



make a clear difference for Flathead Lake

Nonpoint Source Pollution Basics

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Flathead Lake is the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River, majestic mountains, rural landscapes, clean water, native fish and wildlife, all these converge to make the Flathead Watershed a special place – and those very qualities that make it special are a magnet for population growth. Flathead Valley’s population is growing fast. Increasing development can lead to more polluted runoff reaching the lake.



WHAT IS NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION?

Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution is caused by rain or melting snow moving over and through the land. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, oceans and groundwater.

SOURCES OF NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION



- excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from agricultural and residential areas
- oil, grease, antifreeze, and other toxic chemicals from urban runoff
- sediment from improperly managed construction sites, crop and forest lands, and eroding streambanks
- failing septic systems
- pet waste
- air pollution



DEATH FROM A THOUSAND CUTS

The cumulative effect of nonpoint source pollution (NPS) can be hard to imagine. Small amounts of polluted runoff from throughout Flathead Lake's watershed add up. Once in the lake, NPS pollution can lead to algal blooms, loss of water clarity, and eventually altered food webs. NPS pollution can be VERY difficult to track because there is not a single source of pollution- instead it truly is a death from a thousand cuts.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Dispose of oil and household chemicals properly.

Maintain your septic tank.

Use water gaps or other ways to water livestock.

Restore your riparian area or create a Buffer Garden. Plant root systems filter out pollutants and stabilize soil, cleaning runoff before it enters our lake.

Pick up your pet's waste. How many dogs live in the Flathead watershed? It adds up.

Read the label. Use lawn and garden fertilizer wisely and sweep up excess.

Think before you dig. Starting a construction project or creating a buffer garden? Avoid leaving bare soil exposed. Use silt fences during your project and reseed or replant bare areas as soon as possible.

Give water more places to go. You can do things on your property that can hold onto storm water like a sponge, giving it time to infiltrate into ground water: Plant a rain garden, connect your downspouts to rain barrels, choose porous pavement instead of impervious materials, like concrete or asphalt.



HOW TO LEARN MORE

The Flathead Lakers offer opportunities to learn more:

-Clean Water Practices Site Visit: We will explore clean water practices that might work for you. Contact Hilary Devlin at hilary@flatheadlakers.org or 406-883-1341

-Walk and Talk Tour: Watch for our small group tours to see lake-friendly lawns and other clean water practices in use.

-Additional clean water practices fact sheets and informational brochures are available on our website. Visit www.flatheadlakers.org 'Tips for Clean Water Stewards'

Together, we can keep Flathead Lake blue!

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