

Executive Director update:

LETTER FROM THE LAKE

KATE SHERIDAN



Happy fall to our Lakers members! We hope that you are enjoying the changing autumnal colors, the much-needed rainfall, and the change in season that brings a calm energy to Flathead Lake.

In this issue of the Monitor, we bring together highlights from our spring and summer work, including a dedication to the new Somers Beach State Park, the return of the Poker Paddle, our Annual Meeting, and our first-ever Summer Soiree. After several years of pandemic restrictions, it was wonderful to see many of your faces and connect in-person. This summer, we also honored three retiring board members, Steve, Dick, and Jim, who devoted countless hours, along with generous contributions, to the mission of the Lakers. We have a strong and successful organization today thanks to their efforts. Each of them also had an incredible sense of humor and quick wit, which I'll sincerely miss at our meetings.

I hope each of you had a memorable summer as well, with your family and friends! A personal highlight for me was swimming the annual Grizzly Relay with my swim team, FLOW (Flathead Lake Open Water) Swimmers, from Painted Rocks to Wildhorse Island to Rocky Point, then around Bird Island, and finally Blue Bay, following the tracks of a radio-collared grizzly bear's (multi-day) swim in 2010.

Cheers and best wishes for good health this season,

-Kate Sheridan, Executive Director



Flathead Lake MONITOR

SUMMER/FALL 2022



@whitehawkmedia

Thank you Hilary

Thank you for 7 years dedicated to the Flathead Lakers. You will be missed by all of us. We wish you the best on your new endeavor!

“ In June, I moved on to Habitat for Humanity of Flathead Valley. I am so proud of the work I have done for the Lakers, and I am immensely thankful for my colleagues Kate, Rosalie, Constanza, and Amber; our board members, partners, and volunteers; and students and teachers that I have worked with over the years. I had so much fun, and I feel so honored to have learned from you all.

And thank YOU so much for being a member of the Flathead Lakers; for volunteering, attending, or participating; for reading our (e)newsletters; and for caring deeply about this lake, watershed, and community. ”

- Hilary Devlin



HILARY DEVLIN

FLATHEAD LAKERS

Mission Statement

Working for clean water, healthy ecosystems, and lasting quality of life in the Flathead Watershed.



Conservation & Restoration

Somers Beach Opens to Public



Montana's newest state park opened to the public this summer, providing public access to nearly a half mile of shoreline along Flathead Lake. From fall through spring, when the lake is below full pool, a beautiful sandy beach stretches as far as you can see to the Flathead River. The 106-acre park also includes wetlands, riparian areas, and grassy areas which provides important habitat to nearly 230 species of birds and other wildlife. A parking area off of Somers Road currently provides day access to the park. MT Fish Wildlife and Parks is in the process of establishing a management plan with public input.

We are especially thankful to the Sliters family for their commitment over the years to see their property turned into a state park to provide access and enjoyment to Flathead Lake for all. The Flathead Land Trust was an instrumental partner in helping MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks create the park. Thanks you to all who supported the Somers Beach state park! The Flathead Lakers donated \$15,000 to the MT State Parks Association to help with the development of amenities in the park.



LEARN MORE AND SEE PUBIC COMMENTS
FWP.MT.GOV/STATEPARKS/SOMERS-BEACH-PLANNING-PROJECT

Looking at our Watershed

Flathead Watershed - River Conditions Interactive Map

Check out our new interactive map of rivers and lakes in the Flathead Watershed. Find out what the water temperature is, streamflows, fishing access sites, warnings, AIS inspection stations, and more.



The Flathead Lakers worked with the Flathead Conservation District and US Fish and Wildlife Service to develop this new user-friendly map in our watershed.



A Summer Soirée

CELEBRATING OUR MEMBERS

Flathead Lakers members and guests enjoyed a private concert fundraiser with Tommy Edwards and Man & The Box on August 4th.

This special event was graciously hosted by our board member Eve Dixon, and her husband Charlie, at their house on Black Point. Guests had spectacular views overlooking Flathead Lake on a clear summer evening while enjoying good music and food.

We were able to raise \$6,700 to support the Flathead Lakers work throughout the watershed.



The Return of the Poker Paddle

After a three-year hiatus the Lakers, brought the Poker Paddle back to Polson this July. Over 80 participants, 30 volunteers and two brave dogs came out to enjoy a morning on the lake. Mark Johnston won best hand with 4 Queens, and Bruce Kasnitz took worst had with only a Jack high card.

We had an incredible group of volunteers, including Lake County Search & Rescue and Sheriff Don Bell.

Thank you to our sponsors: Anderson Broadcasting, Glacier Bank, Sportsman Ski Haus, Simply 406, JanCo Accounting, and Flathead Raft Company.

Mark your calendar for **July 22, 2023** for the next Poker Paddle!

November 29th, 2022

GIVING TUESDAY

What are you doing on Tuesday, November 29? It's GivingTuesday—an annual global day of giving where people all over the world come together to support their favorite nonprofits.

This year, the Flathead Lakers are participating in GivingTuesday! Our goal is to raise \$10,000 that will kickstart an exciting new conservation project — but we'll only reach that goal through the kindness and generosity of people like you.



BRINGING LAKERS MEMBERS TOGETHER, SO WE CAN CONNECT ON HOW WE PROTECT OUR LAKE

Board president, Onno Wieringa, kicked off the annual meeting by reminding the membership of the Flathead Lakers mission and stressed the importance of keeping the entire watershed clean. "If the rivers flowing into the lake aren't clean, the lake isn't clean." To visualize and communicate an impactful story to the public and policy makers, the Lakers are creating a "Lake Threats Map" showcasing threats that impact the lake daily.

Kate Sheridan, Executive Director, shared that the Lakers had two incredible wins for conservation and public access: Bad Rock Canyon Wildlife Management Area and, the Sliter Family's property on the North Shore, which is now Somers Beach State Park. We've also returned to hosting our student environmental education field trips with the Biological Station, learning during the pandemic that smaller groups facilitated a more rewarding experience for all involved.

Good news from Dr. Jim Elser, nitrogen (N) and phosphorous (P) levels are NOT increasing in Flathead Lake. Studies dating back to 1980 show no long-term upward trend of nutrient levels. Nutrients are the number one source of pollutants in water. Inputs of N&P from the Flathead & Swan River have declined by 10% over the past 30 years. These declines can partially be accredited to our advancements in wastewater treatment.

2022 Flathead Lakers Annual Meeting

A HEALTHY WATERSHED FROM RIVER TO LAKE

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Legacy Giving Spreading Ashes in our Watershed

While enjoying lunch with a board member, staff, and new business member this summer, we had an unusual question. The business owner had gotten a call from a family who was visiting Flathead Lake, and preparing to honor the life of a relative who loved the lake. **Could the grieving family spread the ashes of their loved one in Flathead Lake?**

Luckily the board member at the lunch table was prepared with a thoughtful answer - and solution in his reply. While spreading ashes in the lake are discouraged - they contribute nutrient inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus - there are other ways to honor someone who cared about Flathead Lake:

- If you do not have property on Flathead Lake, ashes can be spread on Montana State Parks land. We recommend an area of native vegetation where the nutrients can be absorbed by plants, rather than going straight into the lake. Montana State Parks ask that you be discrete and respectful if you choose to do this.
- The family we spoke with ended up doing a toast on the water to their loved one. They had also inquired about placing a wreath or bouquet. We recommended they do so by finding a florist who can create an arrangement with native plants or flowers.
- Finally, the Flathead Lakers have options for giving in memory of someone who loved Flathead Lake, which we include in our Annual Report. If you are planning for yourself or your family, there are options for leaving a legacy gift in your estate.

LEARN MORE AT [FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG/LEGACY-GIVING](https://flatheadlakers.org/legacy-giving)



Plant a memorial garden with native plants



Donate in memoriam



Leave a legacy gift

Honoring Retiring Board Members

Steve Rosso

Steve served for 12 years as a Flathead Lakers board member. He could always be found volunteering at a Lakers event, and is an advocate for proper septic maintenance, smart planning, and preventing AIS.



Our 3 retiring board members all received our Stewardship & Volunteer Awards for 2022

Jim Hollensteiner

Jim has been a generous supporter of the Lakers and dedicated 21 years to being board member. He may be departing the board, but he will be leaving a generational legacy with his families continued involvement with the Lakers.



Dick Siderius

Dick volunteered 15 years to the Flathead Lakers board. As a champion of conservation, he restored a riparian buffer zone on his property along half a mile of Ashley creek.





Monitoring Flathead Lake

The Flathead Swim Guide

Over the course of ten weeks, from July 5th to September 6th, the Flathead Lakers tested 16 swimming beaches around Flathead Lake for e.coli. We sampled and monitored the water quality of Flathead Lake's swimming beaches to reduce the risk of water-borne illnesses. Every Monday, one volunteer made the journey around the lake to gather a water sample from each location, then delivered to the Flathead Lake Biological Station for testing.

We are lucky to live next to one of the cleanest lakes in the world. We also share our home with a diverse ecosystem of plants, animals, and reptiles. During the summer months, there is a window of opportunity for dangerous pathogens like E. coli to accumulate and contaminate public swimming beaches.

Only twice this summer, at two of the swimming beaches (due to some pesky geese and the sweltering summer heat), did we see a slight uptick in E.coli levels, and those were cleared up by the following week.

The Flathead Swim Guide Project is a collaborative project between the Flathead Lakers, Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS), and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

LEARN MORE AT
FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG/FLATHEAD-LAKE-SWIM-GUIDE

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FLATHEAD LAKE REMAINS MUSSELL FREE

Thank You AIS Inspectors

51 AIS MUSSEL FOULED BOATS FOUND STATEWIDE

18,582 HIGH RISK BOATS

95,798 TOTAL WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS

As of October 5 2022

AIS inspectors dedicate their summer days to protecting our watershed from aquatic invasive species. The Flathead Lakers donated a cooler and gatoraid to keep the volunteers cool and hydrated during the hot summer days. We also supported the state park volunteers by sponsoring their seasonal training.

Check out our video, "What are Aquatic Invasive Species and What Happens at an AIS Inspection Station?"



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AMERICORPS VISTA



Hannah Hernandez

Hannah Hernandez joined the Flathead Lakers team in August as an AmeriCorps Resilience VISTA member. Born and raised in Montana, Hannah has worked both in hydrology and mindful meditation. She is interested in exploring ways to advance and encourage climate action through human resilience and active hope. Hannah will work with us for one year. Please help us welcome Hannah!