contact the plan coordinators:

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*Spring is coming to Flathead Lake.  
This is the time of year when adult  
cutthroat migrate upstream to spawn.*