

Protecting Basin Waters

# Membership Recruitment an Essential Component

By Ron Selden, Executive Director

With numbers we have strength. While that's an old adage, it remains true, especially when it comes to being heard and influencing decisions.

For many years, the number of members in the Flathead Lakers has stayed relatively constant. But the organization is changing. While a new office and a paid staff are important, we now need to expand our membership base to help ensure that our concerns about water quality continue

to be taken to heart and acted upon.

Unfortunately, far too many people in the Flathead Basin have little regard for the concept of long-term environmental stewardship.

Developers and others demand to build homes and businesses within the fragile zones of our floodplains and lakeshores. Short-sighted zealots with little regard for the concept of community manage to derail all but the most feeble attempts at land-use planning, and area elected officials, with some exceptions, suffer stunning impairments of vision when it comes to finding alternatives to the cancerous development devouring our landscapes.

While groups such as the Flathead Lakers can't cure all the world's ills, they can affect the way our local land and water resources are taken care of. By demanding that our population densities and development be managed with an unblinking eye toward the future, for example, effective safeguards can be put in place to ensure that all of the water flowing into Flathead Lake is free of excessive nutrients and other harmful materials. And with enough clout, the Lakers, working in concert with like-minded groups, can help elect people locally who as a basic tenet of their service will work to keep our waters clean.

In our system of democratic governance, however, right is not done without might.

At the end of 1996, the Lakers had a total of 679 memberships, or about

1,200 individual members if spouses and other family members are added in. We gained about 70 new memberships last year, and hope to expand our ranks by another 20 percent in 1997.

In coming weeks we'll be kicking off our first "Each One Get One" campaign. You'll be getting a letter explaining this project and a copy of our new recruitment brochure in the mail, with a request that you help us grow stronger by finding at least one new member among your friends, neighbors or relatives. If each of you recruits just one person, our voice will quickly double in strength.

Later in the year we'll be unfolding the second phase of our campaign, which involves targeting other groups of people around the region as we spread the word about our work protecting the basin's water resources.

With your help and continued support, Flathead Lake will remain the most vibrant jewel in this precious and spectacular land of natural splendors.



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Members are encouraged  
to attend  
Director's Meeting

Board of Directors meets every six weeks. Call Robin Steinkraus (837-0399) for the time and location if you'd like to attend a meeting.

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## **Executive Director Resigns**

One thing they don't teach you in college is that expectations don't always match realities. That's a lesson we each have to learn on our own.

So after 10 months as the Flathead Lakers' first executive director, I'm leaving this month on my own accord to go back to my former career of writing. It's a fairly comfortable, familiar place and a field in which I have enjoyed considerable success in the past.

While I was deeply honored and excited to have been chosen from scores of other applicants to be the Lakers' chief administrator, I learned over time that in my heart I'm simply not cut out to be an administrator. No matter how hard I tried over the past 10 months to make the title and duties fit, in many ways they did not. So it became clear that I needed to make a change. The board has chosen Robin Steinkraus, our administrative assistant, to at least temporarily fill the position.

While I am truly sorry to be leaving, I am excited about the progress that has been made. Under the guidance of a diverse and talented board of directors, short-term and long-term plans have been developed to increase the group's membership, broaden its financial base, and expand its offering of educational projects and programs. The group's internal structure has been strengthened through a variety of new and expanded committees, and the stage is set for the organization to further develop effective strategic plans for the future.

It has been a pleasure to be associated with the Flathead Lakers, primarily because the goal of protecting the basin's waters from further degradation is such a worthy mission, but also because it is an organization comprised of dedicated people who truly care. That's a strong combination, and one that will ensure that the organization continues to be successful in its endeavors.

—Ron Selden

## **Board Adjusts Basic Dues**

Making a decision to raise membership dues is never easy, especially in a small organization.

But in analyzing our operations, we discovered that it costs about \$13 a year to serve each Laker membership. That figure, in part, includes the costs of record-keeping, preparing and sending special mailings, holding our annual meeting, and producing and mailing the *Monitor*.

We also found that a large number of our members opt for the \$15 *Individual* category. In short, the \$2 remaining from each individual membership to devote to programs, an office, and staff is not enough.

Foundation funding is another issue. The foundations that now provide the Lakers with half our operating funds say their unrestricted grants to get us on our feet financially will likely cease after this year. That means we must become more self-sufficient, mainly through our members.

After careful review and a survey of other conservation organizations across the state, the Board of Directors in December voted to replace the *Individual* and *Family* categories with a \$25 general annual membership. The board also approved a new \$25 minimum *Gift & Remembrance* category, and an *Other* category for those who feel they can't afford the new base rate. The changes went into effect Jan. 1. All other levels of the previous dues structure remain the same.

We greatly appreciate those members who support the Lakers by contributing dues above the basic category.

## 1996: Flathead Lakers Year in Review

1996 was a year of growth and transition for the Lakers. Along with opening a new office and hiring our first executive director, we were involved in a variety of programs and projects. Among other accomplishments, the Lakers last year:

- Recruited 70 new memberships, designed a new brochure, and developed short-term and long-term plans for expanded recruitment efforts.

- Conducted an internal evaluation to assess the organization's strengths and weaknesses and plan for the expansion of operations and programs.

- In conjunction with more than a dozen other organizations, participated in Flathead County *Earth Day* activities.

- Participated in *Flathead River Day*, an outdoor educational event that attracted hundreds of students to learn about water quality and other resource issues.

- Helped support an education campaign in that favored proposed revisions in Flathead County's master land use plan.

- Rewrote and published 5,000 copies of the *Flathead Basin Ways of Water Tour Guide*, a booklet that explains the functions of local watersheds and ways to explore and protect them.

- Conducted *Flathead Water Quality Week* activities, including *Field Day at Yellow Bay*, a workshop for fifth and sixth graders at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station.

- Hosted a first-ever *Summer Celebration* fundraiser at the Flathead Lake Lodge.

- Co-sponsored and judged a student essay, poem, and poster contest on why the Flathead region is important and why we should all work to protect it.

- Assisted in the creation of the Montana Lake Protection Association, a public education coalition of lake-

conservation groups from around the state.

- Developed a slide-show presentation on basin water quality issues for school classes, service clubs and other groups.

- Co-sponsored and presented information at *The Power, Promise and Prospect of Water in the Flathead* conference at Flathead Valley Community College.

- Worked with a variety of other conservation groups to educate the public about I-122, Montana's Clean Water Initiative.

- Co-sponsored a visit to the area by Dr. Michael Brett of the University of California-Davis. Dr. Brett spoke at our annual meeting about the correlation between pollution problems in the Flathead Basin and in the Lake Tahoe Basin of California.

- Participated in the planning process for the Crane Mountain timber sale.

- Continued involvement in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Kerr Dam mitigation case.

### President's Column

By Sam Reynolds

The Legislature is upon us. Unlike critics who say "Hold onto your wallets" or make other flip remarks, I confess I like the legislative process and respect and like the Legislature.

A top Montana officeholder once told me about a conversation he had with Sen. Barry Goldwater. The United States Senate, the Arizona conservative told him, reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the population as a whole. It has hard workers and slugs, honest people and corner-cutters, sobersides and drunks.

My experience with the Montana Legislature and the Wisconsin Legislature before that, demonstrates to me that legislatures function very well. Not that I don't howl at some of their decisions. Everybody does. But on the whole I'm convinced we're in good hands.

The reason is that both parties raise bright, hard-working people to leadership positions, and then follow their leaders.

Flathead Lake is fortunate to have John Mercer as speaker of the House. At least I hope so. The Polson Republican knows that a majority of Lake County voters last November favored I-122, to tighten pollution controls on hard-rock mining. Statewide, the initiative failed. But the Lake County vote indicated that the people in Mercer's area want no weakening of state water quality controls. They want a clean Flathead Lake.

A Lee Newspapers poll published Jan. 5 backed that up. Despite turning down I-122, Montanans favor tougher water quality standards. The poll found that 56 percent of Montanans support tougher standards, and only 3 percent want the standards weakened.

The people speak through their Legislature and the Legislature follows its leaders. The Flathead Lakers can expect that the 1997 Legislature will honor the need to protect Flathead Lake's water quality.



## The Care and Feeding of Backyard Sludge

A standard on-site sewage treatment system includes a septic tank and a drainfield. Like any living pet, the system needs loving care and maintenance. Not unlike the family dog or cat, it needs to be fed and checked on to ensure it isn't doing something it shouldn't be doing, like pooping in the neighbor's yard.

Feeding the system is actually very easy. All you have to do is wash the dishes, take a bath, or flush the toilet. Lots of folks would like to sell you wonderful elixirs that allegedly will make it start quicker, run faster, and smell better. But like Fido, the average system does fine on a plain diet, along with a few table scraps and no special treats.

There are those who suggest that the regular addition of vitamins and enzymes will enrich and extend the life of your pet. This may be true for the dog, but not in the case of an on-site treatment system. Unlike the cat, a septic system doesn't live in a world of its own. It lives together with the other part of its family, a drainfield.

Normal maximum life expectancy of a drainfield is about 20 years, and like us all, that can be significantly shortened by overindulgence. A drainfield must be fed a very weak and watery diet, and in this family the septic tank is dietician and cook.

To prepare healthy food for the drainfield, the septic tank must remove all of the suspended stuff, like soap suds, ground up carrots and sand. In addition, it must remove as much as possible of the dissolved stuff, such as sugar, tea, and recycled beer.

Getting the suspended stuff out is easy. The dissolved stuff is a little more difficult. Basically, the only removal process available to the septic tank is time and gravity, so it must first convert the dissolved stuff to suspended stuff and then remove it. To do this it encourages bacteria to gobble up the dissolved stuff, which gets heavy and sinks.

There are many products on the market which, according to their labels, are not only recommended but necessary to help the septic tank do this. In reality all of the elements necessary to start and keep things going are in the sewage. We humans are great at producing prepared food for the bugs. All we have to do is help the septic tank maintain room for the stuff that it removes.

About once a year, the septic system should be given a routine physical exam. This involves removing the inspec-

tion manhole cover and looking in, a somewhat unpleasant task, but nothing in comparison to finding the new basement carpet is under six inches of chewed carrots and used beer.

If your septic tank is buried and you don't know where it is, phone the Flathead City-County Health Department at 758-5760, or Lake County Health Department at 883-7236. If you are lucky, they will have a drawing on file which shows where the tank and manhole are located. If not, you can either plan a lot of togetherness time with a shovel, or circulate word that a pirate's chest is buried somewhere in your backyard and sell permits to those who would like to dig for it.

Actually, most of the septic tank pumpers listed in the phonebook seem to have a special talent for locating and uncovering a buried septic tank. With a little encouragement and some silver coins, you can also talk one of these craftsmen into removing the manhole cover and determining how much stuff is in the tank. With a little more encouragement and silver coinage, if it's cleaning time, this person will also remove the collected stuff and save your basement carpet.

Cleaning time comes about every five years for an average four-person, two-bedroom household, and perhaps on shorter intervals if there are more munchkins in the bedrooms or a garbage disposal in the kitchen.

Of course, there are those who claim proudly that their tank is 20 years old and has never been pumped. This is somewhat similar to an individual proudly claiming he hasn't had a bath or changed

underwear for a month.

Just because the basement doesn't smell or look like a sewage swimming pool doesn't necessarily indicate that what's going down your sewer isn't coming back up your well or feeding the fish in your private fishing pond. Personally, I don't like the taste of salty drinking water . . .

—Dick Montgomery, Director



**The Flathead Lakers grew by 70 memberships in 1996. We're glad you're with us. Please welcome our newest additions!**

Tim Ramage  
 Steve and Jenifer Corning  
 Dr. A.D. & Marjorie Bloomstrom  
 John H. Wicks  
 Rashel Jeffrey  
 John Talbot  
 Sarajane Corette  
 Hugh E. Elmore  
 Darrell and Florine Marshall  
 Jeanette S. Hamilton  
 Fred Weiss  
 Jan and Will Tusick  
 Howie Howlett; Glacier Raft Co.  
 Jerry and Carolyn Kurzenbaum,  
 Gull Printing  
 Jay Lehman; KwaTaqNuk Resort  
 Mary MacDonald  
 Elaine Meeks  
 Ken Walks in Winter;  
 Rising Wolf Traders  
 Gary and Susan Wicks  
 Coe Carew and Bill Starkey  
 Dr. Don R. Erickson  
 Linda Hewitt  
 Chad and Anne Castren  
 Don Scharfe;  
 Rocky Mountain Outfitter  
 Leo Evans Jr., Bikology  
 Andrea Scott

Meadow Manor  
 Fred Cox  
 Beth DeVore  
 B.E. Arnlund  
 Mrs. W.L. Shryock

**Welcome  
 New  
 Lakers  
 Members!**

Maggie Bagon  
 Printer Bowler  
 Dave Hadden  
 Jack and Laura Barrett;  
 Bridge Street Gallery Restaurant  
 Karen Kershaw and Greg Bloom;  
 Brookie's Cookies  
 Lon Cahney  
 Judane Clark; Contractor's Design  
 Clayton and Kay Emmert  
 Blu and Rose Funk;

ShowThyme Restaurant  
 George and Shauna Gibson  
 Lyn Healy  
 Larry W. Jochim; Flathead Bank  
 Hale Lake; Hale's Lake House  
 Elsbeth Suter and Margrit Matter;  
 Swan River Cafe  
 Rose Schwennesen  
 Jim and Mary Slack  
 Dorothy Smith  
 Fred Sterhan; Marina Cay Resort  
 Don and Judy Thompson  
 Lona and C.R. Wilson  
 Rob Wink; Eagle Bend  
 Marilyn Wood  
 Paul Mutascio and Jill Gotschalk;  
 Gotschalk's Graphics  
 Lanny Rae and Bob Thomas  
 Walter Stark  
 John and Laura Eisenlohr  
 Charles and Loretta Selden  
 Dennis and Joan Hensley  
 Stephen and Carol Ackerman  
 John and Donna Briggs  
 H. Howard Stephenson  
 Raymond and Joan Deily  
 Mike and Konnie White  
 Dolly Gudder and Walter Dodds  
 K. Raymond Brown  
 Robert and Catherine Brown  
 Nicholas L. Frazee  
 Lisa Brown  
 Cynthia Faubion

***YES! I want to belong to the Flathead Lakers!***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Address \_\_\_\_\_

- DUES:  \$25 Membership     \$50 Sustainer     \$100 Patron     \$250 Benefactor  
 \$500 Protector     Gift & Remembrance (\$25 Min.)     Other \_\_\_\_\_

***Mail to: Flathead Lakers • P.O. Box 990 • Bigfork, MT 59911***

# What's New Around the Lake:

## Bill Bishop Dies

Longtime lake lover and former board member Charles A. "Bill" Bishop of Polson died of cancer in late January.

Bill, 68, founder of the highly successful Bishop Insurance chain, was a dedicated and thoughtful protector of Montana's land and water, and was long an active member of the Lakers. He was also a respected member and former president of the Montana Wilderness Association, as well as Polson Outdoors, Inc.

Bill loved the outdoors and everything the natural world offers. He traveled widely and until recently still enjoyed the long business jaunts that took him to every corner of the state. Among his many hallmarks was a remarkable ability to get along with most anyone, and his tireless advocacy of the Polson community.

Bill is survived by his wife Marcy, a daughter, and four sons. His passion for Flathead Lake and conservation in general will be greatly missed.

## Nutrient Study Completed

A major study of nutrient loading in Flathead Lake is in its final stages and the project, coordinated by the Flathead Basin Commission, will soon move into the public participation stage.

Researchers at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station have spent the past 18 months compiling and analyzing data on nitrogen and phosphorus movement throughout the basin. The Total Maximum Daily Load study, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is designed to help resource managers develop new standards for the level of nutrients allowed to enter the lake. The main goal of the project is to keep Flathead Lake algal growth limited to a natural minimum.

The study is an outgrowth of a 1993 determination by Montana officials that the lake is not fully meeting state

water quality standards. A coalition of conservation groups served notice in December that they intend to sue EPA and the state Department of Environmental Quality for allegedly stalling on programs to clean up Flathead Lake and other "impaired" lakes and waterways.

## Somers Plan Derailed

The Flathead County Board of Commissioners has killed a neighborhood planning effort on Flathead Lake's north shore.

The proposed Somers Neighborhood Plan, the culmination of a year-long effort by local residents to develop local land use controls, was axed by commissioners on Christmas Eve, just before the proposal was to move into the final public hearing stage.

Earlier in December, the county's planning board bucked area anti-planning activists and unanimously recommended approval of the proposed plan. The commissioners, however, were unwilling to wait until the full public had its say.

Meanwhile, Montanans for Property Rights, a local anti-planning group, recently announced the kickoff of a campaign to amend county rules to require that landowners be compensated if zoning restricts uses of their land. According to published reports, the group's proposal says

zoning should be prohibited unless it is "demonstrated to be essential to protect the public health, welfare and safety."

In a separate matter, the Montana Supreme Court in January upheld the dismissal of a lawsuit filed by Montanans for Property Rights to invalidate Flathead County's Master Plan and kill county zoning districts.



*Monitoring is a crucial component in protecting the region's water quality. Photo courtesy Flathead Basin Commission.*

## Lake Trout For Sale?

Senate Majority Leader John Harp, R-Kalispell, has introduced a bill to allow anglers to catch and sell lake trout from Flathead Lake.

# Roundup of Regional Events

Senate Bill 174 drew opposition from charter boat operators and others during a legislative hearing in late January. While opponents contend that a commercial fishery could harm stocks of trophy fish and otherwise upset Flathead Lake's biotic balance, advocates conclude that something more must be done to trim back burgeoning numbers of mackinaws. Lake trout, believed to be the second most populous fish species in Flathead Lake, are blamed for devouring stocks of introduced kokanee salmon and dwindling native species such as westslope cutthroat and bull trout.

In a recent report to the Flathead Basin Commission, state biologist Tom Weaver indicated that without a surge in population levels, naturally reproduced bull trout in Flathead Lake will likely soon become a thing of the past.

## Marina Plan Withdrawn

A longstanding proposal to expand the Eagle Bend Marina along the Flathead River west of Bigfork was abruptly pulled in December after it ran into rough regulatory waters.

In the meantime, other Eagle Bend holdings, including its highly acclaimed golf course, have been sold to another private interest, Golf Northwest.

The marina expansion project appeared to be sailing toward approval, and a crucial permit had already been granted by the Flathead Conservation District prior to a December hearing before the Flathead County Board of Adjustments. The panel had authority over the proposal because the marina's owner, GSI Inc., had requested a conditional-use permit.

Expansion proponents withdrew their request after more concerns were raised about sewage plant sludge in the vicinity, as well as potential impacts on area wetlands. According to published reports, however, the expansion proposal can be resurrected later.

## Columbia Basin Ailing

A massive survey of the Columbia Basin concludes that nearly half of the drainage, which includes almost all of Idaho, most of Oregon and Washington, and part of Montana, has "low ecological integrity."

According to a scientific report released in December by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, at least 45 percent of the basin's ecosystem no longer functions as it did historically due to human alterations. Other areas of the drainage don't fare much better, the report concludes.

The unprecedented report documents the swath of

human-caused changes throughout the basin, particularly the damage to native fish stocks and other natural resources.

The assessment will be used to write a drainage-wide environmental impact statement on the future management of the basin's public lands.

## Air Standards Debated

Scientists studying nutrient loading in the Flathead Basin have long maintained that a large portion of the phosphorus entering our waters, perhaps up to 40 percent at certain times of the year, comes from fugitive dust and smoke in the air.

Responding to renewed concerns about air degradation nationwide, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is considering tough new restrictions on particulate pollution that could further affect dirt roads, wood stove burning, and timber slash fires throughout the region.

At present, EPA standards broadly focus on particles that are less than 10 microns in diameter. These tiny particles have been deemed to be most dangerous to human health because the lungs have trouble removing them once inhaled.

The American Lung Association, among other clean air advocates, has long pushed for tighter national standards for particles 2.5 microns in diameter, or smaller. The controversial issue of revising particulate standards is moving into the congressional hearing stage this winter.



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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.*

## Kerr Dam Mitigation in Final Phase?

By Ron Selden

The long road to a final decision about mitigating the impacts Kerr Dam operations have on fish, wildlife and erosion may finally be coming to an end.

Montana Power Company, the dam's owner, was ordered in 1985 to develop a plan to compensate for habitat and fish and wildlife population losses caused by the impoundment and its generation of electrical power. The company's original plan, submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in 1990, was largely revamped by the Department of Interior, which maintains it can make mandatory changes to the document because of its trust responsibilities to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and over other federal holdings. The tribes share a joint operating license with MPC for operating the dam.

After months of squabbling over Interior's changes, MPC officials, citing economic woes, last fall proposed selling the dam to the tribes now, instead of waiting until 2015 to offer them the option of taking over

the structure. The power company later unveiled a proposal to settle the mitigation issue at a fraction of the cost of earlier recommendations.

Late last year, tribal officials informed FERC that they would forego early transfer of the dam and would not resume turnover talks until the mitigation issue was settled. They also commented that they felt MPC's settlement proposal was "unacceptable."

The Lakers, an intervenor in the proceeding, are opposing the company's settlement proposal on the grounds that it is inadequate. The Lakers are also concerned that despite widespread opposition, the company is still

advocating an offshore revetment scheme to create 30-odd acres of swamp near the mouth of the Flathead River on the north shore.

The Board of Directors has vowed to remain actively involved in the mitigation issue until its resolution.

