



Annual meeting wrap-up

Time to protect is short, experts say

Many of the calamities at California's Lake Tahoe can be avoided in and around Flathead Lake, but time is short, according to researcher Michael Brett.

Dr. Brett, a limnologist at the University of California-Davis, told participants at the Lakers' annual meeting in August that the best hope for Lake Tahoe, which has seen astounding leaps in development within its small watershed, is to simply slow down the current rapid rate

of degradation. Residents here, he said, have the luxury of learning from mistakes made in the Tahoe Basin and still have time to enact and carry out plans to protect Flathead Lake. He estimated that the water-quality and development problems here are perhaps 20 years behind the ongoing problems at Tahoe.

While Tahoe and Flathead lakes have many similarities, there are many differences, too. Tahoe, for example, has an average depth of 600 feet, compared with Flathead's average depth of 150 feet, and the Tahoe watershed is far smaller. By contrast, the Flathead River provides an important flushing function for the lake here.

Like Tahoe, Brett said, Flathead Lake is extremely fragile and has a very limited capacity for absorbing nutrients. The water quality of both lakes also is degraded by erosion from logging and other development, as well as air pollution, which is increasing, he said.

Brett said there are about 90,000 homes in the Tahoe Basin today. In 1960, there were about 1,000 homes in the basin, he said.

Lake Tahoe's waters are so vulnerable, Brett said, that a state-of-the-art sewage treatment plant constructed in the basin was deemed inadequate, even though it removed approximately 95 percent of the waste's nutrients. The remaining nutrients released as effluent into the lake exceeded natural levels to the point that discharges now must be pumped into a different watershed to avoid degrading Tahoe, he said.

In our watershed, extensive renova-

tions at some upstream sewage treatment plants has resulted in marked decreases in the load of nutrients reaching the lake, added Dr. Jack Stanford, director of the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station. Nonetheless, phosphorus loading, which could be managed in part by more stringent controls on land use, remains a major concern at both Tahoe and Flathead, Brett and Stanford said.

Stanford told meeting participants that while the current trend points to likely increases of algae, no unusual blooms have yet been noted in Flathead Lake this year. The effects of increased summer discharges from Hungry Horse Dam for downstream salmon remain to be seen, he said.

The water from Hungry Horse, which is warmer than in past years due to dam's revamped withdrawal system, has been flowing across Flathead Lake's surface, instead of sinking to the lake bottom, Stanford said.

Stanford reiterated that one of the biggest threats to Flathead Lake's health is "atmospheric loading," mainly from airborne dust, wood smoke, and other pollutants.

**Welcome
New Lakers President
Sam Reynolds**



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Members are encouraged
to attend
Director's Meeting

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

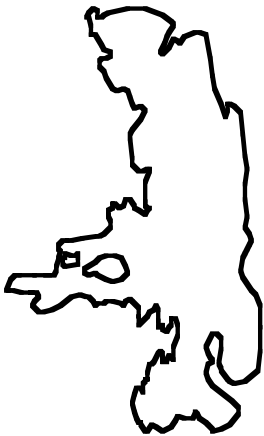
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Board Reorganizes

Sam Reynolds Elected President

After two highly productive and often hectic years at the helm, Lakers President Mickey Sogard has announced her resignation in order to free up more time for fundraising and membership-recruitment work with the organization.

Over the past several years Mickey has devoted countless volunteer hours toward the betterment of the Lakers and the protection of Flathead Lake. Due in large part to her leadership skills and enthusiasm, the Lakers now have a first-time executive director, as well as an office to call home. Mickey now plans to chair the group's newly formed Finance and Development Committee and will continue to sit on the Executive Committee.

Newly elected to the top leadership position is Sam Reynolds of Polson, who has most recently served as secretary-treasurer. Sam culminated a distinguished career in journalism as the long-time editorial page editor for the Missoulian. He has taken a strong interest Flathead Basin management issues, and has been actively involved in a variety of educational projects with the Lakers since his retirement. He will preside over the Executive Committee and is a member of the newly expanded Program and Education Committee.

Also at the September board meeting, Bigfork-area resident Dick Montgomery was re-elected into a new term as the Lakers vice president. Dick, a long-time water systems engineer who retired from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, also serves on the Executive Committee, which guides office operations and activities. Former board President Joe Biby was elected secretary-treasurer.

A new face on the board is Lakeside resident Charlotte Easter. Charlotte holds a master's degree in environmental studies from the University of Montana and is a former

chair of the Montana Environmental Information Center's Board of Directors. She was a longtime volunteer and staff member with the American Red Cross, has worked with The Nature Conservancy in Bigfork, and was active in the Sierra Club during a 28-year stint living in Missoula. Charlotte, the mother of four grown children, has great spirit and enthusiasm for working toward conservation of the basin's resources. She replaces longtime director Art Thompson, who put in many years sharing his expertise and knowledge with the Lakers. Watch for Art and Diane spending more free time sailing now that his retirement is fulltime and official.

July 31 was a fateful day for director Dick Idler, who sustained a major stroke that morning in the parking lot of the Bigfork Athletic Club. Luckily, however, medical help was close by and Dick was quickly transported by helicopter to Kalispell Regional Hospital. Despite the stroke, he's been keeping up with Lakers issues from his hospital room.

He's in good spirits, is working hard at rehabilitation, and looks forward to returning home in coming weeks. As his wife Nancy says, "Dick still has much to live for."



Kerr Mitigation Saga Continues

By Ron Selden, Executive Director

Montana Power Co. officials threw lake watchers a curve ball in August when they proposed the early transfer of Kerr Dam's operating license to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Citing increasing competition, high operating costs, and "unreasonable" changes proposed for their dam mitigation plan by the U.S. Department of Interior, company leaders said the time has apparently come to give up the dam. The company is also seeking a three-month stay in dam mitigation proceedings so details of the potential transfer and a proposed settlement can be worked out behind the scenes.

As background, MPC and the tribes in 1985 were issued a 50-year joint license for operating Kerr. Under an agreement approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, MPC was authorized to run the dam for the first 30 years, with the tribes to be given the option of purchasing and running the facility for the remainder of the license period.

As part of the licensing compact, MPC agreed to develop a plan to mitigate for fish and wildlife damage caused by the dam's operation and in 1990 filed an initial proposal. Responding to requests from the Flathead Lakers, the state's congressional delegation, and other intervenors, FERC eventually agreed to complete a lengthy Environmental Impact Statement on the proposal.

In the process, the Department of Interior, acting under the authority of the Federal Power Act and in trust for the Salish and Kootenai Tribes, submitted several major changes to MPC's proposal, including expanded requirements that Kerr Dam be operated as a base-load facility, instead of a peaking facility. Advocates of the proposed operational change contend they would greatly benefit the lower Flathead River, which has been heavily impacted by wildly fluctuating water levels under the current power-generation scheme.

At a mid-August news conference, Montana Power leaders complained that Interior's conditions demanding that the company pay more for mitigation were "too much, too late," and were "unreasonable." The company also noted that FERC's final environmental study predicated that Interior's conditions could make future Kerr operations uneconomical.

In comments filed with FERC, however, Interior attorney Anne Crichton questioned that assumption and argued that the figures and methods used to calculate the dam's worth were faulty. Crichton also stated that "MPC and its customers have been benefitting from lower power costs under peaking and load following operations at the expense of (Flathead) reservation resources" and that Interior's conditions would add only part of the true cost of doing business.

In a related issue, Montana Power appears to be backing away from earlier plans to build a chain of offshore dikes on the north end of the lake. In a recent filing company officials stated it appears "that shore-aligned structures would accomplish erosion control goals and would be easier to maintain and be more cost-effective" than the offshore revetments.

Sen. Max Baucus, arguing that the offshore structures are unneeded, in September announced plans to introduce legislation that would prohibit their construction.

The Lakers remain opposed to the offshore dikes on the grounds that they appear to be too costly for the benefits envisioned. The board is also asking FERC to ensure that final and substantial mitigation measures are soon put into effect, no matter who ends up owning Kerr Dam, and that the public remain a player in the process.

Lakers Support I-122

The Lakers Board of Directors has come out in support of Initiative 122, the Montana Clean Water and Public Health Protection Act.

The measure, if approved by voters on Nov. 5, would require certain new mines and some mine-expansion and exploration projects to meet minimum state water-quality standards at the point of discharge, instead of using river and stream mixing zones for diluting loads of heavy metals and other toxic wastes.

- *Prevention makes more sense than clean-up*
- *New mine-related jobs could be created, not lost*

The only mines affected by the initiative are major projects that use cyanide, which typically is applied to hard-rock ore to remove gold deposits. Existing mines would not be governed by I-122, unless their operators applied for expansions after the law went into effect.

Opponents of I-122 include an array of out-of-state and Canadian mining companies that have contributed more than \$1 million toward defeating the measure.

What's New Around the Lake

Dr. Jesse Bierman (1900-1996)

Flathead Lake lost a good friend and the Lakers lost a long-time supporter with the death of Dr. Jessie M. Bierman on August 26.

Born in 1900 near Kalispell, Dr. Bierman studied at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station in 1921. After receiving a degree in biology from UM, Dr. Bierman went on to graduate from medical school in Chicago. Her long and distinguished career in pediatrics included creating well-baby clinics in county health departments in Montana during the Depression; a stint as assistant director of health for the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C.; heading up maternal and child health programs for the California Health Department; and a 20-year tenure as professor of medicine at the University of California-Berkeley.

Dr. Bierman loved to return to her summer home at Goose Bay, and was long a supporter of the biological station. She will be greatly missed by her many friends in Montana and California. —*Robin Steinkraus*

Watershed Tour Guides Ready

Thanks to a \$2,000 grant from our friends at the Flathead Lake Protection Association, the Lakers recently published a new educational booklet designed for students and their families.

The Flathead Basin Ways of Water Tour Guide was adapted from a similar publication put out last year by Washington WaterWeeks, a program of the Washington Department of Ecology. The tour guide explains the roles and functions of watersheds and goes over ways in which individuals and groups can explore and protect them. The guide's original coastal emphasis was changed to include an array of specific details about the Flathead watershed.

The booklets are suitable for either the classroom or the home and are geared toward elementary students and up. Free copies of the tour guide can be obtained by calling the office at (406) 837-0399. —*Ron Selden*

Crane Logging Plan Approved

Promising to protect water and other fragile resources, former Flathead National Forest Supervisor Joel Holtrop in late June approved the Crane Mountain "salvage" timber sale southeast of Bigfork.

The controversial 14-million-board-feet sale was offered

under a 1995 congressional directive that prohibits administrative appeals and allows scaled-back environmental reviews for sales the agency deems necessary to rid the forest of dead or diseased trees. The "salvage" directive, however, also allows healthy trees to be cut as part of the mix, in part to sweeten the pot for prospective bidders.

The Lakers, among others, strongly objected to some aspects of the proposed sale due to concerns that water quality in several small streams flowing into Flathead Lake could be adversely affected. While Swan Lake Ranger District planners substantially modified the Crane Mountain offering, the extent of post-sale stream monitoring remains an issue, as well as incomplete monitoring of voluntary "best management" cutting and hauling practices.

Forest Service officials say the sale, which will fill an estimated 2,800 logging-truck loads, should be out for bid this fall.

Meanwhile, the Montana Department of State Lands is proposing an estimated 3-million-board-feet timber sale near Rollins on Flathead Lake's west shore. According to planner Bev O'Brien, the so-called "Rollins Chunk" sale at this point consists of seven parcels, one of which sits about one-eighth mile from the lakefront. In mid-August, the agency hosted a public tour in the area that drew many area residents.

The Lakers, under the leadership of board member Rich Schleicher, will keep tabs on the Rollins project as it progresses.

Eagle Bend Trims Its Sails

Proponents of a proposal to expand the Eagle Band Marina in Bigfork announced in September that their plans are now being scaled back.

According to a report in the *Daily Inter Lake*, Eagle Bend West developers now propose doubling the length of the existing channel that ties the marina into the Flathead River near its mouth, instead of adding five new lobes to the complex.

In addition, according to the article, backers say they plan to donate a 31-acre strip of land along the river, possibly to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which manages similar wetland areas in the nearby Waterfowl Production Area.

The initial marina expansion proposal called for the addition of 60 slips that had not been completed under the project's original authorization.



Impaired waters need extra care

By Dr. Loren Babls

Aldo Leopold once said that those who are trained in ecology are destined to live alone in a world of wounds. I share this observation with you because it may help you to understand my point of view. After nine years of formal education in aquatic ecology and 25 years of monitoring the health of Montana's lakes and streams, I must conclude that our state's aquatic ecosystems are in bad shape, and they're getting worse. This is not necessarily the view of a pessimist, nor is it politically correct; but it is the honest view of a trained ecologist with 25 years of experience.

Whirling disease. Algae blooms. Dissolved oxygen deficits. Declining fish populations. Endangered and exotic aquatic species. Boil orders. Giardiasis and other intestinal ailments of unknown origin.

Such topics are in the news with alarming regularity. We tend to treat these as isolated events, but they are, in truth, symptoms of a general decline in our aquatic ecosystems. Ecologists have known for years that each species has special habitat needs and that all living things are interconnected. There is a common thread here if we look deep enough.

An aquatic ecosystem may be thought of like a three-legged stool. Each leg represents a key component of a waterbody's ecological integrity: (1) water and sediment quality (chemical integrity); (2) habitat, including water availability (physical integrity); and (3) a diverse, adaptive, and functional community of aquatic organisms (biological integrity). Together, the three legs support a platform — the seat of the stool — that provides the goods and services that people expect from our water resources, including fish, recreation, and clean drinking water.

All three legs — chemical, physical and biological integrity — are required to support a healthy and optimally functioning ecosystem. Remove or damage any one leg, and the system will dysfunction or collapse.

The traditional approach to water quality management has been to control pathogens, toxins and other substances in water that are harmful to human health. However, as water pollution control efforts have reduced the levels of toxic pollutants, other factors often emerge that limit the integrity of aquatic ecosystems. These factors include bank erosion and sedimentation, dewatering, water level and flow fluctuations, and thermal changes caused by the operation of dams, introduction of exotic species, nutrient enrichment and eutrophication, and habitat alteration, including encroachment into riparian areas and channelization of rivers and streams.

These factors may have enormous effects on the biota living in surface waters and meeting chemical criteria alone does not protect the biological community from these sorts of impacts.

While the narrow focus on chemical and microbiological water quality has successfully averted serious and widespread public health problems, it has not stalled the steep decline in the ecological integrity of our water resources. The signs of this decline are commonplace in Montana river systems. Populations of bull trout, cutthroat trout, white sturgeon, and other sensitive aquatic species are declining. Whirling disease, which attacks non-native fish the hardest and is caused by a protozoan parasite whose intermediate host is a pollution-tolerant worm, has spread to several drainages in Montana. Heavy growths of attached algae choke many of our streams, and bloom of toxic algae are common in mainstem reservoirs.

In 1994, the state of Montana reported over 14,000 miles of streams and half a million acres of lakes that did not meet water quality standards. The large majority of these lakes and streams are impaired by causes for which there are no numeric limits in the Montana's standards. These causes include nutrients, sediment, mineral salts, flow alterations, and damage to aquatic and riparian habitats. The effects on aquatic life of habitat alteration, flow regulation, nutrient over-enrichment, and the introduction of non-indigenous species, have not been addressed with federal or state water quality criteria and standards programs. For the sake of our lakes and streams, it's about time they are.

Granted, much of this damage was done before we had effective water quality laws and before we really understood the ecological implications of development — of building large dams, for example. But much of it continues today, more slowly perhaps, despite the best efforts of regulators. One reason is our narrow view of water quality, as explained above. But there are other reasons.

Regulators rarely take into account the cumulative effects of activities in a watershed. Activities are often permitted in isolation of other activities. Even activities that individually have a "deminimus" effect on water quality will have a measurable impact if considered together.

In all fairness, regulators are often constrained legally in controlling water pollution. There are very real issues of "takings" and property rights. As a result, the regulatory focus is on accommodating development by applying legally-supported environmental safeguards, rather than on protecting ecosystems. And even if regulators were not so constrained legally, they still face some very real scientific limitations in being able to predict the environmental consequences of development.

If I have learned one thing in my 25 years in state government, it is this: We cannot continue to have growth and development in Montana *and* have a quality environment — for ourselves, for fish and aquatic life, and for future generations of people. The two are not compatible, despite

Water Quality Week in Review

By Robin Steinkraus, Administrative Aide

The first Flathead Water Quality Week, held in mid-July, was a strong success. The Lakers not only sponsored a variety of education and public service activities, but also began to strengthen ties with other groups interested in protecting water quality. Our goal was to encourage everyone we could reach to appreciate and learn more about the value of the basin's waters, believing that greater understanding and appreciation will inspire stewardship.

The week's activities included:

— "Field Day at Yellow Bay," where about 40 fifth and sixth graders spent an afternoon at the Flathead Lake Biological Station learning about aquatic insects and ecosystems, water sampling and analysis, and the interdependence of living and non-living things. Volunteer instructors also demonstrated key functions of the station's research

boat and the students participated in a variety of water-related music and art activities. The day ended with a performance and sing-along with Native American musician Gen Huitt.

— A basin-wide poster and essay contest for students, co-sponsored with Citizens for a Better Flathead and the Northwest Environmental Education Core Group. The contest's theme of the contest was to send a message to future generations about the hopes the student had for the future of the Flathead Basin. Prizes of \$50 were awarded to the winners. Top entries

are being included in packets designed for people new to the area. Congratulations to winners Darren Hall, Justin Maughan, Derika Brendsel, Melody Whistler and Maggie Dakin.

— Storm-drain stenciling in Ronan and Polson. Volunteers, including several area Boy Scouts and Lake County Extension Agent Jack Stivers, spend a sunny Saturday morning making a contribution to clean water by stenciling "Dump No Waste, Drains To Stream" next to the drains to inform people that most stormwater bypasses

organization at our first fundraising event. The evening at the Flathead Lake Lodge featured performer John Dunnigan, and included a silent auction and raffle of art works, meals, boat trips and lodging. Thanks to everyone who made this event such a success.

Water Quality Week activities sponsored by other groups included:

- Open houses that drew several dozen people to the Creston National Fish Hatchery and Hungry Horse Dam.
- A discussion of water-quality issues at the Flathead Lake Biological Station by National Wildlife Federation attorney Tom France.
- A musical fundraiser in Kalispell for I-122, the Clean Water Initiative.
- A lake cruise on the Far West with the area's stroke and head injury group and a canoe trip on the Stillwater River with Flathead Audubon.

An ongoing project to connect qualified speakers with groups interested in hearing about water-related

topics was also initiated this summer. We encourage members to call the office to arrange for a speaker for your service club, school class, or any other organization.

With your continued support, we hope to make Water Quality Week an annual event.



Colden Baxter describes species interaction with Field Day students

wastewater treatment plants and flows directly into streams and lakes. All of Ronan's drains were marked, as well as 51 drains in Polson.

— An educational hike in Jewel Basin. Families who joined board member Joe Biby were treated to a lovely hike on a gorgeous summer day and reached a vantage point for viewing much of the Flathead watershed. From up high it's easy to see how fragile our basin actually is.

— "Summer Celebration" fundraiser. More than 100 Laker members and friends came out to support the



Workshop Highlights Basin Needs

Participants in a Sept. 14 workshop on the Flathead watershed, co-sponsored by the Flathead Lakers, learned from the past and looked ahead to the future.

"The Power, Promise and Prospect of Water in the Flathead: What's the Role of Local Watersheds?" conference at Flathead Valley Community College provided an overview of the physical, biological and social characteristics of the area and served as a forum for citizen dialogue about the value of our water resources, threats to those resources, and things citizens can do to protect them.

Self-described "historian, humanist and philosopher" Ron Therriault, a former Salish and Kootenai tribal chairman, offered the perspective of the people who have lived in the basin for more than 100 generations. The river, he said, was used by native peoples for many things, but it was not a commodity and they respected it as "part of who you are." If the river is polluted and spoiled, he said, "then we are in fact destroyed because we are not separate from it."

"Humans destroy when they lose respect," he added, "not only for natural things, but for ourselves." Humans, Therriault said, do not stand alone — as individuals, as a species, or in time — and as his people have done, we should look at our actions in terms of how they will affect the following seven generations.

Speaker Holly Voermans told how she was inspired three years earlier while at a natural resources camp as a freshman in high school. She returned home and convinced her father to support her in a project to improve and protect the water quality and riparian habitat of Haskill Creek from damage by their cattle. Holly recounted how she got advice, planned the project, obtained a 310 permit for the work, and eventually fenced 20-foot buffer zones along the stream where it crosses her family's farm.

the most sincere political assurances, despite the most sophisticated technologies, and despite the most elaborate (and expensive) management schemes.

The lands that people harvest, the waterfront properties that people occupy, and the waters into which people dump their wastes are all habitats for some other species. Everything is hitched together. Every increment will be felt. We get food and electricity and living space. They get what's left over. Our gain is their loss. Ultimately, their loss will be our loss too.

(Dr. Loren Babls of Helena retired recently. He was a longtime employee of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and since 1991 served as an ex-

in the process she developed a "watering alley" for the stock and improved conditions for fish and wildlife. This encouraging example vividly showed how individuals can make a difference.

Mary Sloan's slide show, "Three Forks of the Flathead River: Exploring the Ecosystem," provided a visual feast of what makes the watershed special. Dean Sirucek and Teresa Wenum of the Flathead National Forest described physical and biological components of the watershed, while historian and journalist George Ostrom provided colorful insights into white exploration and settlement of the area. Biological station researcher Bonnie Ellis presented an overview of the threats to water quality, and Mayre Flowers of Citizens for a Better Flathead described their project to reduce contamination of storm runoff in urban areas of the watershed.

Participants broke into small groups representing different "sub-watersheds" of the basin and discussed local threats to water quality and what could be done to alleviate them. Several groups plan to follow-up on the workshop by learning from a video how residents of one local watershed, East Spring Creek, solved their problems.

In closing, *Bigfork Eagle* publisher Marc Wilson summed up the day by saying one speaker told him she feared she was "preaching to the congregation."

Be happy there *is* a congregation, because in Montana we have "the gift that this many people being active can change our world," Wilson said. —*Robin Steinkraus*

officio member of the Flathead Basin Commission. His column is re-printed from the commission's Summer 1996 Basin Watch.)



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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.*

Are Kokanee Salmon Here to Stay?

By Joseph Biby, Director

There are many ways to describe water quality. To an angler, an indicator is the nature or fitness of a lake or river's fishery.

Although it may well be a highly subjective matter to try and define the current fitness of the Flathead Lake fishery, it is clear that it has undergone many changes since the turn of the century.

It is also clear that one introduced fish in particular, the kokanee salmon, enjoyed considerable popularity during its heyday as a resident of Flathead Lake. Whether the kokanee will again dominate the creels of area anglers remains to be seen. Efforts to re-establish the species are ongoing, despite strong indications the five-year experiment is not working.

Not that long ago, Flathead Lake and its great river system were home to strong populations of westslope cutthroat and bull trout. Old timers remind us of fish so abundant that barrels of cutthroats caught near Bigfork Bay were used to feed loggers working in area camps.

In time, the cutthroats shared the lake with a new introduction, the lake trout. The lake trout muscled in on bull trout, invading parts of their top-predator turf.

Kokanee salmon also flourished after their introduction into Flathead Lake. Kokanee, by feeding exclusively on zooplankton, went about things differently than the fish already mentioned. Zooplankton are microscopic animals that feed on the tiny plants (phytoplankton) that live on the big lake's sunlit upper layer. The phytoplankton, as part of a classic food web, were converted into a "crop" of more than a million kokanee salmon.

Bull trout and lake trout had no trouble preying on the smaller kokanee, and anglers found the salmon to be spirited fighters, as well as tasty for eating. The annual fall spawning run of the kokanee was an event eagerly anticipated. In the 1970s it was not uncommon to catch the daily limit of 35 fish. The kokanee were also awaited in their upriver spawning beds by hundreds of bald eagles.

Eagle watchers were happy, kokanee anglers were happy, and the business owners who served these people were happy.

Sometime in the late '70s or early '80s, managers with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks introduced from Canada the mysis, or opossum shrimp. Intended as a food source to bolster kokanee populations in upstream lakes, the shrimp unexpectedly turned out to be a direct competitor with the salmon for its zooplankton prey.

Unfortunately, because mysis migrate up from the lake's dark depths only at night to feed, the kokanee seldom came in contact with the shrimp fishery managers intended them to eat. By 1986, the mysis population skyrocketed and Flathead Lake kokanee numbers spiraled toward an eventual collapse. Young lake trout, with their preference for the depths where the shrimp reside, welcomed mysis to their diet and their numbers mushroomed.

Today, even though their population has dropped, mysis remain a significant part of Flathead Lake's altered food web. Bull trout have declined to a point of danger, and cutthroats are increasingly hard to find. Meanwhile the kokanee salmon, a favorite introduced species of many anglers around the lake, is re-introduced annually, with the hopes that hatchery-raised stocks can promote a comeback.

Like the spotted knapweed invasion that's overwhelmed our landscape, however, the mysis shrimp in Flathead Lake appear to be a permanent resident, and one that has apparently delivered a knockout punch to the salmon. (These observations represent the opinion of a fisherman who happens to be a board member. They do not necessarily represent the views of the entire Lakers board.)