



FLATHEAD LAKE
Monitor
Newsletter of the Flathead Lakers

Flathead Lake, Montana

Spring, 2002

Room for Improvement in Proposed Drought Management Plan

by Robin Steinkraus, Executive Director

It looks like we may actually see a Drought Management Plan for Flathead Lake adopted before the next severe drought occurs after all.

The fortuitous March and April snowstorms left the Flathead's mountain snowpack in good shape, although much of the rest of the state and west does not share this good fortune. The NW River Forecast Center predicts runoff in the Flathead Basin will be at 105 percent of average this year.

This good news means there should be plenty of water to meet both the summer lake level and minimum river flow requirements this year. And it gives PPL Montana, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai

Tribes, the Department of Interior (DOI) and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) some breathing room for the process of developing and adopting a Drought Management Plan (DMP).

The Flathead Lakers' board and staff thoroughly reviewed PPL MT's proposed DMP. We submitted written comments on the proposal and presented a summary of those comments at both the Kalispell and Polson public meetings on the plan held by PPL MT.

The core of the proposal calls for four sequential steps:

- 1) Raise the target drawdown to a lake level "at or about 2888 feet" by Dec. 31 each year.
- 2) When forecasts predict drought, establish an annual plan (dam operating rule curves) which minimally satisfies all Kerr Dam license requirements.
- 3) If the first two steps don't resolve the problem, reduce the target lake level as of June 15 from 2893 to 2892 feet.
- 4) If the first three steps don't resolve the problem, ask DOI "to approve, to take additional measures and seek additional inflows, to resolve the situation without causing additional reduction in lake levels." These

measures would involve: a) revising license requirements for flows at Kerr Dam; b) arranging for additional water to be released from the Hungry Horse Project; or c) establishing some combination of such adjustments to maintain lake levels at approximately 2892 feet (you can view the proposal on the Lakers' website).

We are pleased that progress toward adoption of a DMP for Flathead Lake is finally occurring and that PPL MT's March 4 proposal recognizes a full range of water uses and their potential for conflict during a drought. We believe, however, that the proposal needs further input and refinement in order to prevent the confusion and misunderstandings that resulted during last year's drought.

A DMP for Flathead Lake must provide the public with a clear understanding of when drought conditions will trigger management changes that could harm Flathead Lake water users. And, it must base the tradeoffs among water users on a careful evaluation of the environmental and economic impacts of those tradeoffs. PPL MT's proposal fails to do either of these.

PPL MT's plan does not provide clear "trigger criteria" for when its
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DIRECTORY

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

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

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Flathead Lake Monitor

Newsletter of the Flathead Lakers, the **Monitor** is published in print and on the internet. The current issue and many back issues can be viewed on and downloaded from our web site (www.flatheadlakers.org). The opinions expressed in the **Monitor** are those of the authors. We welcome comments and submissions. Copyright 2001, Flathead Lakers, all rights reserved.

Robin Steinkraus, Editor

President's Column

Greetings, Members and Friends —

With spring upon us, and summer just around the corner, I am reminded by nature's signs — greening grass, budding trees, and drumming grouse — that the time of renewal is here. Hopefully, the cumulative winter snowfalls in the higher elevations will prove sufficient in generating good stream flows and adequate lake levels to satisfy our economic and environmental needs this summer and fall.

While nature takes its course, man — in the form of PPL MT, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the Department of Interior (DOI) and other regional and national agencies — will be pursuing an elusive target: a fair and balanced Drought Management Plan (DMP) for Flathead Lake. The Lakers have been continuously in the forefront in pressing PPL MT, FERC, and DOI to develop, with full public disclosure, review and input, a fair and effective plan that considers economic and environmental impacts. The PPL MT proposal is a welcome effort, but a careful evaluation of options and impacts is still needed.

Another organization, the National Organization to Save Flathead Lake, is also working on this issue. I have been queried often about what the difference is between the Lakers and this group. We definitely have one thing in common. We are both interested in ensuring that the DMP seriously considers the importance of summer lake levels to recreation and the local economy (see the article on page one of this newsletter). Flathead Lake levels is the primary — I might even say, sole — concern of the National Organization to Save Flathead Lake.

The Flathead Lakers have been in the forefront of dealing with a range of Flathead Lake threats and concerns since 1958. The Lakers is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, qualifying donors to deduct their contributions. The Lakers addresses a wide array of issues in pursuing its mission: clean water, healthy ecosystems and lasting quality of life in the Flathead Watershed. Flathead Lake levels are a crucial issue, which we have given vigorous attention and advocacy, as we give to many other endeavors such as:

- Bringing agencies and organizations together to protect and restore lands critical to water quality through our *Critical Lands Project*;
- Working to secure adequate and consistent funding for Flathead Lake and tributary *water quality monitoring*;
- Working to improve prevention and clean-up rules and protocols for *toxic materials spills* and assure financial responsibility;
- Advocating reasoned and thoughtful *land use planning and development* policies and plans (a case in point: the Glacier Mall project near Kalispell is proposed to be sited in an area of very shallow groundwater which could readily lead to pollution of Flathead Lake);
- Developing and facilitating a *watershed education program* for students;
- Working to reduce negative impacts of personal watercraft.

In all, there are literally dozens of programs, planning initiatives and monitoring endeavors that the Lakers are involved with. I hope this outline of some of the issues which the Lakers address year-round helps to define our role and the comprehensive nature of the Lakers' mission.

Thank you for your continuing support and financial help, which is so essential to the Lakers' efforts to keep the Flathead a great place to live, work and play!

— Sid Rundell, President

Please Attend the Flathead Lakers

Annual Membership Meeting

Keynote Address: *Partnerships for Protection*

Jan Sensibaugh, Director, Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality

State of the Lake Report

Dr. Jack Stanford, Director, Flathead Lake Biological Station

Silent Auction

Photo contest winners announced & entries displayed

Refreshments

Sunday, June 23, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

KwaTaqNuk Resort, Polson

Wanted!

Lake and River Photos

for the

2002 Flathead Lakers Photo Contest

3 Categories

Flathead Lake (open)

Human Impacts to our Waters

(the good, the bad & the ugly)

Natural Phenomenon

(waterspouts, waves, aurora, thunderstorms, ice, etc.)

Prizes for each category

First Prize: \$100 • Second Prize: \$50

Winners will be announced at the
Annual Meeting on June 23

Entry Closes June 10

Submit entries (with name, address & phone) to:
Flathead Lakers, PO Box 70, Polson, MT 59860 or

First Citizens Bank, Polson

Yogi's Sure Shot Photography, Polson

Bigfork Photo Plus, Bigfork

Burch's One Hour Photo, Kalispell

Photo Video Plus, Kalispell

Sam's Cameras, Kalispell

Smith's Photo, Kalispell

Tidyman's Photo Shop, Kalispell

Formats Accepted:

8 x10 glossy print • 8 x10 glossy digital print

35mm slide with 8 x10 glossy print

Welcome New Board Members!



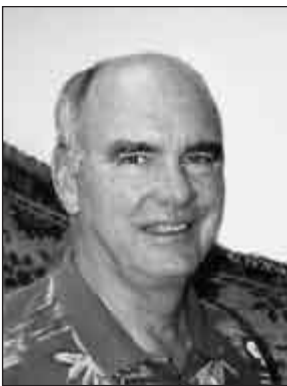
Marc Lorenzen

My wife Lynette and I live on Flathead Lake in Marco Bay. I recently retired from a 30-year career in environmental consulting, with special expertise in limnology. I received my undergraduate education in civil engineering at the University

of California-Berkeley and Ph.D. in environmental engineering from Harvard University.

After working for Battell-Northwest in Richland, Washington and Tetra Tech, Inc. in California and Washington, I founded PTI Environmental Services in 1987 and subsequently sold the company to Exponent, Inc. in 1997. I have been involved with or supervised numerous Superfund investigations including major restoration and natural resource damage studies in and around Butte. I have published papers related to nutrient enrichment and mathematical modeling of lake behavior.

Lynette and I enjoy hiking, boating skiing and having company.



Otto Klein

I have had the fortunate opportunity to visit many of the great lakes of the world: Lake Geneva, Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika, and Lake Tahoe. But the best of them all is Flathead Lake.

Thanks to my parents, I am a native Montanan, having been born and raised in Helena. After graduating

from Helena High School I attended Stanford University, graduating in 1960 with a BA in History. Four years later I received my M.D. from Cornell Medical School in New York City. After a year of internship in Seattle, I served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps and one year as Artillery Group Surgeon in Viet Nam.

Returning to the states, I completed my Ophthalmology training at New York University-Bellevue

Medical Center and served as a clinical associate professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Washington.

After ten years, Montana called and I returned to Missoula to help build the Rocky Mountain Eye Center. I actively participated in the Missoula community.

It was our Polson satellite office that started our family's love affair with Flathead Lake. After my retirement from 20 years at Rocky Mountain Eye Center, my wife Sue and I moved to Polson permanently in October of 2000. We have four wonderful children who all hope to someday return to Flathead Lake. My goal is to work with the Flathead Lakers to help ensure they can return to a lake of exceptional quality.



Robert Gauthier

I am the Executive Director of the Salish & Kootenai Housing Authority, a position I've held since 1983. I am responsible for all housing and community development on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Currently, the Housing Authority manages nearly 900 subsidized housing units and

18 community water/sewer systems. The Housing Authority also administers the Housing Improvement Program, Community Development Block Grant, Weatherization Program and Indian Health Service water/waste water programs for the Tribes.

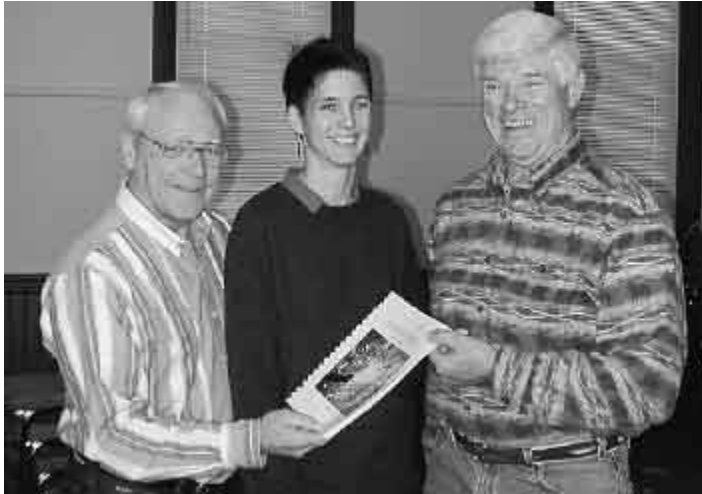
A member of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, I have received recognition as an expert on national Indian housing and finance issues. In 1986, I served on the national American Indian Housing Council steering committee that created Amerind Risk Management Services. I served six years as Treasurer of Amerind and was elected Board Chairman in 1998. In 1992, I served as Chairman of the National Commission on American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian Housing. I served on the Board of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle from 1995 to 1998. I also currently serve on the Lower Flathead Valley Community Foundation Board, Camp Make a Dream Board, and the First Interstate Bank of Polson Advisory Board.

Momentum Builds for Critical Lands Project

Progress continues for the Critical Lands Project. This project is a collaborative effort to protect and restore lands critical to water quality in the Flathead Watershed.

Critical Lands Status Report

The Lakers recently completed the *Critical Lands Status Report*, a report describing critical lands (such as riparian corridors, flood plains and wetlands) in the Flathead Valley north of Flathead Lake. The report



Holding report: Laney Hanzel, Constanza von der Phalen, Sid Rundell

discusses lands critical for protecting water quality and associated amenities such as wildlife and fisheries habitat, recreation and scenic beauty, as well as threats and concerns related to these areas.

The report was distributed to protect participants. Participants include resource professionals from county, state, federal and tribal government agencies, scientists and conservation organization representatives. The status report will be available in June through the Lakers' web site.

Thank You Barry and Thurman!

The Flathead Lakers board and staff wish to express our sincere thanks to Barry Flamm and Thurman Trosper for their many contributions to the organization and lake quality. Barry and Thurman both left the board last fall. Barry served on the board for six years including a term as President. He helped develop the Lakers' first strategic plan and led the development of the Critical Lands Project. Thurman joined the board in 1999 with a long history of commitment to water quality in the Flathead Basin. Thurman's experience and thoughtful analysis of issues provided invaluable guidance to the board. We'll miss them!

3rd Critical Lands Workshop

We used the information in the report during the third Critical Lands Workshop on May 7 to help develop protection and restoration strategies for priority critical lands.



The workshop focused on identifying protection and restoration strategies for critical areas in the North Flathead Valley and initiating an implementation plan. Research by the Flathead Lake Biological Station indicates that urban and agricultural lands in the North Flathead Valley contribute the highest nutrient loads to Flathead Lake via Ashley Creek and the Stillwater, Whitefish and Flathead rivers. Success in the North Flathead Valley will help ensure high water quality in Flathead Lake.

Grants Awarded

This year, the Flathead Lakers were awarded two grants for the continuation of the Critical Lands Project. River Network, a Portland-based national river and watershed conservation organization, awarded the Flathead Lakers a Watershed Assistance Grant of \$15,000. More recently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded a \$45,000 grant to support the project through 2003, the first federal grant the Lakers have ever received. The support of Flathead Lakers' members leveraged our ability to attract these grants and advance the project.

The Lakers' board and staff are gratified by the project's success in securing these nationally competitive grants. We appreciate the support of the Lakers' members who have helped make this success possible.

— Constanza von der Pahlen, Project Leader

Drought Management Plan, continued from p. 1

recommended drought responses would kick in. Lakers' President Sid Rundell said the Lakers believe "the proposed ad hoc process of monthly reviews of runoff forecasts during a drought by numerous independent entities and jurisdictions under the pressure of immediate, competing demands for water will not lead to the best decisions regarding Kerr Dam operations. Nor will that proposed process provide the public with adequate advance notice of decisions that will affect them."

The plan should allow flexibility for responding to changing conditions, but it should clearly delineate a dam operating plan (rule curves) for a range of drought conditions.

Decisions about when the dam's license requirements for lake levels and river flows can be relaxed must be based on sound information about the environmental and economic impacts of those changes. Questions such as at what summer lake level shoreline property owners, area businesses and boaters are significantly affected and what are the associated economic impacts are not answered in this proposal.

The Flathead Lakers' comments on the proposal assert that, at a minimum, a Drought Management Plan must:

- Spell out the conditions that would require implementation (trigger criteria).
- Establish specific rule curves for a range of potential drought scenarios.
- Maximize chances for achieving both lake refill and minimum river flow license requirements.
- Provide clear definitions, explanations and justifying evidence for its provisions.
- Identify the best sources of information and models to predict streamflows and lake levels.
- Base tradeoffs among water uses on sound environmental and economic information and analysis, with opportunities for public comment.

The Lakers continue to support "stable, predictable, and useable (2892.5 minimum) lake levels during the recreation season (June 15 through September 30)" as stated in an October, 2001 position statement. No evidence is provided in the plan to justify a proposed drought level of 2892.0. And no explanation is given about what conditions (forecasted runoff volumes) would trigger reduction in lake levels.

We encouraged DOI and FERC to require a thorough review of the options for managing Kerr Dam operations and their potential environmental and

economic impacts before approving a DMP. And we recommended that the following be considered in the evaluation and revision of PPL MT's plan:

- Base the DMP on the DMP1 rule curve described in the 2001 Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) *Flathead Lake Drought Management Study: Final Report*. DMP1 achieves lake refill and river minimum flow requirements in nearly all drought years and meets flood prevention requirements.
- Encourage the Bureau of Reclamation to adopt proposed VAR-Q rule curves for Hungry Horse Dam, which would improve the probability of sufficient water reaching Flathead Lake to meet lake level and river flow requirements during droughts.
- Undertake an evaluation to analyze environmental and economic impacts of DMP options that includes answering the following questions:
 - At what summer lake level are shoreline property owners, area businesses and boaters significantly affected? What are the economic and environmental impacts?
 - What are the environmental impacts of reducing flows in the Flathead River below the minimum license requirements?
 - What are the environmental and economic impacts of providing water from Hungry Horse Reservoir to supplement Flathead Lake levels and/or lower Flathead River flows during a drought?
 - At what winter lake level, and during what specific time period, are docks and the shoreline put at significant risk of storm damage? What are the potential economic impacts of not maintaining the lake at a level that will prevent significant damage?
 - What sources of information and models best predict streamflows and lake levels?
 - What are the opportunities for a phased approach to alternate reducing lake level targets with allocating supplemental water from Hungry Horse Reservoir?
- Revise and refine DMP1 to reflect a thorough analysis of probabilities of various drought scenarios, flow volume forecasts, and the new information about economic and environmental impacts.

An evaluation will result in a better plan to provide adequate water for various uses in all but the most extreme drought years. And for those rare years, the information can help ensure that the plan addresses all water needs so the tradeoffs cause the least harm.

News From Around the Basin

Barge Sinks Again

The saga of the barge that won't stay afloat continued this winter. The barge sank again near Angel Point during a storm last February while moored to a dock under construction. Flathead County Deputy Sheriff Lynn Ogle reported to the Missoulian at the time that there was no contamination of the lake or lakeshore.

The same barge and a tug boat sank near Angel Point and later in Woods Bay last spring, spilling fuel into the lake.

The owner and operator of the barge, Tim Knopfle, was arrested in April and charged with five violations of the federal Clean Water Act for the earlier incidents. Knopfle pleaded innocent to the charges and was released from jail after posting a property bond.

The barge was raised in early May at a cost of \$7,000.

The Flathead Lakers continue to investigate options for strengthening spill prevention and clean up.

TMDL & VNRS

The acronyms "TMDL" and "VNRS" stand for efforts to reduce polluted runoff or "non-point source" pollution. A TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) proposal to reduce nutrients in Flathead Lake, was spearheaded by the Flathead Basin Commission. The state Department of Environmental Quality refined the Commission's proposal last fall and submitted it to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval in December. EPA representative Julie DalSoglio reported that approval should be forthcoming shortly.

The Flathead Basin Commission will take the lead in coordinating strategies to achieve the TMDL targets through their Voluntary Nutrient Reduction Strategy (VNRS). The Commission released a draft VNRS Implementation Plan in March.

The plan provides a summary of the research findings about nutrient loading in Flathead Lake and water quality targets. It outlines six major goals:

- Provide coordination and planning for nutrient reduction efforts;

- Seek funding for coordination and nutrient reduction efforts;
- Support partnerships with agencies, citizens and stakeholders for education and to promote best management practices;
- Support efforts of local watershed groups to reduce nutrients, and;
- Monitor water quality trends.

For more information, please contact the Flathead Basin Commission (752-0081 or fbc@digisys.net).

The Flathead Lakers welcome the progress being made and look forward to contributing to reducing Flathead Lake nutrients through our Critical Lands Project and education programs.

Co-Management Plan Update

Over the past year, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes have begun to implement the new Flathead Lake and River Fisheries Co-Management Plan. The plan seeks to increase bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout to at least secure levels by increasing recreational angling to control nonnative fish. Progress was reported at the February Flathead Reservation Fish & Wildlife board meeting.

Preliminary research shows that *Mysis relicta* (nonnative freshwater shrimp) numbers are being controlled by predation, and that a reduction in lake trout would reduce predation pressure on lake whitefish and increase predation pressure on *Mysis*. A secure level for bull trout has not yet been determined.

Education efforts to improve anglers' ability to identify bull trout, improve catch and release techniques, and encourage harvest of nonnative fish are underway. An inventory of public access to the lake and river has been completed and work to improve and inform the public about access sites continues. Contact FW&P (752-5501) or CS&KT (675-2700) for more information.

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

Between now and October 1, 2002

The following septic services will honor this Flathead Lakers coupon with a

10% discount
on their standard price for cleaning your septic tank

A-1 Sanitation	755-3938	Mel's Pumping Service	752-5318
Bjork's Valley Pumps	883-4898	Ready Freddy Septic Tank Pumping	752-4552
Smith's Septic Pumping	883-6708	Rainbow Septic Service (Ronan) (toll free)	1-877-676-2400
Ken Pedersen Pumping Service	837-6711 & 752-4321	Shur Clean Septic Service	257-4714 & 837-4714

6th Annual Discount Offer

*We've made it through another year, the snow is gone at last,
But there's now a nasty odor that's not been there in the past.*

*You've noticed that the toilet flush is getting kind of slow,
And that the water in the sink would rather stay than go.*

It may just be the weather or a bird's nest in the stack,

But then again it just could be the sewage coming back!

It may be time to get some help before things start to smell,

And old time friends avoid your house and neighbors start to yell.

You can save yourself some money and have yourself to thank –

Use the coupon up above – have someone pump your tank.

If you can't use the coupon, please share it with a friend.

A well-maintained system means clean water in the end.

Here is your annual reminder from the Flathead Lakers to check your septic system. It is particularly important to properly maintain systems near lakes and streams. Incomplete treatment can result in human health risks and can allow excess nutrients to reach streams and lakes, promoting algae growth. When remodeling your home or cabin, be sure to expand the capacity of your system to meet the new demands. Save your septic system! Save your money! Don't become the neighborhood stinker!



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

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