



Lakers Press on to Save Monitoring Program

by Sid Rundell, board member

For many years the Flathead Lakers have been working diligently to secure stable funding sources to support the water quality monitoring program for Flathead Lake and its tributaries. Without a continuous record of water quality, various external influences, such as land use changes, development and air pollution, may degrade the lake's quality appreciably unbeknownst to the public.

Flathead Lake's clean water is part of our special natural heritage and an economic magnet for the basin. We must guard and preserve

its quality. Over the past decade, the Lakers have encouraged local legislators to support funding for the monitoring program. We especially appreciate the efforts of Sen. Bob Keenan of Bigfork, Rep. Stan Fisher of Bigfork and Rep. John Bruggeman of Polson to sustain funding for the program during the past two legislative sessions.

But those efforts were only partially successful during the 2001 legislative session. Last summer the Lakers' board met with several local legislators and candidates to gain a better understanding of how the legislature works and begin to build a boarder base of support for the monitoring program.

We have been working to gain support for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) budget request of \$100,000 per year for Flathead Lake and tributary monitoring.

At our 2002 annual meeting last June, keynote speaker Jan Sensibaugh, Director of DEQ, committed to including the \$100,000 for monitoring in the DEQ's budget request. She also

made it clear that strong support for the program would be needed for it to survive the budget cuts that will be needed due to the state revenue shortfall. We encourage you to voice your support for the program to your legislators.

Understanding the difficult budget situation our state faces, the Lakers' board has decided to also pursue opportunities for future federal funding. We will continue to work with state legislators, DEQ personnel, and county and tribal officials to build a broad base of support for the program.

Flathead Lake is truly a national treasure and it deserves everyone's help to keep its water clean, healthy and beautiful. If you would like to help reinvigorate the water quality monitoring program, please contact the Lakers' office at 883-1346.

To learn more about the Flathead Basin Water Quality Monitoring Program and its funding, please visit our web site and review our *Program and Funding Summary: Flathead Lake and Basin Water Quality Monitoring Program*.

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DIRECTORY

Flathead Lakers: Working for clean water, a healthy ecosystem, and lasting quality of life in the Flathead Watershed.

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The **Board of Directors** meets quarterly. The executive committee meets monthly. We encourage members to attend meetings. Please call the office for the time and place if you'd like to attend a meeting.

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Flathead Lake Monitor

Newsletter of the Flathead Lakers, the **Monitor** is published in print and on the internet. The current issue and many back issues can be viewed on and downloaded from our web site (www.flatheadlakers.org). The opinions expressed in the **Monitor** are those of the authors. We welcome comments and submissions. Copyright 2002, Flathead Lakers, all rights reserved.

Robin Steinkraus, Editor

President's Column

Greetings, Fellow Lakers —

This is my first time to write in this section of the Flathead Lakers' newsletter. I am honored that my fellow board members voted me into the President position. I will do my best to guide our organization in the year ahead.

As my first comment, I want to express my gratitude to immediate past president Sid Rundell for his leadership. Sid was instrumental in bringing the organization to a new level of professionalism.

Sid retired when he moved to the Flathead, but fortunately he didn't retire his business skills, he loaned them to the Lakers' board of directors. Thanks, Sid. And with true dedication, Sid has agreed to chair our Membership & Financial Development Committee. To help him out, you can forward to him the name of a new neighbor or other candidate for membership, or just make sure all your neighbors are members!

Articles in this newsletter provide an update for you, our members, on issues and projects the board and staff are working on that impact our lake in positive or negative ways. It is important that, from time to time, you let us know how we are doing.

In October, the board held its annual planning meeting for the upcoming year. As always, our agenda is large and the tasks are many. If you can lend a helping hand, we always appreciate volunteers.

At the planning meeting, the board developed draft goals and objectives for 2003 that will be refined and approved at the January board meeting. Projects and issues that we will continue to work on include our Critical Lands Project, securing funding for the water quality monitoring program, participating in the process for developing a drought management plan for Flathead Lake, our Personal Watercraft Project, and working to ensure that growth and development are compatible with clean water and a healthy environment.

We will also continue our education and outreach projects. Watch for our improved web site in early 2003.

New projects we hope to embark on in the next year include a project to demonstrate the effectiveness in protecting groundwater of different types of stormwater runoff mitigation methods, an evaluation of septic system technology and regulations with recommendations for improved septic system management, and an analysis of the economic value that Flathead Lake contributes to the region.

Our Public Affairs Committee, chaired by Paul Williams, oversees our education, communication and outreach program. The committee has some great ideas for getting out the word about our work.

With a new legislative session approaching, I would like to encourage you to exercise your citizenship and support policies and programs that protect our waters.

I'll end with a special thank you to those of you who contributed to our recent special request for contributions to support our Critical Lands Project and other important programs. Your help makes a big difference. If you haven't made a contribution, please consider a special year-end gift to the Lakers.

— Rose Schwennesen

Swan Joins Lakers' Staff

Karen Swan joined the Flathead Lakers' staff in August. She's already become a great asset, helping with the management of our organization in the new part-time Administrative Assistant position.

She's put her financial and bookkeeping skills to work streamlining our financial recordkeeping and reporting system. She is responsible for coordinating our membership records and mailings and general office management.

In addition to her work experience in management and the financial investment business, Karen worked for seven years as a photographer at the University of Montana.

Karen spent many family vacations at Taylor Bay during her childhood. She moved to Polson in 1981 where she lives with her husband and two children.

Karen and her family enjoy sailing and fishing on Flathead Lake and skiing at Big Mountain.

"I feel like what I do here contributes to making a difference for the future of Flathead Lake," Karen said. "I find a lot of satisfaction in that."



New Officers Elected

Rose Schwennesen of Bigfork was unanimously elected President of the Flathead Lakers at the October board meeting. The new Vice President/President-elect is Paul Williams of Kalispell. Chuck Mercord of Somers will continue to serve as Treasurer. Best wishes to the officers in their leadership roles!

Outgoing President Sid Rundell was presented a framed photograph of Flathead Lake at sunset at the meeting in appreciation of his service to the organization. Sid completed three one-year terms as President and will continue to serve on the board of directors.

The Secretary position is currently vacant. The board is seeking a volunteer to serve as recording secretary. This position would require attending quarterly board meetings and, if possible, eight executive committee meetings per year, recording minutes of the meetings, and typing the minutes for distribution to the board. Please contact the Lakers' office if you might be interested in providing this service to the Flathead Lakers.



Former board member Rick Skates guides Lew Keim Mac fishing on Flathead Lake. Lew was the winner of the fishing trip donated by Skates for the silent auction at our annual meeting.

FOUND!

We found a Ricoh camera at the Cherry Hills Clubhouse after our "Friends" French Picnic last July. Please call the office if you are missing this camera.

Environmental Impact Statement Underway

Progress on Drought Management Plan

by Paul Williams, Vice President

Using water stored in Hungry Horse Reservoir, developing new drought forecasting methods, and developing a new Flathead streamflow model were major topics under discussion at a series of drought management workshops held this summer and fall.

Sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and their consultant, HDR Engineering, five public workshops were held in August and October in Kalispell and Polson.

The workshops were part of the work being done by the BIA to produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on PPL Montana's proposed drought management plan and alternative drought management plans for Flathead Lake and Kerr Dam. A plan is required by the terms of the Kerr Dam license issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Flathead Lakers' board and staff members were active participants and advocates at these sessions.

Salient issues posed and discussed at the workshops included:

Anticipating Water Supply Problems

Historically, runoff projections and analyses conducted by several different agencies have depended upon weather and streamflow information gathered in January, with monthly updates through late spring. Therefore, streamflow predictions were determined only after a significant part of the water year, which begins October 1 and ultimately affects

summertime water supply, had passed. At that point the lake might already be low enough that it would be difficult to meet both lake level and river flow requirements later in the spring and summer if severe drought conditions occurred.

At the October workshops, John Henz, meteorologist with HDR Engineering, presented information about potential tools for evaluating and predicting stream flows earlier in the water year. By combining actual October through December precipitation records with tools that measure the frequency of storms and ocean temperatures (El Nino, for example) he found he could predict drought conditions 70 to 80 percent of the time. This could provide earlier warning of potential drought conditions. Earlier information would facilitate adjustments in winter and spring management protocols to moderate summertime water problems. Interestingly, these early warning tools suggest the prospect of drought in 2003.

Water Flow Model

HDR Engineering developed a database and model of the dynamics of the Flathead River and Lake system so that various alternative formulations of a drought management plan can be evaluated for their relative merit and effectiveness. Alison MacEwen, modeler for the firm, said the model will be run for many possible scenarios based on information provided by cooperating agencies such as the Fish & Wildlife Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and the Army Corps of Engineers.



Hungry Horse Dam

Hungry Horse Reservoir & South Fork Flows

At the last October workshop in Polson, Jeffery Loman, Chief of Natural Resources for the BIA's Office of Trust Responsibilities, stated that "We're going to go to the Bureau of Reclamation and say you need to be a part of this plan." He said Hungry Horse Reservoir should do what it can to support Flathead Lake and River needs during drought years. But the BIA

DMP continued from page 4

will not request a revision of the “biological opinion” that now dictates flows from Hungry Horse for fish listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. This was a reversal of Loman’s July statement that Hungry Horse would not be part of the mix in the drought plan.

Flathead Lakers representatives described a historic precedent for making reservoir water available to meet spring and summer lake level requirements during drought years. Kerr Dam operations commenced attaining and maintaining full pool (2893 feet elevation) summer lake levels in 1941. It appears that docks and related lakeshore structures were converted from floating devices to fixed devices right after the end of World War II, demonstrating reliance on an expected full-pool lake level. This occurred more than a decade before Hungry Horse Dam was completed.

Economic Studies

The Flathead Lakers and others have consistently contended that an economic analysis of the impacts of lower than full-pool summer lake levels and reduced downstream flows on the Flathead Basin economy is an essential ingredient of a complete EIS. It appears no existing economic study fills this requirement. Loman confirmed that a study is planned and will be undertaken when the specific alternatives to be considered in the EIS are determined.

Gathering information about the elevations of fixed lakeshore structures is also planned. This would help provide information about the economic impacts of holding lake levels above usual winter elevations when drought conditions are likely, thus risking storm and ice damage and shoreline erosion. This analysis may help establish a most feasible winter lake level when drought threatens. Another economic



PWC: A Question for Flathead Lakers Members

This summer was the second one with the new 200-foot from shore no wake restriction. It was the first summer that the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks enforced the restriction with citations, as only warnings were issued in the rule’s first year.

Our question to you, the Lakers’ members: “Is it working?” Were boaters and personal watercraft (PWC) operators staying further from shore than in past years? Did you see enforcers at work? Was it less noisy on the lakeshore?

If you have a comment, please contact the Lakers office (contact information appears on page 2).

We are also curious if a significant number of new PWC were in use this past summer. The new revamped 2-cycle and new 4-cycle PWC engines are more efficient, less polluting and quieter. If you have first-hand experience, please let us know. Thank you.

— Rose Schwennesen

consideration is the impact of lake level management upon agricultural lands along the north lakeshore and Flathead River immediately above the lake.

Lower Flathead River Flows

The Kerr Dam license requires certain minimum flows in the Flathead River below the dam at various times during the year. Members of the public questioned whether the required minimum flows are supported by scientific evidence. It looks like the BIA will incorporate an analysis of these flows in the EIS.

EIS Process

Workshop moderator, Robert Beduhn of HDR Engineering, described the workshops as “the end of the beginning of the EIS process.” In due course, certainly not before next spring, a draft EIS will be published. It will describe a preferred drought management plan and alternatives, and will assess the environmental, social and economic impacts of each alternative. A 60-day public comment period will follow, and one or two public meetings will be held.

For more information and background on this issue, please visit our web site. You can find additional information in our 2001 and 2002 newsletters which also appear on the web site at www.flatheadlakers.org.

Momentum Builds for Waterton Expansion

By Steve Thompson, Glacier Program Manager, National Parks Conservation Association

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien gave a huge boost to the proposal to expand Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park into the Canadian headwaters of the Flathead Valley.

On October 3, Chretien unveiled a sweeping national park initiative to protect new lands and marine areas while better protecting and funding existing parks. The provincial government of British Columbia has agreed to negotiate terms of the proposed expansion, and talks are expected to begin in December.

Chretien's Waterton announcement also was applauded in Montana, where a broad coalition of business, civic, political and conservation leaders have banded together to support Canadian efforts to "fill the hole" in the world's first international peace park. "I want to cheer so loudly they will hear it all the way across the international boundary," said West Glacier businessman Rob Lundgren.

The proposal gained momentum a year ago when Canadian park advocates reached a compromise agreement with Tembec, the timber company that holds logging rights on the provincially owned public lands. Tembec agreed to give up logging rights on 100,000 acres in return for dollars to modernize a local sawmill. By increasing utilization standards, Tembec could produce the same amount of lumber using fewer logs, a "win-win situation" according to company executives.

The proposed expansion would double the size of Waterton and align its western boundary with Glacier's at the North Fork of the Flathead River. Parks Canada already has announced that the area would be managed as a backcountry wilderness if it's added to the Peace Park. The biggest concern of park advocates is that political leaders will agree on only a token expansion that doesn't even come down to the Canadian Flathead River.

The Peace Park Plus Campaign has been boosted by the active support of four Montana mayors, the Chambers of Commerce in Kalispell, Whitefish and

Columbia Falls, and favorable newspaper editorials throughout the state. Rotary Club leaders in both countries have rallied around the proposal as a way to complete the peace park that Rotary first championed more than 70 years ago. In Fernie, British Columbia, more than 50 local businesses have signaled their support.

Supporters have emphasized the economic importance of the park expansion for protecting the region's world-class waters, wildlife habitat and other natural amenities. Even without the added economic contribution of tourists, the Peace Park is the "region's biggest economic engine," according to the Kalispell Daily Inter Lake, because it attracts and helps retain businesses and high-quality employees in the Flathead's growing economy.

Despite the broad base of support in both nations, the park expansion continues to face significant hurdles, primarily in the form of staunch opposition from Fording Coal Company. Fording has long indicated that it intends to develop open-pit coal mines in the Canadian headwaters of the Flathead. Even though the Flathead coal fields are west of the Flathead River, and thus outside the proposed park, Fording appears to oppose any conservation initiative in the transboundary watershed.

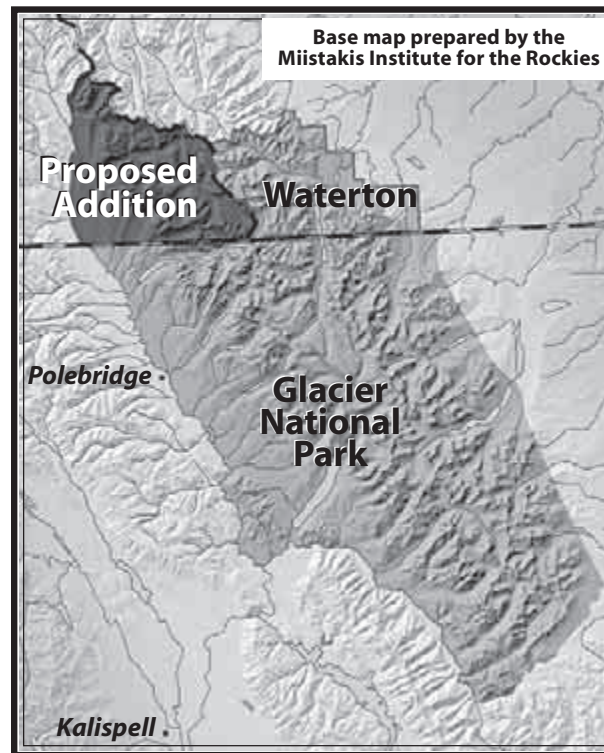
Nevertheless, park supporters hope that Chretien's personal commitment will break the peace park logjam. After a decade as Canada's leader, Chretien has announced his retirement in early 2004. So the next year will be critical in determining the fate of the Canadian Flathead Valley.

You can help support this important campaign by sending a letter to BC Premier Gordon Campbell. You can fax a free letter by going to

www.peaceparkplus.net. Or send a personal letter to:

The Honorable Gordon Campbell
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1
Canada

Or via fax: 250-387-0087



News from Around the Basin

Agreement on Swan River Recreation

PacifiCorp, owner of the Bigfork Dam, and several other groups including the Flathead Lakers, have reached agreement on recreation use of PacifiCorp lands along the Swan River.

For the past several years, Rose Schwennesen has represented the Flathead Lakers on the Swan River Corridor Committee (SRCC) working to enhance recreational opportunities along the Swan River corridor. PacifiCorp had offered the Bigfork Dam and lands around it (about 450 acres) for sale, later pulling it off the market. The SRCC had begun negotiating to purchase the lands (not the dam).

In the meantime, the dam's license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission was up for renewal. As part of the relicensing, PacifiCorp will submit a recreation management plan to FERC which will last for the term of the license, 30 years or longer.

Agreement was reached on recreational issues important to the Bigfork community and residents of the Flathead Valley. Some items include continued use of the Swan River Nature Trail, continuation of the annual Whitewater Festival, continued use of Sliter Park which hosts summer music concerts, and improved access to trails along the south side of the river. The SRCC will have the first option to purchase the property should it be offered for sale in the future.

The Lakers hope this agreement will benefit those who seek recreational use of the river and the lake.

Tug Boat Owner Convicted

Tim Knopfle was found guilty of knowingly polluting Flathead Lake in a jury trial in federal district court earlier this fall.

Knopfle is the owner of the tug boat that sank at Angel Point in May, 2001, spilling fuel into the lake. The boat later spilled fuel in bilge water at Woods Bay to prevent sinking again. Knopfle uses the boat in his dock building and repair business.

He is the first Montanan to be tried and convicted under the federal Oil Pollution section of the Clean Water Act. A penalty has not yet been determined.

The Flathead Lakers have been exploring options to improve prevention and clean up of such spills of toxic materials into Flathead Lake.

Second Annual Lake Honoring Held

High school biology students from around the Basin learned about fish, water quality, polluted runoff, and even the Flathead Lake monster at the second annual Lake Honoring held in September.

The Flathead Lakers participated in the event in Polson with a station on lake stewardship and a watershed model that graphically demonstrated how polluted runoff from nonpoint sources can pollute streams, rivers and lakes. Board member Laney Hanzel (left, standing next to the large map) talked about Flathead Lake monster "sightings."



Included in the program was a lake honoring ceremony and stations on fish identification, populations, ecology and management, and tribal perspectives on water quality. Staff at the Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay gave presentations on their lake ecology research.

The event is sponsored by the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Editor's note: In this issue of our newsletter we are initiating the first of a series of articles about "critical lands." Each article will focus on a specific area that is critical for maintaining water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities and other values. The Flathead Lakers are working to protect priority critical lands in collaboration with numerous agencies and organizations. For more information about the Critical Lands Project, please contact Project Leader Constanza von der Pahlen at (406) 883-1341 or constanza@flatheadlakers.org. For more information about critical lands, please review the Critical Lands Status Report from which the following information is excerpted and which is now available on our web site.

The Flathead River Islands

The area we are calling the Flathead River Islands is the highly braided area on the Flathead River, including islands, sloughs, wetlands, gravel and sandbars. It is located north of Flathead Lake, south of the Evergreen community, and east of Kalispell.

The wetlands and floodplains provide benefits such as capturing and storing nutrients and sediments which helps maintain high water quality.

The water flow through the river controls the natural plant communities present on the islands. Young willow and black cottonwood communities are most common after gravel or sandbars are created by natural floods. In less frequently flooded areas, such as terraces, the forest becomes dominated by black cottonwood and red-osier dogwood. In areas where flooding is uncommon, conifers dominate.

The Flathead River Islands provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Bull trout and cutthroat trout use the river for migration. They winter in several locations around the islands where water flows are slower, there is protection from predators and water temperatures are higher.

The vegetation on the islands, river banks and in wetlands provide nesting and winter habitat for bald eagles. It also provides important year-round habitat for river otters, beavers, osprey, great blue herons, cormorants, wild turkeys and pheasants. The area has the highest density of beaver colonies in Montana and large populations of river otter and osprey.

The area is also very popular for hunting, fishing, bird watching and



This highly braided area on the Flathead River, including islands, sloughs, wetlands, gravel, and sandbars, is located southeast of Kalispell and south of Evergreen. More detailed maps and photographs are on our website. USGS aerial photograph, 1990.

boating. The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has a fishing access at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area and Leisure Island on the west side of the river. The area was also a traditional river crossing area for the Kootenai Tribe.

The Flathead River Islands are highly unique and environmentally sensitive. The Stillwater and Whitefish Rivers contribute significant nutrient loads to Flathead Lake. These nutrients enter the Flathead River in this braided section. Nutrient filtering and sediment retention provided by wetlands and the floodplain in this area are critical for protecting water quality downstream, as well as protecting wildlife and plant species dependent on clean water.

Development pressures are high, especially west of the Flathead River corridor. Threats to the area include housing development (along with septic systems, dogs, removal of vegetation, etc.) and timber harvesting. As part of the Flathead River system, degradation of this area can contribute to water quality deterioration in the river downstream and in Flathead Lake.

By maintaining or restoring native vegetation on the islands, the floodplain and wetlands, we can help ensure that clean water, fish and wildlife, and the scenic beauty of the area can be enjoyed in the future.

— Constanza von der Pahlen
Critical Lands Project Leader

Growth Policy Updates Coming Soon

New Growth Policies (previously called Master Plans) are currently in the process of being created for both Flathead and Lake counties and the cities of Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls.

Growth and development are continuing in the Flathead Basin – no surprise to those who live or regularly visit here. Flathead and Lake counties grew by 26 percent in the past decade.

Growth has its advantages. It can provide new economic and cultural opportunities for our communities. But it can also have costs. The Flathead Lakers are working to ensure that the Flathead does not pay a price for its growth in degraded water quality.

A positive way to protect our clean water and other valued community and natural attributes is to work together to create community plans that guide growth and development.

A recent ruling by Montana Attorney General Mike McGrath says that a state law passed in 1999 requires cities and counties to develop a Growth Policy that meets that law’s requirements before they can make any major zoning changes or plan amendments. This ruling has spurred Flathead cities and counties into action to quickly adopt Growth Policies that meet the requirements.

As community members, you have the opportunity to shape those policies and help make sure they include provisions to protect Flathead waters. The Flathead Lakers board and staff encourage your participation in this important planning process that affects the Flathead’s future.

Several public meetings have been scheduled by the various jurisdictions. Please try to participate where you can. Contact respective cities or counties for more information.

Flathead County Growth Policy Meetings

(all meetings take place at 7:00 p.m.)

Dec. 10	W. Glacier Community Bldg
Dec. 17	Whitefish City Hall
Jan. 7	Evergreen Elementary
Jan. 14	Bissell School
Jan. 21	West Valley School
Jan. 28	Bigfork High School
Feb. 4	Lakeside School
Feb. 11	Smith Valley School
Feb. 18	Somers School
Feb. 25	Creston School
Mar. 4	Marion School
Mar. 11	Canyon Elementary

Lake County Growth Policy Process

Lake County held a series of public meetings during the summer of 2001. The planning department plans to release a draft Growth Policy after the first of the year for public comment.

Kalispell City Planning Board Growth Policy

Work Sessions (7:00 p.m., City Council Chambers)

Dec. 3	Open House - Review Resource & Analysis
Dec. 10	Potential Public Hearing Date
Dec. 17	Potential Public Hearing Date
Dec. 27	Document forwarded to City Council

YES! I want to be a member of the Flathead Lakers!



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Summer Address (if applicable) _____

Member: \$25 Member \$50 Sustainer Other \$ _____

Friend of the Flathead: \$100 Patron \$250 Benefactor \$500 Protector

Mail To: Flathead Lakers • PO Box 70 • Polson, MT 59860

We're Giving You a Second Chance!

If you missed last summer's lakeshore protection workshops, you have another chance to learn about maintaining or restoring a healthy lakeshore or streambank. Learn more about preventing erosion and protecting water quality.

Plan to attend!

Practical Aspects of Lakeshore & Streamside Restoration

a presentation by
Paul Hansen
 of Bitterroot Restoration

Wednesday, January 15, 7:00 p.m.
 Montana Logging Association, 2224 Hwy 35
 (just east of Kalispell)

Sponsored by the Montana Native Plant Society

Hansen is an expert on lakeshore restoration and riparian ecology and a former University of Montana professor



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