



make a clear difference for Flathead Lake

# Clean Water Awareness

## WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Flathead Lake is renowned for its clear, blue waters. It enriches us in many ways – family fun, a respite from busy lives, an economic boon to our communities. But it is showing signs of declining water quality. Research shows algae – both in the water and on shorelines – is increasing.

- Phosphorus and nitrogen are nutrients that increase algae growth.
- Increased algae growth leads to loss of water clarity, lower oxygen levels, and scummy beaches.
- These changes harm fish, degrade recreation, pollute drinking water, and can lead to declines in property values and tourism.
- The state of Montana declared water quality in Flathead Lake impaired.



*Slippery rocks coated with algae are becoming more common in Flathead Lake.*

We all want Flathead Lake and the waters that feed it to remain clean and beautiful. We can all take actions now to help keep it clear and blue.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Protecting Flathead Lake requires both individual actions and working together. As individuals, we can implement clean water practices like:

- maintaining or planting vegetated buffers on our lakeshore or stream bank properties
- limiting use of fertilizers and pesticides and always using them according to directions
- safely disposing any unneeded toxic materials, like pesticides, paint, and motor oil
- maintaining septic systems

Together, we can be a strong voice for public policies and resource management practices that protect our waters.



*Algae in Yellow Bay.  
Photo by UM Biological Station.*

# CLEAN WATER TOOL KIT: Clean Water Awareness

## WHY DOES IT WORK?

Nutrients reach Flathead Lake in stormwater runoff. As rain and snowmelt flow over lawns, farm fields, construction sites, parking lots and streets, they pick up sediments, nutrients, and other pollutants and deliver them to ditches, streams, rivers, and Flathead Lake.

Plants take up water and nutrients from runoff and bind soils. Vegetated buffers, responsible lawn care, and other clean water practices help prevent pollutants from reaching our streams, rivers and Flathead Lake.

Awareness about clean water is the first step that leads to action. As waterfront residents, we wouldn't knowingly harm our property or water quality. But this is precisely what we're doing when we clear or compact the shoreline. Individually and together, let's make a clear difference!



*Sediment and nutrients leaching under a retaining wall.*



## WHERE TO LEARN MORE?

Find out more about polluted runoff, how to prevent it and other clean water solutions. The Flathead Lakers offer:

- **Free visit** to explore clean water practices that might work for you;
- **Flathead Clean Water Toolkit:** a series of fact-sheets and other materials with tips about lawn care, septic system maintenance, landscaping with native plants and preventing soil erosion;
- **Walk and Talk Tours:** Visit clean water practices demonstration sites;
- **Newsletter, workshop, annual meeting, and other events;**
- **Drop by our office in Polson.**

Together, we can keep Flathead Lake blue! Visit the Flathead Lake Clean Water Toolkit:

[www.flatheadlakers.org/toolkit](http://www.flatheadlakers.org/toolkit) or call 883-1341.

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