



FLATHEAD LAKE  
**Monitor**  
 Newsletter of the Flathead Lakers

Flathead Lake, Montana

Spring/Summer 2019

## Closing the Gap for Conserving a Gem of the Flathead

by Constanza von der Pahlen

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to help complete a very special conservation project along the Flathead River.

Your donations will help conserve 155 acres of farmland and wetlands, building the network of protected lands critical for sustaining clean water and healthy habitat. This project will add to the 3,000 acres already conserved just upstream from the lake, for a total of nearly 12,000 acres of private and public lands conserved along the river from Columbia Falls to the lake and at the lake's north shore.

The Flathead Lakers and the Flathead Land Trust now have about \$50,000 to raise to meet the \$128,000 local match required for a \$500,000 federal grant for the conservation project.

Please visit our Flathead River to Lake Initiative website at



[flatheadrivertolake.org](http://flatheadrivertolake.org) to learn more about the project.

We hope to see you at our Summer

Solstice Party (see page 3) to celebrate and support this project and the clean waters and natural heritage it will project!

## Painted Paddle Auction Supports Flathead River Conservation Project

One-of-a-kind painted canoe paddles are being auctioned off to raise funds for the Flathead River Conservation Project.

The "Battle for a Paddle" online auction ends on June 21 at 8:00 pm at the Summer Solstice Party. Paddle winners will be announced at the event.

You can view the paddles at [www.flatheadrivertolake.org/battle-for-a-paddle-online-auction](http://www.flatheadrivertolake.org/battle-for-a-paddle-online-auction) and place online bids at [www.auctria.com/auction/battleforapaddle](http://www.auctria.com/auction/battleforapaddle).

Please contact our partner the Flathead Land Trust at 406-752-8293 if you have questions.

We are grateful that eight well-known Flathead Valley artists donated their time to paint these beautiful wooden paddles. Special thanks to the artists for their gift

for conservation: Joe Bottomly, Nancy Cawdrey, Lonnie Collinsworth, James Corwin, Susan Guthrie, Colt Idol, Nick Oberling, and Kenneth Yarus.

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Visit our web site!  
[www.flatheadlakers.org](http://www.flatheadlakers.org)



## DIRECTORY

**Flathead Lakers:** Dedicated to protecting clean water, healthy ecosystems, and lasting quality of life in the Flathead Watershed.

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The **Board of Directors** meets bimonthly. 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 are available in Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF) and can be viewed at and/or downloaded from our web site ([www.flatheadlakers.org](http://www.flatheadlakers.org)).

The opinions expressed in the *Monitor* are those of the authors. We welcome comments and submissions. Copyright 2019, Flathead Lakers, all rights reserved.

*Robin Steinkraus, Editor*

## President's Column



### Greetings Fellow Lakers,

Someone recently said to me, "What message would you most like to communicate to the members?" It is: Get involved.

You can help by volunteering, through your financial contributions, or just by paying attention to the issues and educating your friends.

The Lakers have all sorts of opportunities to volunteer, including the Mussel Walk and our Becoming Watershed Citizens student field trips. Or you may be interested in supporting our work by

paddling in the Poker Paddle, running in the Flathead Lake 5K, learning at Science on Tap, doing science as a Citizen Scientist, and many other ways.

You will have fun, you will meet interesting people, you will learn a lot, and you will help preserve this wonderful watershed.

To keep you informed, we have this newsletter, our annual report, our Flathead Connections e-newsletter, a short "Did You Know?" piece in the Flathead Beacon, the Annual Meeting, and more. Check out [FlatheadLakers.org](http://FlatheadLakers.org) to find out everything you might want to know about, including the issues we currently think need attention.

To get more directly involved, we occasionally have positions open up on the Board. Please indicate your interest to me or the Executive Director.

Some good news – the Montana Legislature has moved forward with funding to help prevent the introduction of zebra/quagga mussels and other invaders, there is a new monitoring site for water quality in Polson Bay, and more land has been protected by the River to Lake Initiative partnership along the Flathead River upstream from the lake. Some not so good news – the issue of the proposed water bottling plant near Creston has not yet been settled, mussels are still being found on boats entering the state, and no good plan has yet been developed to help prevent an oil train derailment along the Middle Fork of the Flathead.

Looking to the future, we are in the final stages of a search for a new Executive Director. The Board of Directors and Robin Steinkraus have discussed the importance of succession after her long tenure. After many years of service, Robin will step down as ED at the end of July. The new ED will build on a strong record of achievement with a sound financial base.

Your continuing generosity to support our efforts to defend against the many threats to our lake and watershed is much needed and appreciated. Support can be in the form of a regular membership, a sustaining membership, a business membership, through a legacy gift, a memorial, or a special project gift. All of your contributions will help the Lakers' work to keep our stunning lake clean and clear. See [FlatheadLakers.org](http://FlatheadLakers.org) for complete details.

I hope to see you at our Annual Meeting on July 11! Please send me your best lake jokes ([tomcoxmt@gmail.com](mailto:tomcoxmt@gmail.com)). We may share some of them at the meeting.

*–Tom Cox, President*



*Celebrate and learn about our lake and watershed!*

**2019**

# Flathead Lakers Annual Meeting

**Thursday, July 11**

**Flathead Lake Biological Station  
Yellow Bay**

<p><b>6:15 pm</b></p> <p><b>Social Time</b></p> <p><i>hors d'oeuvres and cash bar</i></p>	<p><b>7:00 pm</b></p> <p><b>Program</b></p>
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**State of the Lake Address**

Dr. Jim Elser, Director  
Flathead Lake Biological Station

**2019 Stewardship Award Presentation**

**Reflections on Watershed Protection Connections**

Robin Steinkraus, Executive Director  
Flathead Lakers

## Lakers Welcome New Director

We are delighted to welcome Onno Wieringa to our Board of Directors. He is a Montana native, born in Conrad. He grew up recreating in all the landscapes Montana has to offer, and he has always been led to water, from mountains to rivers to lakes.



Onno ran Alta Ski Area in Utah for 44 years, and established the Alta Environmental Center. He was also partner in establishing Glacier Raft Company with river operations on the Middle and North forks of the Flathead,

Lower Flathead below Kerr Dam, the Lochsa in Idaho, the Kickinghorse in B.C. and the Colorado in Moab.

He received a B.S. degree in Commerce from Montana State University. Onno serves on the board of the National Museum of Forest Service History and on the advisory counsel for the Montana Department of Recreation.

“I am honored to join the Flathead Lakers Board and hope to be of assistance in the ongoing efforts to live up to the mission of the Flathead Lakers,” Onno said.

## Join us to Celebrate and Support Conservation!

### Support the Flathead River Conservation Project

Rivers End Ranch  
on the North Shore of Flathead Lake

live music by Mike Murray and Chris Krager

live fundraiser and painted paddle auction

For more information and to buy tickets (\$35):

[www.flatheadlandtrust.org/event/summer-solstice-party/](http://www.flatheadlandtrust.org/event/summer-solstice-party/) or call 752-8293

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the Flathead Land Trust and the Flathead Lakers  
with our sponsors:

*Mission Mountain Winery, Somers Bay Café,  
Mike Murray, and the Hormuth family*

## Summer Solstice Party

**Friday, June 21**  
**6:30 pm**

*Mike Murray & Chris Krager*

Join us to celebrate the longest day of the year and support conservation along the Flathead River!

Live music and food at the Hormuth Barn on the north shore of Flathead Lake.

For more information about the paddle auction:  
[www.flatheadrivertolake.org/battle-for-a-paddle-online-auction](http://www.flatheadrivertolake.org/battle-for-a-paddle-online-auction)

## Funding for AIS Approved by Legislature

There is finally assurance that Montana will dedicate funding for the long haul to combat the threat of invasive mussels and other aquatic invasive species.

The Flathead Lakers supported AIS prevention measures and adequate funding to implement them every legislative session, starting in 2009. So we are thrilled that permanent funding to support the state's program passed the legislature and was signed by Governor Bullock.



Thanks to our local Flathead legislators for leading the charge for protecting Flathead Lake and other Montana waters from this scourge during the 2019 Legislature and the past decade!

This funding supports, among other things, boat inspection stations, public education and outreach, and monitoring.

Another important bill will require decontamination of boats with ballast tanks or bladders entering the state or crossing the Continental Divide to be decontaminated before launching. Since these boats, designed to create larger wakes for water skiers, are nearly impossible to completely drain and dry, full decontamination or quarantine is critical for protecting our waters.

## Bill Proposing Changes to State Water Quality Standards Fails

A bill that would eliminate nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) criteria and eliminate variances from Montana's water quality standards did not pass. We opposed this bill, which passed the House and was tabled in the Senate Natural Resources Committee. Strong nutrient standards are important for protecting water quality.

The Flathead Lakers have participated in the state's Flathead TMDL Watershed Advisory Group for many years. We have also participated in the state process for setting nutrient standards. We will continue to monitor and provide information and recommendations as Montana Department of Environmental Quality continues work to establish Flathead Lake nutrient standards and work on phase 2 of Total Maximum Daily Loads for Flathead Lake. We will continue to monitor and participate in that process.

– Robin Steinkraus

## Court Rules Against Water Bottling Plant Permit

We are pleased that Montana District Court Judge Kathy Seeley ruled against the Montana Artesian Water Company's water right permit this spring.

Judge Seeley said the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation did not correctly follow the law on aquifer testing required for a permit and that the permit application from MAWC did not include all the information required for DNRC to make a decision on its impacts.

The Flathead Lakers, along with Water for Flathead's Future and others, objected to the water right permit application back in the spring of 2016. Then last year, we appealed DNRC's decision to issue the water right permit to District Court. We are grateful for attorney Jack Tuholske's counsel.

This ruling invalidates the water right permit. On May 29 the Missoulian reported that MAWC and DNRC appealed the ruling to the state Supreme Court.

The District Court ruling also stated that the "beneficial use" of water is the commercial use at the bottling plant. Our appeal contended that the law on out-of-state transport of water applies in this case because that statute states that the "use" of water, rather than the water right term "beneficial use," requires evaluation of the permit application with additional criteria and a more rigorous burden of proof.



## Septic System Study Bill Passes

We are pleased that a resolution was approved by the legislature to authorize a study of septic systems, including impacts of aging septic systems and septic system regulations adopted in other states. The Flathead Lakers have long promoted improvements in septic system regulations and have educated homeowners about proper system maintenance. We hope that the study will inform new solutions for protecting Flathead Lake water quality.

## Oil Safe Flathead

Several groups concerned about the threat of an oil train disaster in our watershed came together in 2015 to discuss concerns. And now our common cause finally has a name — *Oil Safe Flathead*.

We are excited to begin working with journalist Samantha Weber, who will help us get the word out about the threat this summer. Samantha recently completed her Master's degree in Environmental Science and Natural Resources Journalism at the University of Montana.

Stay tuned for an e-newsletter update and check out our Oil Safe Flathead Facebook page — *Keep it Clean not Crude*.

## Spring Planting Brings Clean Water and Healthy Habitat

This spring the Flathead Lakers, with our Flathead River Steward Program partners, planted 550 trees at the Foy's Bend Fisheries Conservation Area along the Flathead River. We also built fences to protect young aspen from deer browsing, giving nature a little help in naturally expanding riparian buffers and habitat.

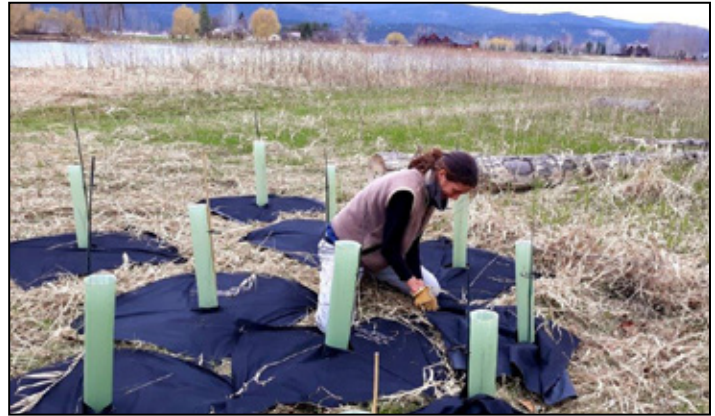
Fish, Wildlife & Parks Restoration Ecologist Franz Ingelfinger is providing long-term monitoring of our collaborative planting projects to help determine the most effective and efficient planting methods to minimize maintenance so we can scale up planting to restore more riparian forests.

Riparian forest buffers help keep our waters clean and cool, provide important habitat for birds and other wildlife, and benefit our native fish that need cold, clear water. The trees' root systems reduce erosion and filter pollution from runoff from roads, farms, and lawns.

Please call me at 883-1341 to learn more about our riparian

restoration projects or to schedule a project site visit.

– Constanza von der Pahlen



Constanza placing weed mats to protect newly planted trees along the Flathead River.

## Biological Station Launches New Monitoring Site in Polson Bay

The Flathead Lakers are proud to support the Flathead Lake Biological Station's new long-term water quality monitoring site in Polson Bay.

The Lakers provided a \$5,000 contribution to launch monthly monitoring at the new site. Monitoring began in April with the endorsement of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

The Lakers have long defended, supported, and sought funding for robust water quality monitoring by the Biological Station in Flathead Lake and its tributaries. Regular, long-term monitoring provides essential information for understanding the health of our lake and watershed and early warning for changes that may occur.

The new site will augment the Mid-Lake Deep site in the deepest part of the lake, which has been monitored since 1977. Polson Bay is more shallow and a much different environment than the deeper main body of the lake, so monitoring will provide new and ongoing information about its quality and ecology.

The Biological Station reported that new information collected by Citizen Scientists from around the lake in our joint Flathead Lake Citizen Science Program last summer was the impetus for beginning monitoring in Polson Bay. Congratulations to our first group of Citizen Scientists for their important contribution!

## Did you know...

- ... that the Lakers' student education program has provided hands-on learning and field trips for over 5,000 local students over the past 20 years?
- ... that once established in a lake, it is impossible to get rid of invasive mussels?
- ... that protecting the headwaters is critical for safeguarding clean water in Flathead Lake?
- ... that you can protect our lake by simply planting a beautiful lakeshore buffer garden?

If you read the Flathead Beacon you knew! This year we kicked off a new series of brief "Did you know?" information pieces about our lake and watershed and our work to protect them. We hope to reach beyond our membership to inform people about our lake and watershed, threats to water quality, and how they can be part of protecting these

# Did You Know?

... that if you live along Flathead Lake or one of the many rivers and streams that feed it, you can help protect this beautiful lake, watershed, and clean water from harmful polluted runoff (also called nonpoint source pollution) simply by planting a beautiful buffer garden or supplementing the vegetation in your riparian area?



Learn more Clean Waters Steward tips or schedule a site visit for personalized recommendations at [www.flatheadlakers.org](http://www.flatheadlakers.org)

**Brought to you by the Flathead Lakers.**  
Protecting our Watershed for over 60 years.

precious resources.

Check them out in the Beacon – flatheadbeacon.com – or in the announcements on the home page of our website.

## Mussel Walks Educate 400 Students Around Flathead Valley

Since the threat of invasive mussels isn't going away any time soon, educating students about the threat and how they can be part of the solution is important for preventing their spread to Flathead Lake and other lakes in our watershed.

The Flathead Lakers again partnered with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Flathead Lake Biological Station, and Montana State Parks to offer this educational opportunity to Middle School students and community members.

A week of hands-on interactive lessons about invasive mussels in classrooms around the watershed preceded five days of Mussel Walks with more hands-on learning on local beaches. Mussel Walk activities included a mussel detecting dog demonstration and searching for mussels on the beach while also picking up trash. We welcomed the public to participate in the Walks.

Somers, Ronan, Polson, Bigfork, and Whitefish middle school students participated in pilot lessons for a new **"Be AIS Aware"** curriculum and educational trunk



Students search for invasive mussels on Flathead Lake during the 2019 Mussel Walk. We're happy to report no mussels were found.

developed by the Flathead Lake Biological Station's FLARE program and the Flathead Lakers, with the Mussel Walk as the culminating event. The new curriculum will be available for teachers in October, and teacher training will be available.

"It was really an amazing learning experience for the kids and myself. I know they all enjoyed it and learned much on such a vital and important topic. I can't say enough about the activities today. They really engaged the kids. The same is true of the lessons overall. I'm excited about the ongoing use of this program and I will spread the word to any schools that have not done it," shared Randy Hohf, Whitefish Middle School Education Coordinator, Center for Sustainability and Entrepreneurship, and Science Teacher.

– Hilary Devlin



A musical chairs activity shows middle school students how native species populations are under threat from and are out-competed by invasive species.

## More Local Students Become Watershed Citizens

Third and fifth graders from around Flathead Valley enjoyed the nicest days in May learning about our unique watershed at the Flathead Lake Biological Station. The Flathead Lakers, Flathead Lake Bio. Station, and our intrepid volunteers hosted 350 students for day-long hands-on activities and learning designed to inspire the next generation of watershed stewards.

Learning about our watershed and clean water, as well as the threats and what they can do to protect our waters, is at the core of the curriculum and field trip experience. Encouraging our students' sense of place can lead to a greater sense of responsibility. Plus, seeing how bugs breathe underwater is super cool!

– Hilary Devlin

Students learning about aquatic insects at a 2019 Becoming Watershed Citizens field trip.



# Flathead Lake Citizen Scientists Make a Splash



Last summer, our group effort and the great data that our Flathead Lake Citizen Scientists collected provided the best assessment of water clarity around Flathead Lake ever conducted.

Our first Flathead Lake Secchi Dip-in results showed significant differences in the lake's physical and chemical characteristics around Flathead Lake, supporting the argument to expand the monitoring program to new sites.

"It's encouraging that in the first year of our Flathead Lake Citizen Science program, our team of volunteers produced meaningful data with a tangible result that is making a difference right now," said our partner Dr. Shawn Devlin, Flathead Lake Biological Station.

Join the effort! Our Flathead Lake dippers will be taking Secchi measurements during the whole month of July. Visit our website if you would like to participate in the 2019 Flathead Lake Secchi Dip-in or other Flathead Lake Citizen Science programs, or contact me at hilary@flatheadlakers.org. *- Hilary Devlin*

# Run for Clean Water at the 4th Annual Flathead Lake 5K!

Enjoy magnificent Flathead Lake views while you run or walk your way toward helping preserve and protect Flathead Lake!



**August 17**

**Run starts at 10 am**

**Volunteer Park in Lakeside**

awards, festivities, plus beer and root beer from Tamarack Brewery register via the link on our website ([www.flatheadlakers.org](http://www.flatheadlakers.org))

We thank the Lakeside Chamber of Commerce for cosponsoring this event!

# Paddle for Clean Water at our 5th Annual Poker Paddle!

Join us on Sunday, August 11 at 10 am in Bigfork for the 5th Annual Flathead Lakers Poker Paddle!

Support the Flathead Lakers education programs and community work to protect clean water and the Bigfork Chamber of Commerce 4th of July festivities.

Choose your course distance and paddle to designated stops to collect your poker hand. Then celebrate your morning paddle at the picnic with live music by Mike Murray, silent auction, and awards for the best and worst poker hand at Brookside Yard from noon to 3 pm.

Early Bird registration \$10 discount ends July 7, and the paddle is limited to 150 paddle craft!



# Sustaining Memberships Add Up for Clean Water Protection

A small monthly contribution to the Flathead Lakers can add up to be a big support for protecting our lake and watershed over the course of a year! We invite you to consider a sustaining membership. It's easy. Just go to JOIN/DONATE on our website to learn more and sign up.

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



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Address (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 Member  \$100 Patron  \$250 Benefactor  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$500 Protector  \$1,000 Advocate  \$2000 Investor  \$5,000 Leader

Please consider becoming a Sustaining Member. Just click on the Join/Donate button at the top of our website, [flatheadlakers.org](http://flatheadlakers.org), and join or renew your membership with a monthly donation.

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



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

## Summer Events

**June 21**

### Summer Solstice Celebration

*Celebrate and support conservation!*  
music, refreshments, and more  
6:30 pm, North Shore Flathead Lake

**July 11**

### Flathead Lakers Annual Meeting

*Celebrate and learn about our lake and watershed!*  
6:15 pm social time • 7:00 pm program  
Flathead Lake Biological Station, Yellow Bay

**July**

### Flathead Lake Secchi Dip-in and monitoring

*Become a Citizen Scientist this summer!*  
See page 7 for more information

**August 11**

### 5th Annual Poker Paddle

*Paddle for clean water!*  
10 am to 3 pm, Bigfork  
visit [www.flatheadlakers.org](http://www.flatheadlakers.org) to sign up

**August 17**

### 4th Annual Flathead Lake 5k Run

*Run for clean water!*  
10 am start at Volunteer Park, Lakeside  
visit our website for more information

**September 3**

### Science on Tap

*Enjoy a brew and a fascinating science talk!*  
Flathead Lake Brewing Co. Pubhouse, Bigfork  
5 to 8 pm, presentation at 6 pm  
No Science on Tap in July and August

Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/flatheadlakers](http://www.facebook.com/flatheadlakers)



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Website:  
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