



FLATHEAD LAKE Monitor

Newsletter of the Flathead Lakers

Flathead Lake, Montana

Summer, 2002

DEQ Director Commits Funding for Lake Monitoring

by Robin Steinkraus

Jan Sensibaugh, Director of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, shared good news about funding for Flathead Lake water quality monitoring in her keynote address at the Flathead Lakers' annual meeting on June 23. DEQ is providing an additional \$70,000 to monitor Flathead Lake and its tributaries.

With the \$30,000 already committed by the state, this added funding will allow the Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay to reinstate its monitoring effort this year. Biological Station Director Dr. Jack Stanford said later in the meeting that he had been forced to

make serious cutbacks in the monitoring program this year for the first time in two decades.

Sensibaugh committed to support future monitoring needs as well. She announced that she has submitted a request to the administration to budget \$100,000 in permanent funding from the general fund for the Biological Station's monitoring work.

The DEQ is also contracting with the Biological Station to conduct a monitoring and assessment project in Whitefish Lake and River to identify nutrient sources in the Whitefish Basin and serve as a template for assessing other tributaries to Flathead Lake.

Throughout her presentation, entitled *Partnerships for Protection*, Sensibaugh affirmed that partnerships hold the key to success in protecting water quality. Securing continued funding for monitoring, reducing nutrients in Flathead Lake, and improving stormwater runoff policies all now rely more than ever on building partnerships to achieve results. Partnerships with focused priorities and strong local support will be needed to secure critical monitoring and research funding in this time of state budget cutbacks.



Jan Sensibaugh

Laney Hanzel

"Protecting the Flathead ecosystem," Sensibaugh told the Lakers, "will always present challenges, but it is clear that a great deal of progress has been made. The dedication you have for this state – and national – treasure will benefit not only your own families and communities but also every future generation that comes to experience this wonderful place."

(The full text of Sensibaugh's remarks at the Flathead Lakers' annual meeting appear on the Lakers' web site at www.flatheadlakers.org.)

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Visit our web site!
www.flatheadlakers.org

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

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Robin Steinkraus, Editor

President's Column

Summer Greetings —

It's the time of year when we enjoy long days, crimson sunsets, and morning walks in the cool air. During my morning hike to the gate and back I reflect on how fortunate we all are to live or visit a place like the Flathead. Our special place is on the cusp of significant change which can pose challenges for protecting our water quality and our future quality of life unless we citizens require good stewardship standards and practices.

The Lakers' board and staff are committed to thoroughly researching and speaking out on threats to Flathead waters. We do our very best to make sure *your* voice is heard and water quality concerns are given high priority in management and planning decisions.

The number and variety of issues the Lakers' board and staff must stay informed about and work on is sometimes daunting, and an alphabet soup of acronyms are part of our vocabulary. Issues and concerns we are currently working on include drought management, dam operations (Kerr, Hungry Horse and Bigfork), planning and development, stormwater regulations, personal watercraft, water quality monitoring, hazardous spills, and nonpoint source pollution. This expanding list challenges the Lakers' capacity to effectively deal with these issues while building our proactive programs such as the Critical Lands Project.

Water quality monitoring is essential to knowing and understanding the changes and threats to lake quality. At our recent Annual Meeting, we were pleased to hear DEQ Director Jan Sensibaugh pledge to include \$100K in her budget for the Flathead Lake monitoring program. In the current state budget environment it will take significant effort by the Lakers and others to ensure that her budget receives support in the legislature.

Although sufficient water is available for this year's recreation season, a drought management plan (DMP) is still needed for future drought years. The Lakers' board and staff are providing input to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Environmental Impact Statement on a DMP for Kerr Dam and Flathead Lake. Continuing involvement by the Lakers will be needed to ensure that a fair and balanced DMP is adopted and implemented.

Another challenge is the potential impact on water quality of the proposed Glacier Mall in Evergreen. The Flathead Lakers are not opposed to the mall, per se, but are extremely concerned about its proposed location on top of the shallow aquifer, which is essentially part of the Flathead River. If built at this location, there is great potential for stormwater runoff (and parking lot pollutants) reaching Flathead Lake. The location was identified through our Critical Lands Project as a high priority area for maintaining excellent water quality in the river and lake.

The Kalispell City Council recently voted (4 to 3) to amend the Master Plan to change the area's designation from primarily agricultural to primarily commercial. If the proposed annexation into the city

— continued on next page

Drought Management EIS Underway

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed for a Drought Management Plan for Kerr Dam and Flathead Lake, Jeffery Loman announced at scoping meetings held on July 9 and 10 in Kalispell and Charlo. Loman is Chief of Natural Resources for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He will be coordinating the production of the EIS. The meetings were held to provide an opportunity for public input regarding the scope of issues to be considered in the EIS.

Loman expects a final record of decision for the EIS within 18 months. "We want to give full, fair discussion of the plan PPL Montana developed and a range of alternatives," said Loman. An EIS is required for any federal action that may have significant impacts on the environment, public health or safety.

A draft EIS will be produced that will describe a proposed DMP, alternatives, and assess the environmental, social and economic impacts of each alternative. A 60-day public comment period will follow the release of the draft, and one or two public hearings will be held.

The BIA has contracted with HDR Engineering, based in Omaha, Nebraska, to develop the EIS. Dr. Donald Wilhite of the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska and Dr. Richard Palmer of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Washington will also assist in the effort. Each gave a brief presentation

on some approaches to analyzing the problems and an overview of their experience at the meetings.

Flathead Lakers President Sid Rundell presented comments outlining the Laker's concerns during the public comment portion of the meeting. The Lakers have also submitted a letter for the scoping process which provides more detail about those concerns. (see our web site for more information).

The Flathead Lakers believe that, at a minimum, a DMP must:

- Spell out the conditions that would require implementation of DMP provisions ("trigger criteria");
- Establish specific dam operating rule curves for a full 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 all provisions and requirements;
- Identify the best sources of information and models to predict streamflows and lake levels, and require their use (with provisions for updating as better tools become available);
- Base tradeoffs among competing water uses on sound environmental and economic information and analysis, with opportunities for public review and comment on that information and analysis.

— Robin Steinkraus

President's Column, continued from page 2 — is approved, this means the mall development would connect to the Kalispell water and sewer system. But stormwater management from such a large impervious surface and the redirection of future growth into this sensitive area remain major concerns for Flathead Lake's future water quality.

Multiple decision points remain ahead as the city and mall developer interact toward reaching an acceptable design and development plan. The Lakers' board and staff will need to continue to be involved to protect against water quality impairment.

These challenges affecting our future quality of life and Flathead Lake's water quality are real and must be addressed now while we can affect the outcomes.

You, our members, can help us rise to the challenges by helping increase the Lakers' capacity to act for positive outcomes for the lake. Please use the membership form on page 7 to recruit a friend or neighbor and/or to increase your own membership level. Your help in expanding our membership will give us more clout and financial resources so we are better prepared to act on the variety of issues that affect our waters. If any of these issues are of concern to you, please join the board and staff in helping address them.

Have a relaxing and fulfilling summer season!

— Sid Rundell

Stanford presents *2002 State of the Lake Report* at Lakers' Annual Meeting:

Water Quality Down 30% in Last 25 Years

Preliminary estimates of 2001 primary productivity, or the rate of algae growth in the lake, show a slight decrease, reported Flathead Lake Biological Station Director Jack Stanford. However, the overall trend continues to show increasing primary productivity and poorer water quality. Stanford said primary productivity has increased by one-third since continuous measurements began in 1977. Upgrading basin sewage treatment plants in the early 1990s prevented even greater increases in pollution.

Stanford said the greatest pollution concern now is nonpoint or dispersed sources of the nutrients phosphorus and nitrogen. Measures are needed to keep these nutrients on land where they help grow plants and out of the water where they increase undesirable algae growth.

Solutions suggested by Stanford include greater emphasis on installing high quality household sewage treatment systems in rural areas, improving treatment of street and parking lot runoff, and maintaining wide forest and vegetation buffers along streams and rivers.

This year, Stanford said, a wet, cold spring and above average snowpack extended the runoff from the rivers, with an unusual three peaks in runoff observed. Stanford predicts colder surface lake temperatures this summer than last summer. As usually occurs during high runoff years, turbid water spread over the surface lake-wide. Water clarity should improve through the summer as the sediments gradually sink to the bottom.

New research conducted by Craig Stafford for his doctorate degree shows that growth in older lake trout (four to ten years) has slowed since the introduction of *Mysis* shrimp, while growth rates for young lake trout

(one to three years) remain the same. The results suggest that small lake trout are foraging for bottom-feeding *Mysis* (freshwater shrimp) in deeper waters where predation risk is lower, thus increasing the survival rate of young fish.

Research on mercury in lake trout and lake whitefish indicate that diet plays an important role in mercury levels. It appears that individual fish preferences in foraging depth explain the variation in contamination levels in fish. Contamination is not great enough, Stanford said, to prevent people from eating fish from the lake.

More information about the Flathead Lake Biological Station's research can be found on the station's web site at www.umt.edu/biology/flbs/. The full text of Dr. Stanford's *2002 State of the Lake Report* can be found on the Flathead Lakers' web site at www.flatheadlakers.org.

Tahoe's Water Quality Worsens

"In the '90s, Lake Tahoe passed us up in a big way," said Dr. Stanford in response to a question at the Lakers' Annual Meeting. Lake Tahoe historically has had greater water clarity than Flathead Lake. A few years ago, Tahoe and Flathead were about equal in terms of primary productivity, a key measure of water quality. Now Tahoe is worse off and continuing to experience declining water quality in spite of massive funding for restoration and stringent land use regulations. The Flathead Lakers hope Flathead basin residents will agree that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Steinkraus Reviews Lakers' Accomplishments

"This month marks my 10-year anniversary of working for the Flathead Lakers," said Executive Director Robin Steinkraus at the annual meeting on June 23. "As I began to reflect on that fact and the changes and growth the organization has undergone, I realized I could measure my tenure with the Lakers in Presidents." She went on to describe the achievements during each of the six president's (Dick Wollin, Joe Biby, Mickey Sogard, Sam Reynolds, Barry Flamm and Sid Rundell) terms over the past decade, thanking them for "their extraordinary commitment that has brought the Flathead Lakers to where we are today."

She also provided an overview of work during the past year, highlighting the Critical Lands Project led by Constanza von der Pahlen, the Personal Watercraft Project, the Drought Management Plan and the proposed Glacier Mall/Master Plan Amendment.

"You often hear how everything in nature is connected," Steinkraus concluded. "That's sometimes hard to relate to on a global scale. But on a watershed scale, it's easier to visualize and understand. Water connects us. It connects us to other living things. It connects us to the land. It connects us to our history. It connects our

– *continued on next page*

More Annual Meeting Highlights

Dick and Candy Wollin Receive Stewardship Award

President Sid Rundell presented the Flathead Lakers' 2002 Stewardship Award to Dick and Candy Wollin of Polson. Rundell said the Wollins were selected for the award by the Lakers' board of directors for their tireless dedication to championing water quality stewardship. Dick served on the Lakers' board for nearly a decade and as president for five years in the early 1990s. Rundell thanked Wollin for his continuing counsel as well as his leadership to protect Flathead Lake.



Candy Wollan, Dick Wollan, Sid Rundell

Photo Contest Winners Announced

Board member and contest coordinator Laney Hanzel announced the winners of the Lakers' second photography contest. Sixty-five entries were received which were displayed at the meeting and much enjoyed by all who attended. First place winners received a \$100 prize and second place winners received a \$50 prize. Thanks to all who entered! Winners are:

Flathead Lake

1st place: Ken Halverson, Missoula – *Lake Gull*

2nd place: Lillian Stephenson, Polson – *Winter Scene*

Honorable Mention: Fred Baker, Kalispell – *Flathead Lake*

Human Impacts on our Waters

1st place: Kyle Malerk, Missoula – *The One that Didn't Get Away*

2nd place: Mike Humphrey, Polson – *Rainbow Over Dam*

Honorable Mention : Wendy Largent, Ronan – *Progress*

Natural Phenomena

1st place: Don Wood, Lakeside – *Lightning Storm*

2nd place: Kathy Truzzolino, Lakeside, *Rainbow Over Goose Island*

Honorable Mention :

Ted R. Burton, Polson – *Skidoo Water Spout*

Leslie DeHaven, Somers – *Sunset Bay*

Steinkraus Reviews, continued from page 4 — communities and gives rise to the adage 'We all live downstream.'

With your help, the Flathead Lakers are nurturing those connections – so we can build relationships within our communities and with our natural environment that are based on understanding and respect. That, in turn, will help us ensure that clean water remains part of the legacy we leave to the future."

Thanks Rick and Ed!

Thanks to Rick Skates and Ed Gilliland for their many contributions to the Flathead Lakers through their service on the board of directors. Both stepped down from the board when their terms expired at the annual meeting. We'll miss them!

New Engines Reduce Watercraft Pollution

by Rose Schwennesen

The Flathead Lakers jumped into the fray concerning personal watercraft just as things were changing in the boating industry. We have the ban on two-stroke engines on Lake Tahoe to thank for a speed-up in action by the companies that manufacture them.

The companies responded to the ban by almost immediately producing more efficient, cleaner-burning and quieter machines. While old personal watercraft (jet ski) models and other two-stroke engines are still banned from Tahoe, new models with fuel injected two stroke and four stroke engines are allowed. The new models are cleaner than the EPA requirements which go into effect in 2006!

Older boats and personal watercraft with engines that are not fuel injected use a fuel mix of around 16:1 (gasoline to oil). The new fuel-injected engines use fuel mixes of up to 100:1.

The problem remaining seems to be the behavior of some personal watercraft operators. We now have a no-wake zone extending 200 feet from shore, which should help reduce noise and annoyance at the shoreline. When the Lakers' PWC Committee was formed, the no-wake zone was only half of that. Continuing efforts to mitigate negative impacts of PWC need to concentrate on operator behavior and noise reduction. Representatives of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and Lake and Flathead County Sheriff's offices encourage Lakers' members and others to report violations they witness to the Sheriff's offices.

Rental Businesses Meet with Committee

The PWC Committee recently invited personal watercraft rental business owners to meet with the committee to discuss their operations and opportunities to improve PWC operator behavior. Of the ten rental businesses invited to our brainstorming session, two attended.

Representatives from Wild Wave in Lakeside and Flathead Boat Rental in Somers and Polson told us how they go about renting PWCs. They go beyond the basics of merely "renting" by educating and instructing users on boating rules and etiquette. They do this for safety and also, in part, to prevent complaints from other boat and shore users. Both

said they are quick to stop unlawful or obnoxious behavior by the renters.

Both companies offered to show Lakers' members and their visitors the procedures they follow when renting watercraft.

At the meeting, FWP representatives showed a short video on safe and courteous PWC operation. The video is required for viewing by PWC renters or purchasers in Idaho. FWP would like to produce a similar video for Montana.

Both at this meeting and at the Lakers' Annual Meeting, FWP representatives encouraged interested parties to become their eyes and (forgive the pun...) ears by joining in the "Neighborhood Water Watch" program. Please call Melanie Cross at Fish, Wildlife & Parks (752-5501) for more information about how you can help be part of the solution to reduce PWC impacts.

Tips for Cleaner Boating

The Flathead Lakers encourage boaters to consider more environmentally friendly options if they are planning to purchase a new boat or motor.

Cleaner boat and PWC engines are now on the market. However, inefficient machines are still available, and often are less expensive than the new fuel injected two- and four-stroke engines.

Whether or not you're ready to replace your old outboard with one of the new models, you can help protect air and water quality by:

- Limiting engine operation at full throttle;
- Eliminating unnecessary idling;
- Avoiding spilling gasoline;
- Using a funnel or a spout with an automatic stop device to prevent overfilling the gas tank;
- Closing the vent on portable gas tanks when the engine is not in use or when the tank is stored;
- Transporting and storing gasoline out of direct sunlight in a cool, dry place;
- Following the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule.

Critical Lands Project Update

by Constanza von der Pahlen

The Flathead Lakers are working on a large grant proposal with a diverse group, including the Flathead Land Trust, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Bonneville Power Administration, the American Bird Conservancy, Flathead Audubon Society, and landowners. If funded, the grant will help protect more than 1,000 acres of wetlands and 2,000 acres of upland areas, including working farms, through the purchase of conservation easements.

These areas are in the Flathead and Mission valleys, north and south of Flathead Lake. They lie along the Pacific Flyway and support a wide variety of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wetland-dependent species. These lands also provide important functions for protecting water quality and significant opportunities for fishing, hunting, and bird watching.

Some of these areas lie in the Flathead River riparian corridor and were identified as critical for maintaining and improving water quality in the Critical Lands Status Report the Lakers recently produced (scheduled to be available on the Flathead Lakers' website in late July).

Successful completion of this major, collaborative critical lands protection project can provide a model for future efforts.

Long-term protection of critical lands in the Flathead Watershed require that we work in collaboration with other agencies and organizations, and seek ways to combine our efforts. By doing this we are also able to protect areas that have multiple conservation values such as water quality, wildlife habitat, farming, recreation and scenic beauty.

For more information about the Critical Lands Project, please contact me at constanza@flatheadlakers.org or by telephone at 406-883-1341.

Thank You!

The Flathead Lakers wish to thank the following for their volunteer contributions to the success of our Friends' appreciation event, the "French Picnic," on July 10:

Mickey Sogard, coordinator
Lori Lasche, Fabulous Feast, caterer
Sue Klein, flower arrangements
Bayern Brewery, refreshments
Pat Rigdon, providing location

Our "Friend of the Flathead" members and other supporters such as those listed above, help make possible the Flathead Lakers' work for clean water, healthy ecosystems and lasting quality of life in the Flathead Watershed.

Web Site Review

We are in the process of reviewing the Flathead Lakers' Web Site. We welcome your input. If you have suggestions or comments, please contact the office at lakers@flatheadlakers.org or 883-1346.

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

Announcements

Workshops For Lakeshore Owners

Plan now to attend a workshop this summer to learn more about the health of your lakeshore and how to manage your property to protect water quality.

Two public workshops will be conducted by Dr. Paul Hansen, an expert in riparian assessment and restoration. The workshops are sponsored by Bitterroot Restoration in conjunction with the Flathead Basin Commission's voluntary nutrient reduction program. Bitterroot Restoration specializes in scientifically-based ecological restoration.

Managing for Healthy Lakeshores:

When: Tuesday, August 6, 9-12 a.m. & 1-4 p.m.

Where: Walstad Fishing Access (about 2 miles S of Big Arm).

The components of a healthy lakeshore; the relationship between a healthy lakeshore and water quality; how to build a native plant buffer.

Assessing the Health of Your Lakeshore Property:

When: Saturday, August 17, 9-12 a.m. & 1-4 p.m.

Where: Big Arm State Park (about 1 mile N of Big Arm).

How to assess lakeshore health using the health assessment and inventory forms developed by Dr. Paul Hansen and other land management professionals.

You are welcome to attend either or both morning and afternoon seminars for either or both workshops. There is no charge. Dress for the weather and bring a

lunch if you plan to attend both seminars. Educational materials, paper and pens will be provided.

The Flathead Lakers encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to learn how to be a better steward of Flathead Lake. For more information contact Clare Fitzgerald at Bitterroot Restoration, (406) 961-4991 or clare@bitterrootrestoration.com.

Septic Tank Need Pumping?

If it's time for you to have your septic system inspected or your tank pumped, don't forget you can save 10% by using the Flathead Lakers' discount coupon which appeared in the last issue of our newsletter. Help protect clean water by maintaining your system! For more information or a coupon, call the Lakers' office at 883-1346 or e-mail lakers@flatheadlakers.org.

Permits Required for Lakeshore Work

Please remember that work on the lakeshore, both in and out of the water, requires a permit. The lakeshore protection zone is defined as the land area surrounding a lake and adjacent wetlands that is within 20 horizontal feet of the perimeter of the lake and adjacent wetlands when the lake is at the mean annual high water elevation. If you have plans to do work, please contact your county planning office (Flathead County – 758-5980 or Lake County – 883-7235) and/or the Salish & Kootenai Tribes' Lakeshore Protection Office (675-2700) for more information. These regulations help protect Flathead Lake and lakeshore property values.



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

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