

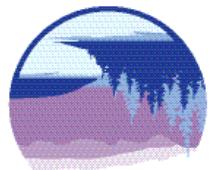


Flathead Lake MONITOR

LATE SUMMER/FALL 2021



DEFENDERS OF THE WATERSHED
FLATHEAD
LAKERS



Conservation and Restoration

The Flathead Valley is booming

ALL FUNDING FOR BAD ROCK CANYON CONSERVATION PROJECT HAS BEEN SECURED.

WE ARE INCREDIBLY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT.



LEARN MORE AT

[FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG/
CONSERVATION-RESTORATION](https://flatheadlakers.org/conservation-restoration)

The Bad Rock Canyon property has been well known to grizzlies, elk, migrating birds, bull trout, and more for many generations. This gem is hidden along the Flathead River, and has provided habitat and migration opportunities for our unique flora and fauna. This property's shallow aquifer feeds clean, cool groundwater into the Flathead River. But, these hidden, undeveloped places along the river won't be left unnoticed for long.

The quiet Flathead Valley is teeming with people seeking nature's invaluable services, from outdoor recreational opportunities to clean water. Subdivision and development around the Bad Rock Canyon property is booming. From 1990 to 2016, Columbia Falls grew by 82%. We have no doubt that this property would be highly developable, with its waterfront, rolling terrain and stunning views, and just minutes away from Columbia Falls and Glacier National Park.

Together with the land trust, we received over 240 donations from the community - an unprecedented show of support.

Thank you for your generous donations towards the Bad Rock Canyon Conservation Project!

We are working with our Flathead River to Lake partners to ensure this 772-acre property is conserved to support our incredible Montana natural heritage:

A mile of river on the property offers amazing views and gravel bars along its shores for people floating the river or fishing. It has a critical cottonwood forest for birds and other wildlife. The Gateway to Glacier Trail, currently under construction, aims to connect Columbia Falls to Glacier National Park, and will meander through the Bad Rock Canyon property, while a youth and disabled hunting program will continue to use the site for its work and mission.

Protected, the Bad Rock Canyon Wildlife Management Area will forever be an invaluable part of our community.

We want to thank our partners, the Flathead Land Trust and MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks who led the charge in securing the bulk of the funding, nearly \$7 million so far, as well as numerous other partners and foundations that supported the project.

Wastewater treatment in our watershed

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND COULD BE A PROBLEM WHEN IT'S YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM.

Regular use and maintenance, like we've discussed in prior newsletters, can keep your septic system functioning properly, save you money, and last for up to 35 years. However, improper use and old age can cause a septic system to fail. A failed system is a great risk to human and animal health, and can pollute the environment. With everything underground, it is important to know the warning signs, so you can respond quickly to problems.



WARNING SIGNS

- Sewage backup in your drains or toilets.
- Sinks, bathtubs, and washing machines drain more slowly than usual.
- Plumbing gurgles when water drains.
- Wet areas or water seeping near the drain field. It may or may not have an odor.
- Lush green grass around the septic tank or drain field.
- Foul odor around drain field or septic tank.
- Excessive growth of aquatic weeds or algae in the lake near your home.

LEARN MORE AT flatheadlakers.org/septic-systems



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A SEPTIC SYSTEM FAILS

It's gross. A septic system failure causes untreated sewage to go where it shouldn't. Sewage carries pathogens and other dangerous contaminants that can make people and animals sick if they are exposed to it. The sewage could also find its way into groundwater or surface water, and make it unsafe for drinking, swimming, recreating, and other uses.



WHAT TO DO IF YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM FAILS

- Have your tank pumped and inspected immediately. This may solve the problem. If the drain field or household piping is clogged or if high water levels are a problem, this won't help.
- Fence off the area to minimize human, pet, or wildlife contact with wastewater.
- Don't use harsh chemical additives - they may harm your system.
- You may need to upgrade or replace the system or drain field. A permit from the county health department is required for all new construction and replacement.



SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

The Montana Association of Conservation Districts is offering assistance for property owners who live near bodies of water in Lake and Flathead counties.

Reimbursements up to \$200 are available to help cover the cost of maintaining a septic system.

CONTACT JILLIAN HENRICHON, BIG SKY WATERSHED CORPS MEMBER SERVING THE FLATHEAD BASIN, AT FLATHEADSEPTICPROGRAM@MACDNET.ORG, OR CALL 406-858-0566.

INSPIRED TO DONATE TO CONSERVATION?

Support Somers State Park

The Lakers are joining forces with the Montana State Parks Foundation to finish the Sliter's match challenge for the Somers Beach Project!

A new state park and public access site on Flathead Lake is being created near Somers, on a 106-acre parcel on the north shore of Flathead Lake. While most of the property is in wetlands or underwater in summer, the sandy shoreline in winter and the above-water banks in summer have been a popular lake access site among locals, who received permission from the Sliter family to access the site for years - stressing the fact that lake access is limited even for a town bordering the lake.



Photo by Susan How

The Sliter family has been looking for ways to conserve the area for public use for a long time. Working with the family, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has secured most of the funding to make this project happen. To support the project moving forward, the Sliter family offered a matching challenge of \$125,000 to the MT State Parks Foundation and another of \$25,000 to the Flathead Land Trust. The Flathead Lakers have joined efforts with the Sliter's and Montana State Parks Foundation to help reach the

finish line, with just \$42,000 left to raise. Funds raised will be used to assist MT Fish Wildlife and Parks with much needed park amenities. Donations to the collaborative R2L Conservation Fund will be allocated to this worthwhile effort.

LEARN MORE AT [FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG/
SOMERS-BEACH-STATE-PARK](https://flatheadlakers.org/somers-beach-state-park)

2021 FLATHEAD LAKERS ANNUAL MEETING

A changing valley

Weather postponements behind us, the 2021 Flathead Lakers Annual Meeting on August 19 celebrated gathering once again with our Lakers community, with some necessary precautions, while noting the many changes and threats that are facing the Flathead watershed.

Phil Jackson, a long-time Flathead Lakers member and so much more, summarized the Lakers community and their commitment to protecting this watershed during his keynote:

“ In the process of watching this lake develop, this last year we had a situation in our little area up in the northwest corner of Lake County... we had a group of people want to come in and put an amusement park right in the neighborhood.

Steve alerted us to a planning commission meeting, and I think 120 people ended up talking at this Zoom meeting.

And we listened as numbers of people kept saying, “this is the one place that’s been wild and free”, and “this is the place that I want to preserve.” But it showed me something, that the community could really rise and support one another in these type of situations.

... Life goes on, we experience it for a few years, and then we retire from the scene and others take our place, our voices, and our passion. Hopefully, we can find somebody under 50 that will take our passion and lend it to this lake. Thank goodness for the crew that’s working here...”

PHENOMENAL FUNDRAISING EFFORTS SUPPORT BAD ROCK CANYON CONSERVATION

Constanza von der Pahlen updated fundraising efforts for the Bad Rock Canyon Conservation Project. With a lot of help from our Lakers members, we raised over \$70,000.

She gave special thanks to Greg & Sue McCormick, Jim Hollensteiner, Bob & Betty Moore, and Mike & Trish Rodrigue for kickstarting fundraising efforts and helping us surpass our goal, as well as all donors who support this project.

DAVE HADDEN HONORED WITH OUR STEWARDSHIP AWARD

This year’s Stewardship Award went to Dave Hadden, recently retired from Headwaters Montana. Dave has dedicated decades of his career to protecting Flathead Lake, its watershed, and into the Crown of the Continent ecosystem.

Dave reminds us that the work to protect our water never ends, and that it often takes decades to achieve our conservation goals. The Lakers are grateful for his years of service to our watershed.

“ The issues then are the same as now — protecting our water, our outstanding wildlife and our opportunity to recreate in a quiet, natural landscape...”



Lakers update

President Tom Cox addressed the growth in the Flathead Valley, and the many ways the Lakers are working to protect our watershed as it takes on new residents and record numbers of visitors.

Still blue, mussel-free

Dr. Elser gave the State of the Lake address, and discussed the many ways the Bio Station is monitoring changes in our watershed.

Regarding climate change, “It’s not just avoiding disaster, it’s welcoming a better future, with clean air, clean water, for our children. Let’s be good ancestors. The state of the lake is blue; let’s keep it that way.”

Work ahead

We are excited to be expanding our organization’s capacity this coming year to help us tackle the many threats to Flathead Lake.



Photo by Lake County Leader

Photo by Lake County Leader



Enhance your shoreline this autumn with native plants

Beautiful native wildflowers and shrubs protect our clean water. Studies have estimated that a naturally vegetated riparian area, or an enhanced lakeshore buffer garden, can filter out 60-90% of sediments and pollution in storm water runoff bound for our lakes and rivers.

Add native perennials to your shoreline in the fall to give them a head start. The soil is still warm, so their roots grow fast. Plus, they aren’t putting energy into producing flowers, rather it goes into their roots. In spring, your plants will be strong, healthy, and ready to filter out what doesn’t belong in our water.

For more information on living in a watershed, site visits, native plants, lakeshore buffer gardens, and more, visit:

[FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG/LIVING-WATERSHEDFRIENDLY](https://flatheadlakers.org/living-watershedfriendly)



Lakers Legacy Circle

TOGETHER, WE CAN ENSURE THAT CLEAN WATER REMAINS PART OF THE FLATHEAD LEGACY WE LEAVE TO OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

You can include a bequest in your will, and designate the amount or remainder to the Lakers.

Gifts of life insurance policies, annuities, and retirement accounts, such as IRAs or 401(k)s can be made to the Lakers.

Gifts to the Flathead Lakers Endowment Fund at the Montana Community Foundation creates a legacy for the future income from the endowment supports the ongoing work of the Flathead Lakers. The Montana Community Foundation can provide additional information about the tax credit and the Flathead Lakers Endowment Fund.

CONTACT US IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE LAKERS LEGACY CIRCLE AT 406-883-1346.



Photo by Marty Zanjac



Boulder 2700 Fire: shoreline recovery assistance

The Flathead Lakers are working with the Lake County Conservation District, the Tribes, local experts, and affected property owners to provide assistance in recovery efforts along their shoreline to prevent soil and ash erosion ending up in the lake.

If you or someone you know have been affected by the Boulder 2700 fire, and would like to learn more about potential post-fire assistance, like silt-fencing and replanting lost riparian vegetation, contact the Flathead Lakers at 406-883-1846.

Lake County Emergency Services recommends getting flood insurance, as flooding can happen below a fire affected area. Landowners below a fire should call their insurance company to assess what it covers and what measures they should take.

[DETAILS UPDATED AT FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG/UPCOMING-EVENTS](https://flatheadlakers.org/upcoming-events)



Science on Tap paused

Once again, we are pausing our in person events because of high covid numbers in our community.

We look forward to in person meetings and events as soon as we can. Thank you, and stay healthy.

STAY CONNECTED!

For updated information on upcoming events, visit flatheadlakers.org and sign up for our enews at the bottom of the page. You can also follow us on facebook.com/flatheadlakers/ and instagram.com/flathead_lakers/.

Until then, browse through the Science on Tap-Flathead YouTube Channel for archived events.

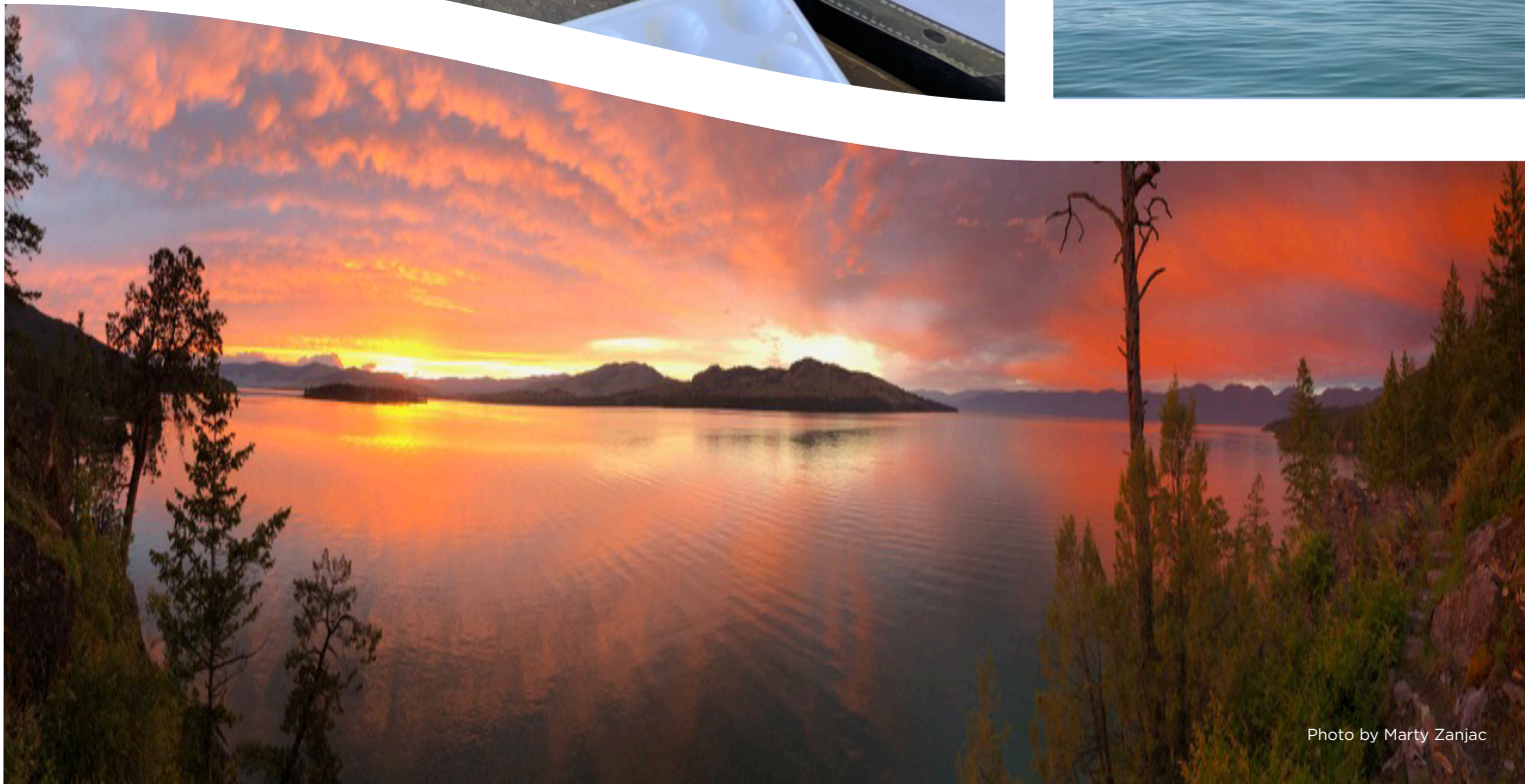
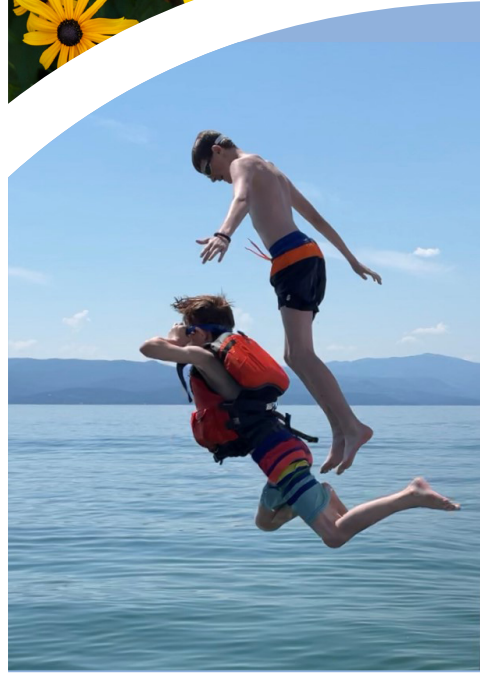
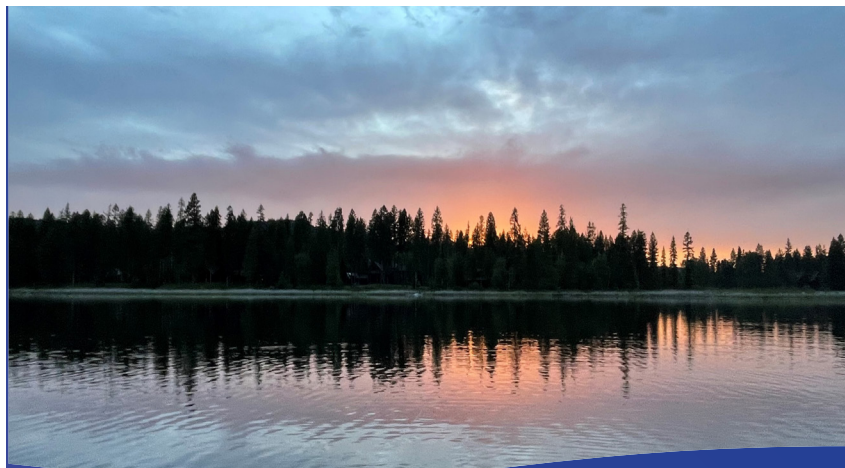


Photo by Marty Zanjac



Tracking the legislation

As you can imagine with a legislature that only meets in odd numbered years, and not for more than 90 days, there is a flutter of activity when our legislators are in session.

The Flathead Lakers was fortunate to have an advocacy intern, Bryce Kadrmas, for the 2021 Montana Legislative Session. Bryce assisted us in tracking and reviewing bills and amendments as they came up, and helped get information out to our members in a timely way, and when their voices were needed.

In 2021, 1,317 bills and resolutions were introduced, with 725 bills passing and 592 failing. With Bryce's help, the Lakers tracked 22 priority bills for the Flathead Lakers, and virtually attended and testified at meetings. She stressed the importance of daily tracking, and the speed at which things can change. Her work supported our legislative actions, and was included in our newsletters and action alerts, bill summaries, testimonies, letters to the editor, and website and social media posts.

Along with trainings and webinars, Bryce began her internship with learning about the Flathead Lakers, our history and community. She saw the strength of the Lakers' voice:

“ Our members are people from all walks of life and political views, working together toward a common goal -- defending our watershed.

This diversity creates a unique position for the Lakers, giving us a stronger, more calculated voice. It really hews that our community's voices matter, especially when speaking up about legislation impacting our beautiful valley and waters.”

BRYCE KADRMAS

A heartfelt thank you to Bryce for her hard work and determination throughout the session from the Lakers Board and Staff.

You can find more information on the bills tracked through the 2021 legislative session. Visit: flatheadlakers.org/news-announcements/wrapping-up-legislative-session

Thank you AIS inspectors

The Flathead Lakers joined partners from around Montana to celebrate the work of men and women who are defending our lakes and rivers from aquatic invasive species, during Watercraft Inspector Appreciation Week, August 2-8, 2021.

The Flathead Valley, and all of Montana, have seen record numbers of visitors... and a record number of watercraft inspections and mussel fouled boats.

Stop in to your local inspection station, and thank them for their dedication and hard work through this hot and busy summer season.

54 AIS MUSSEL FOULED BOATS FOUND STATEWIDE

23,196 HIGH RISK BOATS

103,320 TOTAL WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS

As of Sept. 20



Executive director update:

LETTER FROM THE LAKE

KATE SHERIDAN



I hope each of you had an incredible summer on Flathead Lake. From talking with fellow Lakers, I know you all enjoy an array of activities on the lake (human- and machine-powered alike): kayaking, paddleboarding, sailing, fishing, and boating in all shapes and sizes.

Open water swimming is my activity of choice. Once the water temperature rises to 50F in spring, my fellow swimmers (and Lakers!) and I don our thermal wetsuits and explore the shoreline and routes around various islands. Our longest swim this year has been from Mallet Point (on Finley Point), around the Bird Islands, and back for sunset-watching on the beach. The pace of swimming freestyle allows us to see the rainbow of rock colors as we pass over them, to pause when we spot an eagle or osprey overhead, and to enjoy the clean, clear water as we swim through it (and inadvertently get in it our eyes, ears, nose, and mouth). Swimming makes us acutely aware of our surroundings, and the quick-to-change weather - wind, waves, and temperature drops can all occur within an hour-long swim.

It is this level of care, connection, and concern we bring to Flathead Lake as Lakers.

Wishing you all a safe, healthy fall,

Kate

Welcoming two new board members

The Lakers are excited to expand our board of directors, and welcome two new members, Eve Dixon and Jan Swanson.

Eve and her husband, Charlie, retired to Flathead Lake in 2017. Both are Montana born and raised. Eve has over 30 years of experience in training, support, volunteer positions, and self-employment in web design and advertising fields. Her positions involved a desire to learn and share with others, creativity to inspire adults and children, commitment, advocacy to improve and educate communities, business partners, students, and co-workers.

Jan Swanson is a native of Missoula and grew up in Montana. She spent her youth recreating in the Swan Valley, and the last 50 years at the family's cabin on Flathead Lake. Her goal is to connect as many people and organizations to the Flathead Lakers as possible. She is aligned with the mission of the Board, and holds the protection of the Flathead watershed as critical to the health, prosperity, and opportunities of future generations.

THANK YOU TO BOTH FOR BRINGING YOUR ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM TO OUR BOARD.



EVE DIXON



JAN SWANSON

FLATHEAD LAKERS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Tom Cox, President
Onno Wieringa, Vice president
Rob Mitchell, Treasurer
Nanette Nelson, Secretary

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Laney Hanzel, Jim Hollensteiner,
Roger Smith, Monica Elser, Marilyn
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Constanza von der Pahlen, Critical
Lands
Hilary Deylin, Science &
Communication