



Volunteers Needed!

The work to protect Flathead Lake is growing. The board of directors and staff are finding that many of our projects could benefit from expertise in communications. If you have experience in this area and a few hours per month to volunteer, you could help the Flathead Lakers be more effective!

The board also is seeking a volunteer to record minutes at the board meetings. Learn more about the Lakers' work while providing an important service. All you need to do is attend four three-hour meetings per year, type up the minutes at home and e-mail or mail them to the office.

If you have other areas of expertise you would like to share with the organization, please don't hesitate to call! Contact either Executive Director Robin Steinkraus or President Rose Schwennesen (contact information on page two).

Legislature Comes Through with Funding for Monitoring

by Paul Williams, Vice President

The Montana Legislature provided \$170,000 in the final state budget adopted for the next biennium for continuing Flathead Lake and tributary water quality monitoring. The monitoring program is conducted by the Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay.

The Flathead Lakers have long supported full funding for the monitoring program. Monitoring provides information needed to control or fix problems as they develop, rather than waiting until they become severe. Without monitoring, we would not be aware of problems developing that could affect our health, fisheries, recreation, tourism and property values.

The program calls for lake and tributary monitoring sites to be sampled once per month from July through March and twice per month in the spring. A suite of chemical, physical and biological parameters are measured.

The Flathead Lakers targeted increased funding for monitoring as one of its highest current priorities, and campaigned extensively for that goal. It was a focal point

at our 2002 annual meeting, at which Montana Department of Environmental Quality Director Jan Sensibaugh announced her intent to include full funding in the DEQ budget.

Many members of the Flathead legislative delegation and legislative candidates attended a special meeting held by the Lakers last summer to discuss funding for monitoring. The Lakers provided the legislators with extensive information about the monitoring program and the history of funding. The Lakers' board of directors also maintained contact with legislators during the 2003 session, advocating support for the program, notwithstanding the legislature's budget dilemmas.

The Lakers' board members are gratified to know the monitoring program will be sustained through the next biennium.

The Lakers are especially appreciative of the efforts of Senate President Bob Keenan of Bigfork in supporting monitoring funding. Keenan said, "Considering the programs that have been frozen or cut, this is a winning lottery ticket."

INSIDE

President's Column	2
<i>Come to the Annual Meeting!</i>	
New Board Member	3
<i>Welcome Dan Barz!</i>	
Flathead River Sloughs Critical	4
<i>Second in series</i>	
Critical Lands Update	5
<i>New river map out</i>	
News From the Basin	6
<i>More on monitoring</i>	
Ashley Creek Workshop Held	7
<i>Runoff looking up</i>	

DIRECTORY

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

213 First St. W, #210 • PO Box 70
Polson, MT 59860
Voice: (406) 883-1346
Fax: (406) 883-1357
lakers@flatheadlakers.org
www.flatheadlakers.org

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

President:

Rose Schwennesen, Bigfork 982-3410

Vice President:

Paul Williams, Kalispell 752-9941

Treasurer:

Chuck Mercord, Somers 857-3414

Secretary:

Laney Hanzel, Kalispell 257-1676

Directors:

Dan Barz, Polson 849-5045
Jim Hollensteiner, Rollins 844-2976
Lew Keim, Whitefish 862-3947
Otto Klein, Polson 887-2430
Phil Lehner, Polson 883-5520
Marc Lorenzen, Somers 857-2217
Sid Rundell, Big Arm 849-5053

Executive Director:

Robin Steinkraus 883-1346

Critical Lands Project Leader:

Constanza von der Pahlen 883-1341

Administrative Assistant:

Karen Swan 883-1346

Flathead Lake Monitor

Newsletter of the Flathead Lakers, the **Monitor** is published in print and on the internet. The current issue and many back issues can be viewed on and downloaded from our web site (www.flatheadlakers.org). The opinions expressed in the **Monitor** are those of the authors. We welcome comments and submissions. Copyright 2003, Flathead Lakers, all rights reserved.

Robin Steinkraus, Editor

President's Column

Greetings Members and Friends —

We are excited to report on page one of this newsletter that funding for the Flathead Lake Water Quality Monitoring Program was appropriated by the state legislature. Flathead Lake, as you well know, is a state treasure and a boon to our economy. The understanding of the lake and river system that the Flathead Lake Biological Station's long-term record of water quality monitoring provides is essential to protecting this beautiful and valuable natural asset. Many thanks to our local legislators and especially to Senator Bob Keenan for securing funding during this time of limited financial resources.

We are hopeful we will be able to report another major success by the time of our Annual Meeting. The many and various pieces appear to be coming together to finalize the "Weaver Slough Project," a major, collaborative land conservation project that the Flathead Lakers have supported through our Critical Lands Project. See the article on page five for more details, and stay tuned.

The Flathead Lakers have been successful in encouraging city and county public officials to include in their new growth policies goals and recommendations to protect water quality and riparian areas, floodplains and wetlands. The City of Kalispell adopted a growth policy (formerly called Master Plan) in February. Lake County is very close to finalizing and adopting a growth policy. Both of these policies include language regarding water quality protection suggested by the Lakers. Flathead County held a series of town meetings this winter and spring to garner public input, and the planning board is now in the process of updating the master plan. The planning board is holding a series of workshops to discuss changes to the plan. The workshops will be held June 18 and 25, and July 16, 23 and 30 at 6:00 p.m. at the Commissioners' meeting room in the Courthouse annex.

Last, but not least, I would like to invite all of you to attend our Annual Membership Meeting on July 22 at the Flathead Lake Lodge. Bring your friends and relatives and join us in celebrating the Flathead Lakers' 45th Anniversary and in renewing our commitment to meeting the challenges of protecting Flathead Lake and clean water!

— *Rose Schwennesen*

Correction

We apologize for inadvertently omitting Bayern Brewery of Missoula from our list of donors in our 2002 Annual Report. Thanks, Bayern Brewery!

Don't miss the
Flathead Lakers
2003
Annual Membership Meeting

Tuesday, July 22

Social time with hors d'oeuvres and no-host bar beginning at 6:15 p.m.

Program: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Flathead Lake Lodge, Bigfork

***Welcome New
Board Member!***



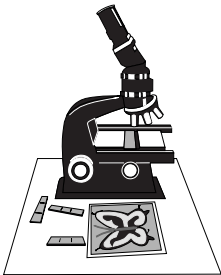
Dan Barz of Polson joined the Flathead Lakers Board of Directors this past winter. He was unanimously appointed by the board to fill a vacant director position.

Dan moved to Polson last summer when he accepted the position of President of First Interstate Bank - Polson. Barz previously was President of First Interstate Bank at the West Billings Office, which he helped establish in 1977. He is a graduate of Billings High School and Montana State University.

In addition to the Flathead Lakers board, Dan also serves as a board member of the MSU-Bozeman Foundation, MSU Athletic Scholarship Board, St. John's Foundaton Board, Pheasants Forever Board, and the St. Joseph Hospital Board.

Dan's wife, Diane, is a District Court Judge. The Barz's have enjoyed their vacation home north of Polson for 17 years and are happy to now be permanent residents. Dan said that he is delighted to be here and that he and Diane "absolutely love the area and the people."

**Board Member
Creates Scholarship**



***Thanks,
Jim & Wanda!***

Flathead Lakers board member Jim Hollensteiner and his wife, Wanda, have generously endowed a scholarship fund at the University of Montana. The scholarship will support deserving undergraduate or graduate students who are studying or doing research at the Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay.

Jim and Wanda's gift stipulates that a major focus of scholarship students' study "shall be monitoring water quality in Flathead Lake and the tributaries thereto, and support to the Critical Lands Project in the Flathead Valley relating to the preservation of open space, sloughs, floodplains, etc."

The Flathead Lakers' board and staff appreciate the Hollensteiners' gift which will not only provide opportunities for talented students but will also add to our knowledge about Flathead Lake and its watershed. Jim encourages other Flathead Lakers members to consider supporting the work of the Biological Station through a scholarship endowment.

Editor's Note: This is the second of a series of articles about critical lands. Each article focuses on a specific area that is critical for maintaining water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities and other values. The Flathead Lakers are working to protect priority critical lands in collaboration with numerous agencies and organizations. For more information about the Critical Lands Project, please contact Project Leader Constanza von der Pahlen at (406) 883-1341 or constanza@flatheadlakers.org.

The Flathead River Sloughs

There are several sloughs, also known as oxbow wetlands, along the Flathead River. Oxbow wetlands are crescent-shaped lakes lying along a winding river. The oxbow is created over time as erosion and deposits of soils change the river's course, cutting off the oxbow from the river's channel.

Egan, Church, Half Moon, Fennon, McWenneger and Weaver sloughs are naturally created oxbow wetlands associated with a previous course of the Flathead River. This complex of sloughs is located north of Flathead Lake along the Flathead River. Weaver Slough lies along the previous course of the river when it flowed into Flathead Lake at Somers. The river's ability to form new sloughs has been reduced by

Hungry Horse Dam and development, making these existing sloughs and associated wetlands irreplaceable.

The sloughs are used by a great number of migratory waterfowl, osprey, upland game birds, great blue heron and double-crested cormorants. Waterfowl move between the sloughs and Flathead Lake for food and nesting cover. The riparian and wetlands associated with the sloughs provide important habitat for river otter and other wildlife that travel along the river.

These sloughs also provide habitat for a number of threatened and endangered species, including bald eagles, bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Bull and westslope cutthroat trout were tracked using radiotelemetry by Montana Fish,

Wildlife & Parks between 1999 and 2002 (Hungry Horse Mitigation Project). These fish were found to overwinter in the mainstem of the Flathead River, particularly near wetlands and sloughs along the Flathead River that have extensive vegetation cover, such as woody debris and overhanging riparian vegetation.

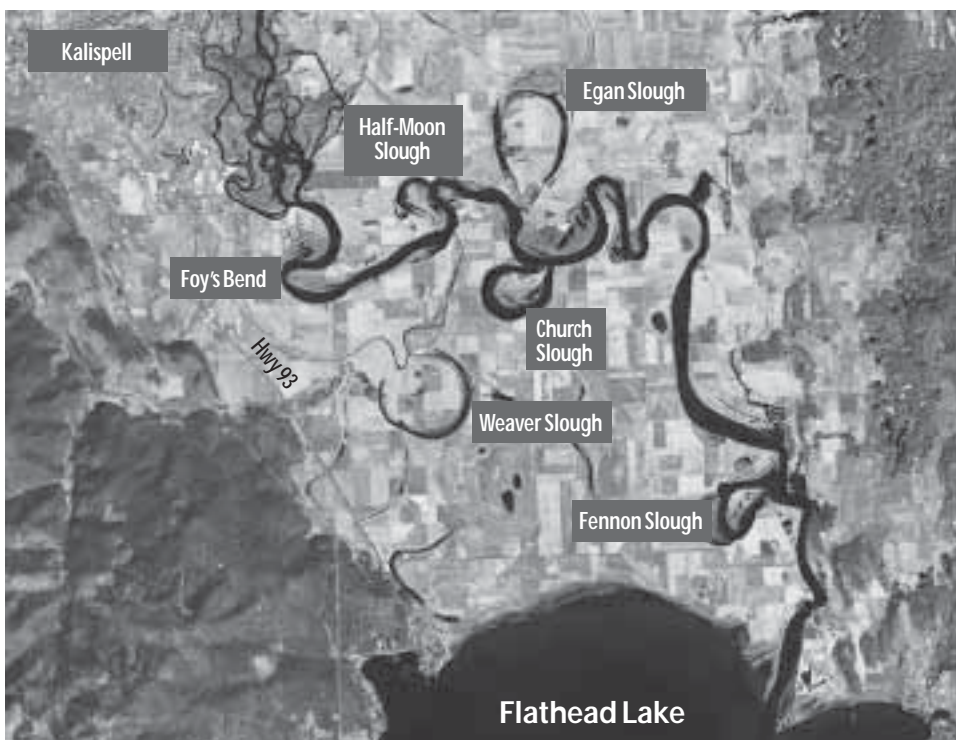
Farming is the predominant land use in the slough area. The area has some of the finest agricultural soils in Montana, comparable to the soils in the Midwestern "bread basket."

Landowners around Egan Slough worked together to form a local zoning district to help protect and preserve agricultural land in the area. Last December, the County Commissioners approved the zoning district which includes limiting land subdivision to 80 acres to help maintain the area's farming character.

The sloughs and associated wetlands are within the floodplain of the Flathead River and provide important floodplain functions for the river, including water storage, flood prevention and protecting water quality. Wetlands help take up and store nutrients in the wetland vegetation.

To learn more about wetlands and how you can help protect them, visit our web site (www.flatheadlakers.org). Additional information can be found in *A Landowners' Guide to Montana Wetlands*, available electronically at <http://nris.state.mt.us/wis/wetlands/>, or you can get a copy by calling the Montana Watercourse at 406-994-6671.

— Constanza von der Pahlen



This Landsat 5 image of the lower Flathead Valley's sloughs was made during the summer of 1990. More Landsat 5 images are available on our website.

Critical Lands Project Update

by Constanza von der Pahlen, Critical Lands Project Leader

New Flathead River Map Now Available

The Flathead Lakers and the Flathead Basin Commission collaborated to produce a new version of the Flathead River Map. Several other agencies, institutions and nonprofit organizations provided assistance and support.

The map covers the area of the Flathead River between Columbia Falls and Flathead Lake and includes information about recreation, riparian forests, wetlands, and shallow groundwater areas. The back of the map contains information about the connections between the river and adjacent lands, including wetlands, floodplains, riparian corridors and the shallow Evergreen aquifer, and explains why those connections are important for protecting clean water in Flathead Lake.

The map can be obtained from the Flathead Lakers. It will also be available soon for purchase through numerous sporting goods stores and recreational outlets throughout the valley. Please contact the Flathead Lakers at 883-1341 for more information or stop by our office in Polson.

Stream Restoration Projects Underway

The Critical Lands Project recently initiated two restoration projects to demonstrate techniques for restoring and revegetating stream and river banks. Critical Lands Project partners identified several potential project sites in the North Flathead Valley, developed criteria to rank projects, and identified two sites for initial work.

The first demonstration restoration project was started this spring on Mill Creek, a tributary of the Flathead River, near Creston. We used a soft restoration method, called brush mattress, to restore the bank, and planted willows along a section of the streambank to test the restoration and planting methods. We plan to complete stream restoration work on this site next year.

The Flathead Conservation District was instrumental in contacting the landowners and helping plan and implement the project. The Flathead Lakers secured a grant of technical assistance from the National Parks Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Program for restoration design and implementation.

The second restoration project will begin this fall at the District 5 VoAg School along the Stillwater River south of Kalispell. Shirley Harrison, a science teacher at

the school, is integrating the project into the science curriculum to help students learn about rivers, land use management options and restoration techniques.

The Flathead Conservation District is coordinating this project. Land and Water Consulting, Inc. is donating the restoration design and the National Parks Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Program will provide assistance and oversight. Several other agencies, nonprofit organizations and private consultants will provide in-kind assistance for both projects.

As these projects continue, the Flathead Lakers and Critical Lands Project partners will be developing an outreach program to share information about the restoration and revegetation techniques with other land owners. For additional information, please contact the Flathead Lakers at 883-1341.

Weaver Slough Project Update

A major setback in completing the funding for the Weaver-McWenninger Sloughs project appears to have been averted. The project, led by the Flathead Land Trust, will purchase conservation easements on wetlands, riparian corridors and prime farmland on lands in the Weaver and McWenninger Sloughs and Foy's Bend area north of Flathead Lake.

To cut costs, the financially struggling Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) rescinded funding for several fish and wildlife mitigation projects it had committed to fund last year. It now appears that a solution is at hand and the \$1 million in funding for the project from BPA will be forthcoming after all. BPA funding is one of the last pieces needed to complete the project.

The Flathead Lakers have supported the project and BPA funding through our Critical Lands Project. The Weaver-McWenninger Slough project area was identified through the collaborative efforts of the Critical Lands Project as a high priority for protection due to its importance for protecting water quality as well as its value for fish and wildlife.

The Lakers are grateful to Ed Bartlett and John Hines, Montana's representatives on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (formerly NW Power Planning Council) and Montana's Congressional delegation for their efforts to ensure BPA funding for the project.

News From Around the Basin

Summit on Water Monitoring Held

Two board members and the Lakers' Executive Director participated in a day-long Water Summit attended by some 40 state, federal, tribal and organization representatives. The summit's purpose was to exchange information about monitoring efforts throughout the Flathead Basin, to promote cooperation between agencies conducting monitoring, and to evaluate monitoring needs for the future. The last such review of monitoring occurred in 1994.

The meeting, sponsored by the Flathead Basin Commission (FBC), was held at the Yellow Bay facilities of the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS) on April 28.

Reports about past, current and planned monitoring efforts were made by representatives of the FBC, FLBS, Montana State Library Natural Resource Information System (NRIS), the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, Flathead National Forest, Plum Creek Timber Co., Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glacier National Park, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, and the U.S. Geological Service.

Issues identified regarding coordination among monitoring and reporting agencies include:

- Respective organizational missions and priorities;
- Monitoring standards and practices;
- Feasibility of posting monitoring data in accessible data bases;
- Regulating exploitation of proprietary information;
- Addressing monitoring gaps;
- Funding sources and funding availability.

Scott Relyea of FLBS cited causes of water quality impairment which make monitoring very valuable for understanding trends in water quality and evaluating protection measures. They include floodplain development, lake eutrophication, untreated storm water runoff, stream channelization, oxygen depletion and algal blooms, septic system densities and failures, hydrocarbons and pesticides in runoff, livestock and the Evergreen aquifer.

Following the summit, the Lakers extended to David deGrandpre, Chair of the FBC, a suggested agenda for follow up:

- 1) Update the 1994 plan, presently in force, to ensure it adequately addresses current needs,
- 2) Develop a matrix of monitoring efforts, including the scope and availability of monitoring results;
- 3) Identify redundancies and gaps;
- 4) Develop a schedule of adjustments to attain efficient and warranted comprehensive monitoring;
- 5) Prioritize the schedule of all monitoring sites and parameters;
- 6) Propose any needed monitoring assignments and pursue agreement;
- 7) Enlist advocates and build consensus to obtain all necessary funding.

— Paul Williams

Directors Meet FERC Commissioner

Commissioner Nora Mead Brownell of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which governs Kerr Dam, met with area officials and three Lakers' directors while on a recent tour of Columbia River System power units and tribal facilities.

The trip was arranged and guided by Jeff Loman, Chief of Natural Resources for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Loman is acting as manager of the Flathead Lake Drought Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement project for the BIA.

Attending the dinner meeting with Brownell and Loman at the Bigfork Inn on April 16 were Mark Simonich, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce; Fred Matt, Chairman of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; Mark Holston of the Flathead Basin Commission; and Lakers' board members Rose Schwennesen, Sid Rundell and Paul Williams.

The meeting afforded the opportunity to discuss matters of concern regarding Flathead Lake with Brownell. Simonich spoke of the state's concerns, citing Montana statutory obligations placed on his department to protect Flathead Lake levels and recreational opportunities. The Lakers' representatives emphasized the historical basis of full-pool lake level mandates and the logic of obtaining Bureau of Reclamation assistance through water releases from Hungry Horse Dam in drought conditions to support lake level and minimum river flow obligations set out in the Kerr Dam license agreements.

— Paul Williams

More News

Ashley Creek Workshop Held

The Ashley Creek Watershed Group hosted Watershed Connections: Ashley Creek and You on Saturday, May 3 in Kalispell. The purpose of the workshop was to provide watershed information for interested citizens, connect watershed users with services and information available to improve water quality in Ashley Creek, and recruit new supporters of the watershed group.

The Flathead Basin Commission and Montana Watercourse helped organize the workshop. The Flathead Lakers contributed financial support for the information packets and provided a display which included Critical Lands Project maps.

The Ashley Creek Watershed includes lands and tributaries that drain into Ashley Creek. Water flows from Ashley Lake to Ashley Creek, which receives waters from various tributaries such as Trumbull and Mount creeks. The creek flows past Smith Lake, along the south edge of Kalispell, draining into the Flathead River.

Research by the Flathead Lake Biological Station has shown that the creek contributes the most nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) to Flathead Lake on an acre-by-acre basis. Sediments and nutrients in the water promote algae growth. Improving water quality in Ashley Creek and its tributaries is important for protecting waters downstream, including Flathead Lake.

The workshop attracted 30 participants, including residents of the watershed, other interested citizens and representatives from agencies and conservation

organizations. Participants were enthusiastic and pleased to learn about best management practices and stream restoration techniques.

The Ashley Creek Watershed Group will also be conducting a tour of the watershed and ongoing restoration activities on Saturday, June 7. For more information, contact the Flathead Basin Commission at 752-0081.

— *Constanza von der Pahlen*

Runoff Predictions Improve

Late winter and spring storms have forestalled what earlier appeared would be another year of drought. Snowpack in the Flathead Watershed is at 96 percent of average. The May runoff forecast from the National Weather Service's Northwest River Forecast Center is at 80 percent of average.

PPL Montana announced in May that it expects the forecasted runoff volume to be adequate to meet minimum river flows and refill Flathead Lake on schedule (2890 feet by May 30 and 2893 feet by June 15).

Drought Management Plan DEIS Delayed

Jeff Loman, Chief of Natural Resources for the Dept. of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, has informed the Flathead lakers that a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the required Drought Management Plan for Kerr Dam and Flathead Lake is not expected before next fall.

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



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Summer Address (if applicable) _____

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

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

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

Visit the Lakers' New & Improved Web Site

The address is the same (www.flatheadlakers.org) but much has changed on the Flathead Lakers' web site.

We've improved the site to make it easier to find the information you're seeking. We've finally added general information about Flathead Lake and the Flathead Watershed. We have new sections on our Critical Lands Project and critical lands and natural resources. And we've reorganized the water quality section and added new information.

You still can find old favorites easily, including our comprehensive section on lake levels and the drought management planning process for Kerr Dam and Flathead Lake, plus links to the current lake level and streamflow information.

We still are putting together some new sections including a recreation and culture page, and a guide to ways you can help protect Flathead Lake. If you have comments, suggestions or wish to help, please give us a call at 883-1346. We appreciate your ideas and suggestions.

Special thanks to our webmaster, James Conner, of Kalispell, for his work on this project. Conner, in turn, notes that most of the new material was written by Robin Steinkraus and Constanza von der Pahlen, and vows "not to let them escape credit for their outstanding contributions." We hope you will find the Lakers' web site a useful tool for finding information about Flathead Lake and water quality.

Thank You Cooperating Septic System Services!

The Flathead Lakers wish to thank the septic system services listed below for cooperating in our septic system pumping discount program.

For the past five years, the Flathead Lakers offered a coupon for a 10% discount on septic system services to help educate septic system owners about the need for regular maintenance. Septic system businesses throughout the valley helped with this effort by agreeing to voluntarily honor the discounts.

The Lakers' board of directors decided to suspend the discount for 2003 since our members have had five years to take advantage of it. The board will consider reinstating the program in the future.

Thanks also to all of you who used a coupon to maintain your system and help protect water quality.

A-1 Sanitation
 Bjork's Valley Pumps
 Smith's Septic Pumping
 Ken Pedersen Pumping Service
 Mel's Pumping Service
 Ready Freddy Septic Tank Pumping
 Rainbow Septic Service
 Shur Clean Septic Service



FLATHEAD LAKERS
 Post Office Box 70
 Polson, MT 59860

*Friends and neighbors
 working for clean water,
 a healthy ecosystem, and
 lasting quality of life in the
 Flathead Lake watershed.*

NONPROFIT
 STANDARD
 U.S. POSTAGE PD
 PERMIT NO. 230
 POLSON, MT
 59860