



FLATHEAD LAKERS

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

PAST AND PRESENT: HOW THE FLATHEAD LAKERS PROTECT THE WATERSHED THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS.

We bring together agencies and organizations to protect and restore lands critical to clean water in our watershed.

In 2000, the Flathead Lakers brought together private landowners, land trusts, conservation organizations, counties, tribes, and public agencies to identify, conserve, and restore lands important for maintaining our Flathead River and Lake natural heritage – excellent water quality, outstanding scenic and recreational values, and abundant fish and wildlife.

These efforts gave rise to the Flathead River to Lake Initiative, a group that works together to conserve lands that help sustain our Flathead Watershed.

Since 2000, our Conservation and Restoration Program and the Flathead River to Lake partners have worked with private landowners to voluntarily protect over 6,000 acres of lands, adding to a conservation network of 12,000 acres of private and publicly protected lands along the Flathead River.

We have planted thousands of native flowers, trees, and shrubs to restore and enhance riparian zones around the watershed.

We educate our community and visitors about the threats of aquatic invasive species.

The Lakers have been an early, and persistent, advocate for a robust program to protect Flathead Lake and Montana from aquatic invasive species (AIS), such as zebra mussels and Eurasian milfoil. This included early personnel funding, organizing the first volunteer boat inspections on Flathead Lake, development of a widely used white board video to educate the public, and focused advocacy working with the CSKT, MT FWP, and with others.

The Lakers created and maintain AIS signs at Flathead boat launches, and have participated in boat inspections.

We educate our community, members, and local students about the threats of aquatic invasive species to our watershed in a multitude of ways, and are an active partner in the annual Flathead Lake Mussel Walk for local middle school students. We encourage our members to do their own mussel walk.

We work with partners to protect the headwaters of the Flathead.

We advocate for greater safety measures for the transportation of Bakken crude oil along the wild and scenic corridor of the Middle Fork Flathead River, and educating the public about the risks. We produced a widely-used film on the potential of oil train spills.

The Flathead Lakers and their passionate partners defended the Flathead headwaters from coal mine and coalbed methane proposals upstream in British Columbia.



The Flathead Lakers advocate for clean water policies at the local and state levels.



We monitor county growth policies and advocate for water quality protection measures.

We track state legislation affecting the Flathead Watershed, and advocate measures protecting clean water in the watershed.

In taking positions and advocating policies to protect clean water, the Lakers rely heavily on the best science available, much of it from the Flathead Lake Biological Station.

We participate in a number of watershed working groups.

We have been, and are, focused on the issues of aging septic systems, houseboats, an increase in the number of large boats on the lake, and the need for adequate pump-out facilities.

We were involved in a drought management plan to better manage summer lake levels during droughts.

We initiated a project to reduce the negative impacts of personal watercraft.

We worked to assure that sewage treatment plants were upgraded for phosphorus removal.

We have promoted the ban of phosphate detergents in Flathead and Lake Counties.

We educate our local students, Lakers members, visitors, and community how to be watershed stewards.

The Lakers develop and carry out watershed education programs, including school materials and field trips for elementary students.

Partnering with the Flathead Lake Biological Station, we co-host Science on Tap-Flathead, an informal community gathering to discuss science and topics of interest around the lake and watershed.

The Lakers partner to maintain a "Swim Guide" that provides information on water quality at 16 public swimming sites around Flathead Lake.

For decades, the Lakers have stressed the need for, and contributed to, funding for water quality monitoring by the Flathead Lake Biological Station, and through our citizen science programs.

Our team of citizen science volunteers help monitor Flathead Lake. Strong citizen science can be a community driven way to continue to monitor our freshwater systems when federal and state funding for water quality monitoring declines.

The Lakers develop and share educational materials on "best practices" for protecting water quality in the development of lakeside properties, e.g. native plants, buffer gardens, and fertilizer use.

We promoted mapping of ground water levels at the north end of the Lake to better assess the likely impact of development on water quality.

The Lakers installed a mural outside our offices that celebrates and honors the natural beauty, tribal culture, history, and wildlife of Flathead Lake and watershed. We invite you to stop by the Salish Building (110 Main St., Polson), and take in the completed mural. Discover the little details that make our watershed so special. A "Watershed Moment" was created by wall artist Thievin Stephen.

The Lakers take initiatives and monitor activities that affect water quality, focusing personnel and funding on those issues where we are most effective in serving our mission.

Visit flatheadlakers.org to learn more or become a member.

