

Flathead Lake
MONITOR

FALL 2020

FLATHEAD
LAKERS
DEFENDERS OF THE WATERSHED





Bad Rock Canyon Conservation Project

The Flathead Lakers, together with the Flathead Land Trust and our other Flathead River to Lake Initiative partners, are excited to help purchase 800 acres along the Flathead River near Columbia Falls.

The Bad Rock Canyon Conservation Project has been a dream for decades. Protecting this land is not only important for sustaining clean water, but also for providing vital habitat and travel corridors for bull trout and grizzly bears, winter range for elk and moose, and a stop for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds.

We are committed to supporting Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks raise \$500,000 by the end of next year. That funding would allow us to secure state and federal grants for over \$6.5 million to purchase the property.

Visit flatheadlakers.org/current-projects for more information or to donate to this special project.

800 acres



1.5 miles of river

80 acres of wetlands

120 acres of cottonwood forests

One warm spring



43 species

of special concern given habitat protection



Public

Secure public access and recreation

SPECIAL EVENT

A Wooden Boat for Bad Rock Canyon - Auction

Thanks to the generosity of former Lakers president and expert woodworker, Greg McCormick, we will be auctioning off a lovely 1953 Century Resorter online this fall. Greg has beautifully restored this boat and ensured that replacement parts are accurate to its era. 50% of the proceeds from the auction will go directly towards the purchase of the Bad Rock Canyon conservation project.

Bidding starts at \$10,000 on October 23rd, and remains open until December 1st. For more photos, specs, and how to bid, please go to flatheadlakers.org/upcoming-events.



Wastewater treatment

in our watershed

Ageing septic systems are a huge threat to future water quality in the Flathead Watershed. Issues surrounding outdated onsite septic systems have long been a problem in both Lake and Flathead Counties, and, unfortunately, we cannot flush these problems away. Many homes on Flathead Lake and Watershed now have septic systems that are well over 50 years old, which lack modern design standards and/or are not effectively treating wastewater.

Ageing septic systems lose the ability to treat wastewater naturally with bacteria and other things in the ground. Failing septic systems impact human and environmental health, and are a significant component of nonpoint source pollution around Flathead Lake.

The Flathead Basin Commission has formed a committee to examine the problem of on-site wastewater treatment, and work together to find viable solutions for our watershed community. The Flathead Lakers are excited to be a part of the effort.

Stay tuned to future newsletters and outreach events to learn more about the issue, how your septic system works, how to maintain it, tips to keep it functioning properly, and signs of a problem.

LEARN MORE AT
flatheadlakers.org/septic-systems

<30%

of the homes and businesses are serviced by a community wastewater treatment plant in Lake and Flathead Counties.

+70%

That means, of us treat our wastewater from our homes and businesses with an on-site septic system/drain field.

+90K people

people flush their toilet, bathwater, and wash water into or on the ground in the Flathead Watershed.

Researchers estimate that thousands of septic systems in the Flathead Watershed are

+50 years old

and no longer able to treat wastewater.

DETAILS AT [FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG](https://flatheadlakers.org)

Other upcoming events

Science on Tap-Flathead is taking a break.



We are all combating screen fatigue, and it is still too soon to gather together. Let's take a break. Get outside, enjoy some backyard winter science, and spend time on Zoom with your loved ones. Stay safe and healthy. Please wear a mask, and we will be back soon!

Meanwhile... we will be posting past Science on Tap-Flathead events to keep your appetite for great science satisfied. Stay tuned! Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Thank you for your continued support.

Become a Flathead Lakers

sustaining member



A small monthly gift can help us continue to provide our community with unique educational opportunities, and find new ways of communicating and connecting during this time.

For over 25 years, the Lakers's education program has provided thousands of local students, community members, and visitors with ways to expand their understanding and knowledge of our watershed, enhance their sense of place within our watershed, and help develop a responsibility for protecting our precious clean water and Flathead Watershed.

Please help sustain our programs and advocacy work with an affordable, monthly gift. Thank you!

WAYS TO SUPPORT OUR WORK
flatheadlakers.org/how-to-give

A Watershed Moment

Our new building mural

When you spot the Salish Building in Polson – whether from the Highway 93 bridge, from the water, or the Lakefront Path, you'll now see the colors of a stunning Montana sunset beaming from the lower concrete walls. About a year ago, we relocated our offices into the basement of the Salish Building, and we immediately began dreaming of ways to make the space more inviting.

Thanks to the energy of board members and staff alike, our Mural Committee quickly moved forward with an artist, Thievin' Stephen; cultural consultant, Cameron Decker; and generous financial support from the community.

The mural means to educate our community and visitors about the watershed in a unique way. In addition to being visually appealing and an already-popular background for social media portraits, the elements within the mural are a "Where's Waldo?" of issues important to our watershed. We will be creating an app with information about each piece, but on the right is a taste of the mural, from our artist.

We look forward to a formal dedication in 2021, but please spend some time visiting the mural in the meantime at 110 Main St., Polson on the bottom of the Salish Building!

Boys and Girls Clubs Participate in Mural Installation

Students from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Polson and Ronan were invited to meet the artist, ask questions, learn about the lake, and paint their own 'Watershed Moment'. Thank you to Jeff and Susan Tuttle and Thievin' Stephen for making this possible. We enjoyed having the students be a part of this special moment for the Flathead Lakers and our watershed community.

Quotes Overheard from local BGC students: Why should we keep Flathead Lake clean?



The lake is our only lake, we mostly don't get another lake. Keep it beautiful for a long time."



For the fishes. We don't want to ruin the environment. If we ruin the environment, no one will want to come here."



People can't swim. Bears can't drink. Animals can't drink clean water. It would be like a wasteland"



Native flora:

Camas, bitterroot, and cattails



Oil train

An eerie oil train, snaking along the shore



Native fauna:

Grizzly bear and cubs, pintail duck, bighorn sheep, bald eagle, cutthroat trout, and bull trout



Cultural elements,

people, and a teepee with a red hand, honoring MMIP (Missing, Murdered, and Indigenous People)





Flathead Lake Citizen Science

The Flathead Lake Citizen Science program's Periphyton Monitoring Project wrapped up its first season of sampling! Thank you to our citizen science volunteers for their time and energy. We are excited to be working with you. We are grateful to the Greater Polson Community Foundation's continued support of this project. We have over 100 rock samples from 10 sites around Flathead Lake, from July, August, and September, in the freezer waiting to be processed and analyzed.

What exactly is Periphyton? Periphyton is a mix of algae, bacteria, detritus, fungi, and the goop that holds the entire complex mess to submerged surfaces like rocks, mud, fallen trees, and even other aquatic plants in the illuminated shallows of lakes. Periphyton is a main food source for mayflies, stoneflies, and caddisflies, which reliably feed fish such as Cutthroat and Bull trout.

Periphyton is also a remarkable indicator of water quality because it responds to changes in the environment quickly, it is easy to sample, and is known for tolerance or sensitivity to change.

The Flathead Lake Biological Station's monitoring program has studied periphyton at two sites for over 20 years. Over that time, periphyton at each site has increased but at different rates of change. Without a more in-depth comparative periphyton study, it's difficult to know what that means.

That is where our citizen science volunteers have stepped in... into the lake... to help researchers learn a more complete story about periphyton in Flathead Lake, and help us identify and isolate potential threats to our lake and clean water. Stay tuned as we learn more, and contact us if you'd like to become a citizen scientist.

REcreate

When I walked past the new Handmade in MT shop in Polson last summer, it felt as if a magnetic force pulled me inside. I met Carol Lynn Lapotka, the owner of REcreate Designs, and curator of her storefront business that features Montana artists. We quickly connected, talking about the community we were both new to, and our love of Flathead Lake.

Recreate Designs is a member of 1% for the Planet – a nonprofit that encourages businesses to donate 1% of their profits annually to environmental groups. Carol Lynn already had the Lakers in mind when I stopped by, as she wanted to ensure her donation went to a local organization.

Carol Lynn shares the same values as the Lakers and implements them in her business practices. REcreate uses upcycled materials (think: that cardigan with the moth-eaten hole) and makes all kinds of magic – from baby clothes to cozy neck warmers, and now to the so-necessary face mask. She was recently awarded a contract from the State of Montana to make thousands of masks to keep our residents and visitors alike safe from the spread of Covid-19.

Please visit Carol at REcreate and thank her for supporting the Lakers! You can find them at 212 Main St. in Polson, online at www.recreatedesigns.com, and on social media.

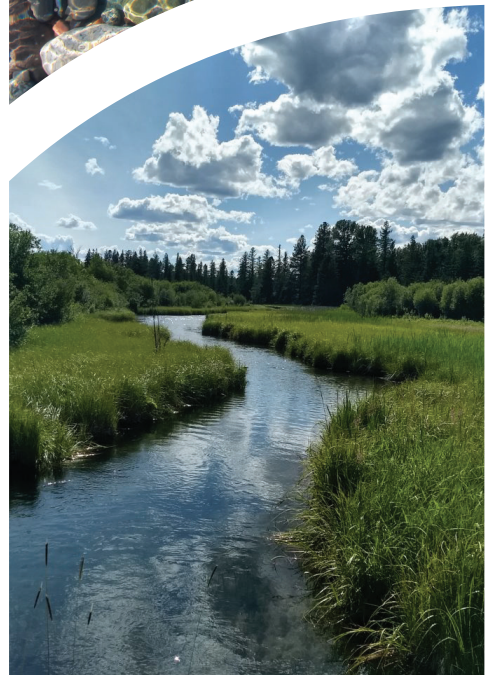


TAKE ACTION

What YOU can do

Curious about what you can do in your daily life and around your home to live more Flathead Lake-friendly? Contact us for a site visit from our knowledgeable staff.

406-883-1346 | FLATHEADLAKERS.ORG



Executive director update



KATE SHERIDAN

At our last Science on Tap, I learned that October is considered the beginning of the new year for the water world. It was striking, as I had been feeling a new sense of energy with the chill in the air, cold water swims alongside fall foliage and in view of snow-capped mountains, and the quiet that settles on our lake in the colder months.

For many – students, teachers, scientists, and other cultures – Autumn is the beginning of the new year. At the Lakers' office, this season saw the installation of a stunning mural, a brand new website, and this newsletter format, which we will send to you quarterly.

We're welcoming new Lakers members and businesses, including REcreate Designs (more inside) and Mission Mountain Gallery, and we are finding new ways of connecting with you and our community during this time.

We have a new conservation project to fund in 2021, and new data and results coming in from our Flathead Lake Citizen Science projects. In our quarterly newsletters, we'll also include a new column specifically on septic systems. While not a new threat to our health and water quality, we need to take new approaches to addressing nutrient inputs, and that starts at home. We'll aim to educate you on this topic with equal parts humor and solid advice.

We've also heard that there are many newcomers to the Flathead, who appreciate our clean water, rich ecosystems, and way of life. If you have a neighbor who may enjoy this newsletter, or be interested in our work, please let us know! In this new year, we're continuing to grow our Lakers crew.

I hope you had an enjoyable summer and fall, whether you were able to join us on Flathead Lake, or are tuning in from another location.

Stay safe and be well. Here's to keeping it blue,

Kate

Lakers welcome new board members

The Flathead Lakers are excited to welcome two new board members, Marilyn Lamb Roberts of Big Arm and Monica Elser of Yellow Bay, and one returning board member, Roger Smith of Skidoo Bay.

Marilyn is a Montana native and former climate researcher with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). She and her husband, and their golden retrievers, have lived in Big Arm for the past 15 years.

Monica is the Education Liaison at the Flathead Lake Biological Research Station. Monica spent many years engaged in limnological research, and now is working to enhance science and sustainability science education within the K-12 community.

We are thrilled to have these members on our board, and have their support help shape the future of the Flathead Lakers.

To learn about our other board members, visit flatheadlakers.org/who-we-are



MARILYN ROBERTS



MONICA ELSER

FLATHEAD LAKERS

Mission statement

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