



FERC Issues Kerr Dam Mitigation Order

by Robin Steinkraus

The Flathead Lakers had reason to celebrate last summer. After many long years of meetings, documents and comments, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) finally issued its final order on Kerr Dam mitigation on June 25.

Many of the Lakers' goals in intervening in the Kerr Dam relicensing process back in 1990 have been achieved. FERC's order requires:

- Changing the operation of Kerr Dam from a peak load and load following* to a base load facility and restricting daily flow fluctuations to more closely reflect natural river flows.



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This change, implemented by Montana Power Co. (MPC) on October 1, will eventually reverse the degradation of the Flathead River below the dam (which has been called a "biological desert") caused by past large daily fluctuations in water releases from the dam.

- MPC to pay nearly \$36 million to mitigate damage to fish and wildlife resources and habitat, and development of a "Fish and Wildlife Implementation Strategy" to protect and improve these resources in the future.

- Acquisition of over 3,000 acres of wildlife habitat as replacement habitat for that lost due to dam operations.

- Coordination between Kerr Dam and Hungry Horse Dam managers.

A major goal of the Flathead Lakers had already been achieved: To open the relicensing process to public review and comment.

Why did the Lakers get involved?

MPC's license to operate Kerr Dam expired in 1980. In 1976 MPC applied for a new 50-year license. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Tribes) filed a competing application. A FERC hearing process would have followed but for a settlement between MPC and the Tribes. The settlement, subsequently approved by FERC,

included license conditions which provided that MPC hold the license and operate the dam for the first 30 years. In 2015 the Tribes have the option to pay to take over the dam. The settlement also required MPC to conduct fish and wildlife studies and file for FERC approval a fish and wildlife mitigation and enhancement plan. It further provided that the Secretary of Interior could impose conditions for the protection of fish and wildlife and related environmental concerns.

The fish and wildlife studies clearly showed that the operation of Kerr Dam had substantial negative impacts on lake and river wildlife and habitat. However, MPC's proposed Mitigation and Management Plan, issued in 1990, would have allowed the dam to be operated in almost precisely the same way as it had been in the past. MPC's plan even admitted that the ecological damage would continue: "Operations will continue to reduce the production potential of fish and wildlife resources, primarily by degradation of critical aquatic and terrestrial habitat."

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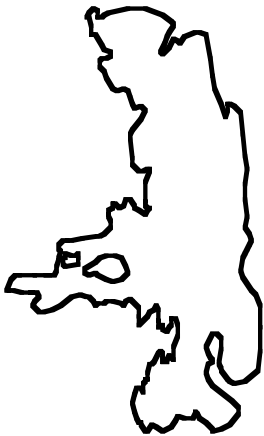
*increasing or decreasing power generation (and water releases) on an hourly or daily basis as power demands fluctuate.
FERC's Kerr mitigation order continued from page 1

Members are encouraged
to attend
Directors Meetings

The Board of Directors meets
every six weeks. Call the office for the
location if you'd like to attend a
meeting.

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President's Column

Adjust or Act?

by Sam Reynolds

I grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, and during the 1940s learned to swim, sail, and canoe on beautiful Lake Mendota.

Beautiful, that is, until mid-August. By then the green algae made Mendota so pea-soupy that, if you plunged in your arm up to the elbow, you barely could see your fingers wiggling below.

In early fall, when I walked my dog by the lake, I had to watch him like a hawk because the dead fish - mostly perch and sunfish - lay fin-to-fin along the shore. He loved to roll in them. He hated baths. I hated to bathe him. A beautiful lake with a putrid fringe.

People adjusted to it. People always do. Pollution comes softly, on little rat feet. On Flathead Lake we have adjusted to the rise and fall of the salmon fishery, the demise of bull trout, the crisis of cutthroats. Algae outbreaks are more frequent and menacing. We view our ongoing losses with a dull, nostalgic resentment. But we'll live. We'll adjust. We always do.

They adjusted at Lake Tahoe, that beautiful mountain lake shared by Nevada and California. They adjusted, and adjusted, and adjusted as lake quality deteriorated. They adjusted until lake quality became so threatened they made the nastiest adjustment of all: Total land use control. Not to preserve the lake. Not to restore it. But to retard its continuing deterioration.

The Flathead Lakers do not advocate rigid, Tahoe-like land use control. Instead, with an uneasy but timely glance at such lakes as Mendota and Tahoe, not to mention thousands of other contaminated lakes around the nation, we tie the still-high quality of Flathead Lake to land use planning that will prevent pollution before it occurs.

Tahoe is a tarnished gem. Here in the Flathead we have an opportunity to save a pure and sparkling gem. The lake belongs to us all. And we all must adjust our thoughts to acknowledge that what we do with our land in this watershed is key to preserving a lake that enriches us all.

Thank You:

To those members who recruited a new member to the Lakers this year!

To the homeowners who helped keep our waters clean by pumping their septic tanks during our special promotion!

To all the septic system services which participated in the special promotion!

ALERT!

As we went to press we learned that coal mining in the North Fork of the Flathead across the border in Canada is again threatening to become reality.

This threat to water quality has been put down before. The Lakers will be following this issue closely and we will keep you informed.

Lakers Board Welcomes Rose Schwennesen

Rose Schwennesen, a Bigfork real estate broker, was elected to the Flathead Lakers board of directors at the organization's annual meeting July 13.

"I'd like to devote my efforts to maintaining and improving our quality of life," she says. In keeping with that, she is emphasizing finding property for conservation-minded people in the Flathead watershed. She does it by serving sellers who have conservation easements on their property, and buyers who want such easements for the property they purchase.

A microbiology major with a degree in medical technology, Rose has worked in a cancer research lab at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, and as a water chemist at the University of Montana Biological Station at Yellow Bay.

She says her interest in environmental matters became focused when her husband, Don, became environmental reporter for the Missoulian. After the couple moved with their three children to the east shore of Flathead Lake in 1979, they raised organically grown cherries and, ever since the freeze of 1988-89 zapped their cherry trees, have concentrated on growing grapes. Don, after 18 years as the Missoulian's Flathead correspondent, is now publisher of the Bigfork Eagle weekly newspaper.

Rose has served on the Bigfork School Board, on the board of the Flathead Land Trust, on the board of the Citizens for a Scenic Lake County, and on the steering committee for Christmas in April, a group that on one April day each year does several building and maintenance projects for elderly low-income people.

Welcome, Rose, to the Flathead Lakers board!

1997 Annual Meeting

Those who attended the Lakers' annual meeting last July enjoyed a beautiful evening near the outlet of Flathead Lake at the Salish in downtown Polson.

Attorney Roger Sullivan discussed the recent FERC order on Kerr Dam mitigation (see article on page 1), provided a synopsis of the dam relicensing process, and commended the Lakers for their intervention and the benefits it achieved for the Flathead Lake and river ecosystem.

The tremendous amount of snowpack and resulting runoff this year dramatized the trend in deteriorating water quality, reported Dr. Jack Stanford in his "State of the Lake" address. Stanford, Director of the Flathead Lake Biological Station, said the amount of algae growing along the shoreline was "much greater this year, largely due to the tremendous amount of material coming into the lake." For more information about the lake's condition, please see

Stanford's article in the Summer 1997 *Monitor*. The biological station is now working to build predictive models using satellite information. The nutrient loading data will be used to create a very complex model which can be used to predict what will happen in the lake with changes in various land use activities, Stanford said.

Past Flathead Basin Commission Chair (and outgoing Flathead Lakers director) Elna Darrow described the Commission's TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) project. New research data from the biological station will now be used in a process of identifying voluntary ways to reduce nutrients coming into the lake from non-point sources. She emphasized the importance of monitoring as the program moves ahead.

President Sam Reynolds thanked the outgoing directors, Elna Darrow, Dick Idler and Bill Baird for their service to the organization.

Board Engaged in Strategic Planning Effort

All organizations go through stages in their development where they find that their internal and external procedures are no longer adequate. Such is now the case with the Flathead Lakers.

Protecting water quality is still the number one priority of the membership and the organization. With the tremendous growth and development in the area during the past several years, with projections for more growth, with a growing body of scientific data, and with changes in the political environment and changing personnel within the organization, the board of directors finds it necessary to restate our purpose in clear language and to formalize procedures which will enable the organization to be proactive rather than reactive.

The board determined that a strategic plan is needed that will clearly define the goals and priorities of the organization for at least the next five years, and from which yearly work plans will be developed. A clear statement is also essential in attracting new members and funding the organization.

Therefore, a good deal of time and energy have gone into strategic planning for the Lakers. The plan consists of both a program component and internal board development issues that must be addressed to ensure smooth transitions and a consistent message to the public. The plan incorporates the future programmatic direction of the Lakers with emphasis in those areas where we believe our organization can be most effective, with formal procedures for carrying out that program.

Language is now being drafted and we will publish the strategic plan in our next newsletter for membership comments. Please look for it and be prepared to send us your comments.

“Common Solutions” Seminar:

by Robin Steinkraus, Executive Director

It took the crisis of a building moratorium for the communities around Lake Tahoe to work together to initiate changes to protect environmental quality.

It took the crisis of a dam failure to bring irrigators, environmentalists and government agencies together to find ways to achieve a healthy river and a healthy agricultural community in the Henry's Fork watershed in Idaho and Wyoming.

It's taken miles of strip development, the loss of agricultural lands to rural subdivisions, and the supremacy of the automobile in countless mega-shopping center designs to awaken many communities around the country to their loss of quality of life. These were some of the experiences the 90 people who attended the “Search for Common Solutions to Common Problems” seminar learned about.

The seminar, held last Oct. 18 in Pablo, was sponsored by Lake County Land Services and the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes and co-sponsored by the Flathead Lakers, Citizens for a Scenic Lake County and other organizations. Ideas from other areas for managing population growth and protecting resources were presented by speakers and videos.

Lessons from Lake Tahoe-

Pam Drum, Community Outreach Coordinator for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), described the deterioration of Lake Tahoe water quality over the past 40 years that prompted a series of changes in attitudes toward lake conservation, the relationship between environmental quality and economic health, land use planning, and cooperation between government, businesses and concerned citizens.

One result of the changing attitudes was the rewriting of the TRPA's compact in 1980. The TRPA, formed in 1969 and representing two states and five counties, has the mission to “lead the cooperative effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe region.” The new compact included the ambitious goal of requiring adoption and implementation of a regional plan to achieve the threshold carrying capacity identified in nine areas (water quality, air quality, soil conservation, scenic quality, forest health, wildlife habitat, fish habitat, recreation, and noise) while allowing for orderly growth and development.

The plan which the TRPA developed was *not* embraced by all parties. Both the League to Save Lake Tahoe, a citizens lake protection group, and the California Attorney General sued in court claiming the plan did not meet the objectives of the compact.

The court agreed, threw the plan out, and required a moratorium on building until an adequate plan could be created. “That got people's attention,” said Drum, and brought all the various interests back to the table to take a

more serious look at the problems.

What they - the developers, casino owners, planners, environmentalists, etc. - discovered was that their “common ground was huge,” Drum said. “They were astounded by the similarity of their answer to the question ‘What is important to us?’” A new regional plan was adopted in 1987. It takes a regulatory approach to halting environmental degradation from new development. Now the TRPA is moving beyond the regulatory approach as it looks at reducing the ongoing environmental degradation from past development.

Drum outlined some of the techniques they are using, including a capital finance plan for an environmental improvement program, using revenue bonds to pay for stormwater management, wetlands restoration and erosion control, and creating community planning teams in which property owners develop plans for protecting and improving their area's scenic quality.

She presented what she called “radical thoughts from Lake Tahoe,” including:

- A land capability evaluation system is used to determine how sensitive a particular parcel is to development. For example, development is not allowed in wetlands, but “development rights” can be transferred to other, less sensitive parcels.

- The amount of impervious land coverage (such as roofs, parking lots, roads) allowed in a development is determined by the land capability evaluation. The maximum amounts allowed are 35% for residential and 70% for commercial developments.

- The total amount of commercial floor area has been allocated. To create more, developers must agree to provide for mitigation beyond their own project.

- Project developers pay mitigation fees of \$1.25 per square foot of impervious land coverage. The money generated is used for water quality improvement projects.

- An “air quality mitigation fee” is required for new homes built, because each new home generates new vehicle trips. The money goes into a trust fund for public transit operations, bike trails, woodstove mitigation measures, etc.

- A public buy-out program using state and federal funds targets the most sensitive lands for purchase.

Drum noted the similarities between the Flathead Lake region today and Lake Tahoe a couple decades ago. “I hope you can learn from what we've been through. It has been painful,” she said as she exhorted the audience to take steps now to protect the natural and community attributes we have. “It is far cheaper and easier to protect now than to try to restore later.”

The Henry's Fork Watershed Council-

Dale Swenson, co-facilitator of the Henry's Fork Water-



Speakers Encourage Citizens to Take Action

shed Council and Executive Director of the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District, offered the example of the Watershed Council as inspiration that barriers to cooperation, consensus and collaborative efforts can be overcome.

Barriers - fear of change, a deeply divided and polarized community, mistrust of government agencies and ineffective elected officials, confrontational attacks exchanged between groups, and ignorance about what consensus means - were in place in the Henry's Fork watershed 10 years ago.

Tensions between irrigators wanting to use their land and water as they wished and environmentalists trying to protect a blue-ribbon trout fishery came to a head with the failure of the Teton Dam and the tons of sediment that fouled the waters of a tributary to the Henry's Fork. That was the catalyst that brought people together to find new ways to protect the river while meeting the needs of both fish and farms. A watershed council was formed in 1993. It meets monthly for educational programs on topics related to watershed concerns, to evaluate proposed projects, and to offer suggestions for protecting watershed integrity.

The council includes a citizens group, a scientific team, and an agency resource managers roundtable. All of the groups have benefitted from improved communications and the exchange of information the Council provides as they cooperate in identifying, finding funding, and implementing watershed protection strategies.

A Landscape Architect's Perspective-

"Communities everywhere are losing their unique identities through uncontrolled growth," said Carol Truppi, a landscape architect from Maryland. To avoid that here Truppi suggested beginning by asking "What are the qualities about northwestern Montana that we as a community want to preserve?"

She said communities can use planning - a good master

plan and design standards - to "take the lead to control the look of their own backyards." She also pointed out the economic benefits of well-planned communities. We all know that scenic beauty, nice neighborhoods and good schools increase the economic value of property because people value those amenities. What people may not realize is that uncontrolled growth and sprawl development costs taxpayers 20 percent more in the demand for new services than the growth brings in through taxes, Truppi said.

Citing a 1994 study which showed that states with the strongest resource protection efforts are also the states with the strongest and fastest growing economies, Truppi encouraged the audience to take charge of determining the future of their communities.

What next?

To build on the interest stimulated by the seminar and to explore how some of the strategies for building cooperation and managing growth might be applied here, a meeting was planned for Monday, November 17 in Polson. We will review the audience comments compiled from the seminar and discuss possible frameworks for growth and resource planning, needs and directions, and further educational topics to pursue.

Flathead River Bull Trout Status Still Precarious

by Laney Hanzel, director

The results of the 1997 bull trout redd (fish nest) counts show the Flathead River bull trout population is not rebuilding as fast as fisheries managers would like after five years of protection from special angling regulations. A count in the four North Fork index streams was the lowest count on record, 44 redds, which was 75 percent below the 16-year average. The number of Middle Fork redds doubled from last year but is still 38 percent below the long-term average.

Although these counts on eight streams do not represent the total number of redds in the drainage, they do provide a bleak picture on the status of the spawning bull trout population in the upper Flathead River drainage. Redd observations in the Canadian portion of the North Fork showed below long-term average numbers, which reflects similar patterns of the population in the Montana portion of this river.

A brighter and more stable picture is represented by redd counts in the upper South Fork of the Flathead River and Swan River index streams. The South Fork counts were

down from last year's count but were at the 5-year average. Spawning conditions this fall in the four Swan River drainage index streams were better than expected as redd counts reached a record high of 586 redds. This is the seventh straight year that Swan River redd numbers have increased. The status of the Swan bull trout is a bright note for managers as they continue to wrestle with the recovery of these fish.

As the redd counts continue to fluctuate throughout the drainage, spawning and rearing habitat conditions in all drainages are showing improvements. This suggests a better survival rate is possible, which would result in a higher reproductive rate of bull trout in the drainage.

It is likely that next summer the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will complete its study and list the bull trout under the Endangered Species Act.

Guidelines for Orchards Needed

by Barry Flamm, director

1997 experienced the best cherry crop in years. Unfortunately it was financial disaster for most growers resulting from packing and marketing problems.

This disaster has some important, if not apparent, consequences for the Flathead Lake region. Cherry growing is a tradition of the lake region, providing a valuable crop, employment, and scenic diversity and beauty. Orchard land has been relatively valuable, deterring the conversion to non-agriculture uses. This year's problems may cause some growers to throw in the towel.

One unquestioned result was that many growers left fruit unpicked, perhaps as much as half a million pounds in total. Several people have publicly criticized growers for creating a bear problem with this abandoned fruit. A more important consequence is the insect and disease infestations that may result from this left fruit. Clean picking is an especially vital part of fruit fly and brown rot control, both serious cherry fruit pests. Without the fruit, neither pest can complete its life cycle. Many growers may try to compensate for this year's bonanza for the pests, and next year's potential for bigger problems, through increased chemical spraying in 1998.

The financial disaster has also forced the Flathead Lake Cherry Growers, Inc. (FLCG), a coop, to examine packing and marketing options for next year and beyond. Shipment of FLCG fruit to Washington for handling is being consid-

ered. As part of the proposal, a Washington company would receive fruit here but pack and market it at a plant in Washington. The company would also provide field advice. Since this out-of-state company's interest will be in maximizing fruit volume and subsequent financial return, it cannot be expected to give Flathead Lake protection a high priority. That is our job! It is likely that field advice (perhaps even company requirements of the grower) will promote increased chemical spraying and increased use of chemical fertilizers.

Currently our region lacks comprehensive regulations or guidelines addressing orchard development and management. Nothing approaches the Best Management Practices (BMP) guidelines for timber harvesting. Indeed there is considerable regulatory confusion and loopholes concerning orchard developments.

Development of new orchards at Yellow Bay illustrates this problem. During last summer Flathead Lake Biological Station and Lakers staff observed land clearing and logging on both sides of Yellow Bay Creek between the Biological Station and Tribal lands. Dr. Stanford, in a letter to the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, stated his findings as follows: "I noted that vegetation had been cleared

completely to within 10 feet of Lolo Creek and it appears that timber was selectively removed all the way to the creek's edge...I noticed that tons of rock that had been removed from the cleared fields were dumped into the riparian area of Lolo Creek...in some places the rock was in the creek and had diverted flow." Regarding Yellow Bay Creek, Stanford wrote, "They had bulldozed a road about 30 feet in width right down to the edge of the creek. They had dumped tons of rock in what appeared to have been a seasonally wet area associated with the creek." Later he calls attention to the impacts of these actions: "Extensive removal of vegetation within the catchment of Yellow Bay Creek will no doubt affect the flow regime in the creek and could potentially alter flows in the drinking water supply (of the Biological Station). A fully functioning, intact riparian area along Yellow Bay Creek would help to buffer

the effects of the large scale removal of the canopy." And furthermore, "If the orchard is planted within 10 feet of Lolo Creek and 25 feet of Yellow Bay Creek, it will be virtually impossible to prohibit the contamination of both streams by the aerial spraying of pesticides and herbicides." Stanford also expressed concern for the potential effect on westslope cutthroat trout in Yellow Bay Creek.



The Lakers also called this problem to the attention of the

public through letters to editors of local papers, to the state Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and to the CS&KT. The state's forest practices specialist, Norm Fortunate, has replied, writing, "I believe the SMZ law and rules were applied correctly in this situation. I am not sure of all the state regulations that may apply to this situation, but certainly the SMZ law applies to the timber sale activities. I believe the water quality law would also apply. Regulations governing the use of pesticides come under the jurisdiction of the state Department of Agriculture." This is a very unsatisfactory regulatory situation which can lead to ecosystem degradation.

With the expected development of additional acreage in orchard and pressures to intensify management, it is critical that voluntary guidelines be developed to aid growers in using economically and environmentally sound orchard management practices.



YES! I want to belong to the Flathead Lakers!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Summer Address _____

DUES: \$25 Individual \$50 Sustainer \$100 Patron \$250 Benefactor
 \$500 Protector Gift & Remembrance Other _____

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So the Lakers, with the leadership of attorney Roger Sullivan, then president Dick Wollin and board member Elna Darrow, intervened. Had the Lakers and others *not* intervened, MPC's plan would likely have been a done deal and we would be living with the consequences until the dam again comes up for relicensing in 2035.

The Lakers' intervention requested that an environmental impact statement be prepared to:

- 1) provide FERC with the information needed to make an informed decision,
- 2) require FERC to identify and assess a full range of alternatives to minimize the adverse effects of dam operations on fish and wildlife, and
- 3) allow the public to fully participate in a decision of vital concern to the people of the Flathead Valley.

FERC eventually agreed, and the EIS process was set in motion, allowing the people who live here and who care about Flathead Lake, the river and the watershed to voice their concerns.

The bad news...

But the news in FERC's order was not all good. It still includes MPC's original proposal (which also became one of the Department of Interior's conditions) to build an off-shore revetment (dike) along the north shore on both sides of the Flathead River to prevent erosion and provide wetland habitat. The Lakers opposed this revetment, which Senator Max Baucus termed "the Great Wall of Flathead Lake."

The order also requires planting hatchery fish in both the lake and river. The Lakers preferred habitat improvement and measures to enhance native fish species rather than planting hatchery-raised fish.

What happens now?

Of course FERC's final order isn't truly the final word on the subject of Kerr Dam relicensing and mitigation.

MPC, the Tribes and the Department of Interior all filed requests for rehearing with FERC, each claiming different reasons for the request.

MPC also requested a stay seeking to avoid the portion of mitigation costs, \$15.6 million, required in FERC's order for the period from July 17, 1985 (when the license was issued) through June 25, 1997 (when the final order was issued). MPC claims that the requirement to make payments covering past periods is unreasonable since it is not connected to specific mitigation requirements, and that the payment duplicates the annual "rent" charge (currently \$13.1 million) it must pay to the Tribes for the use and occupancy of tribal lands. FERC granted the stay request until a decision is made regarding the rehearing request.

Also, the Lakers board has learned that negotiations between MPC, the Tribes and the Dept. of Interior are underway to try to resolve their differences. According to a MPC employee, the parties have agreed that an off-shore revetment is not necessary. If they are able to reach agreement on some other issues and the Dept. of Interior amends its condition to allow an *on-shore* revetment, the "Great Wall of Flathead Lake" would be effectively squelched.

Lakers President Sam Reynolds says he's "dissatisfied that after the Lakers' effort to open the process to public review and comment through the EIS, the final result may come from negotiations held privately." But if that result includes the rejection of the off-shore revetment and doesn't compromise the improvements for fish and wildlife, the Lakers probably won't complain!



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*Flathead Lakers is a non-profit
501-(c)-(3) corporation chartered in 1958 to
protect Flathead Lake and encourage
economic development consistent with that
protection.*

Community Building: Moving Beyond Polarity

by Joe Biby, director

In the aftermath of the defeat of several proposals concerning resource protection and land use planning – the Flathead County Master Plan update and Initiative 122 to name two – a group of individuals and representatives of several conservation organizations active in northwest Montana has begun to explore new ways to work together to protect environmental quality.

Shirley Solomon, Director of Programs for Long Live the Kings, an organization based in Seattle and dedicated to the restoration of wild salmon in the Pacific Northwest, was invited to present information concerning her work “building community” in Washington state at a “Conservation Roundtable” in October. Solomon specializes in community organizing, cross cultural communications and alternative dispute resolution. Board members Joe Biby and Rose Schwennesen and Executive Director Robin Steinkraus represented the Lakers at the meeting.

Solomon suggested that “community is not *similarity* but diversity; we need to do something different than before.” To build sustainable community, she maintains, “you must broaden your circle,” to include the diversity of interests represented in the community. This process involves an attempt at relationship building among neighbors who share a connection to a common place but don’t necessarily have a history of working together.

Further, because we are neighbors, our fortunes rise or fall based on what *all* of us do.

The relationship building process has been used by Solomon in a variety of Washington communities where conflicts ranged from owls and timber to salmon and the rights of native peoples. The motivation to come together derives, in part, from a failure to implement planning and conflict resolution, and from a sense that the various parties involved were “going to hit a wall.” Solomon suggests that traditionally we have been better at reacting to crisis and leaning on science and technology to forge solutions, hoping that science would save the day. As an alternative, the community building approach attempts to establish a proactive foundation, a broader network of people dedicated to the long haul of shaping the future. Solomon calls it “tooling people up to participate in a civic dialogue.”

Solomon shared a case study from Washington, where various individuals and group leaders came into a community circle from positions of polarity. She set dialogue forth as the heart of community building and discovery. Over a period of six months with four meetings and interim activities, the group developed a greater awareness of their mutual feelings about place. They came to a better understanding of the issues causing conflict and began talking about them. Ultimately a series of dramatic

breakthroughs came about that included a town official drafting a resolution recognizing tribal government and the crafting of joint open letters to the community.

The group also looked at applying some of the community building strategies to a local issue. Elna Darrow outlined the Flathead Basin Commission’s upcoming project to invite residents to participate in a process to determine how to voluntarily reduce the amount of nutrients reaching streams, rivers and eventually Flathead Lake from non-point sources of pollution. Many suggestions for crafting an approach to this project and building acceptance for proposed changes were offered both from Solomon and participants. The theme underlying the suggestions was that instead of resignation in the face of resistance to change, those who carry out and promote the program need to involve everyone in developing solutions to the real and measureable changes in the water quality of our watershed. The assignment will be a challenge but there is reason for enthusiasm, especially knowing that some communities, very much like our own, are making significant strides out of gridlock.