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Welcome to the Flathead River to Lake Newsletter.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 19 | August 2013

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## Conservation and Restoration

### *Volunteers help implement restoration projects*

This spring, Flathead River Steward Kirstin Gruver worked with landowners and partners to plan and organize two riparian buffer planting projects on private lands along the Flathead River south of Kalispell.



Kirstin organized volunteers, Initiative partners, and a Montana Conservation Corps crew to plant trees and shrubs, place weed mats, and fence the areas to protect plants from deer.

At the Diamond B Ranch, 375 trees and shrubs were planted within two fenced areas to protect the plants from deer browsing. Additional plantings are planned for next year. At Ken Louden's farm, 450 trees were planted within fenced areas, as well as on exposed areas on the banks of the river. Landowners have been pleased to get the help Kirstin and Initiative partners provided.

These projects will help restore native riparian forests along the river that protect water quality and provide wildlife habitat. Kirstin will monitor these and other projects to assess their success.

### *River Restoration Project includes experiments on tree protection methods*

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) implemented several restoration experiments at Foy's Bend Conservation Area that will provide information to evaluate different methods for protecting young trees from competition with grasses and from damage by voles and other rodents. "This experiment will allow us to share results with landowners along the river" said Kris Tempel, FWP Resource Specialist who designed the experiments.

One experiment included planting 450 cottonwood trees in three different fenced areas (6 ft tall black plastic mesh) to protect the young trees from deer browsing.



Each fenced area was treated with different techniques for protecting the trees from voles, pocket gophers, and competitive grasses.

Last year, FWP fenced an area without trees. Protected from deer and elk, numerous aspen and cottonwood volunteer trees grew within the fenced areas. FWP will monitor plant survival within this enclosure to determine the effectiveness of natural recolonization of native trees.

These projects complement the Montana Department of Transportation's stream bank restoration work at the site that is part of the mitigation of impacts of the Kalispell bypass road construction.

### ***Flathead Valley farmers show river projects to the Society for Range Management***



Flathead Valley farmers are doing something right that the International Mountain Section (IMS) of the Society for Range Management

wanted to learn about during its annual summer tour. In July, the IMS toured three land conservation and river restoration projects completed by *Flathead River to Lake Initiative* partners.

The IMS group visited a Montana Land Reliance conservation project in progress on a local dairy farm, the Foys Bend Fisheries Conservation Area managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Ken Louden's farm that has a conservation easement held by Flathead Land Trust.

A focus of the tour was learning how riparian areas along the river are managed or restored to benefit both the river and the needs of farmers.

### ***Flathead Land Trust earns accreditation seal***

Flathead Land Trust has been awarded accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The seal of accreditation is a mark of distinction in land conservation, indicating to the public that the land trust meets national standards for excellence, upholds the public trust and ensures that conservation efforts are permanent.

Flathead Land Trust was established in 1985 by community members concerned about the rapidly

growing population and maintaining the Flathead Valley's natural beauty, clean water, high quality farm land, and special places that sustain our high quality of life. Flathead Land Trust has worked with private landowners to conserve over 10,000 acres of important fish and wildlife habitat and farmland through 51 conservation easements. The land trust underwent a rigorous review process to qualify for accreditation. Congratulations to the Flathead Land Trust!

### ***Farewell to Flathead Land Trust Director***

Marilyn Wood recently said good-bye to the Flathead Land Trust after leading it for many years. Her tenure as Executive Director brought significant growth to the organization and its conservation accomplishments. River to Lake Initiative partners will miss Marilyn, her enthusiasm and determination in completing complex conservation projects, and her dedication to the success of the Initiative.

### ***Flathead Valley loses an esteemed conservation advocate***

Larry van Rinsum, former Resource Conservationist for the Flathead Conservation District passed away on May 24. Larry had a wonderful rapport with people from many backgrounds and a deep understanding of the valley's history, land use, and culture.

He often advised Flathead River to Lake Initiative partners and he was always interested in finding opportunities to collaborate to serve people and protect the Flathead Valley's natural resources. Recently, Larry encouraged the Initiative to host an AmeriCorps/Big Sky Watershed Corps member as the Flathead River Steward. He will be greatly missed.



*Larry at the Family Forestry Expo*

## **Fall Events**

**August 21, 22, 27 and 28**

### ***Free Wetland Plant Identification workshops***

The Montana Natural Heritage Program and the Montana Wetland Council are offering several one day wetland plant identification workshops, free of charge. Workshops will be held in Helena, Missoula, Bozeman and Billings. The field-based course provides basic plant identification skills for Montana's common native

and invasive wetland plants. Workshops will be limited to 20 participants. For more information, please contact Lynda Saul at 406-444-6652 or [lsaul@mt.gov](mailto:lsaul@mt.gov).

### August 31

#### ***Public comments sought for proposed North Shore project***

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is seeking public comment for the proposed acquisition of 189 acres on the North Shore of Flathead Lake. The purchase would add to several existing protected areas and be managed to protect fish and wildlife and their habitat.

Funding for the project would be provided by the Bonneville Power Administration through FWP's fisheries mitigation program. FWP will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, August 20, at 6:00 pm at the Flathead Lake Inn and Suites located at the junction of Highways 93 and 82. For more information or to comment (by Aug. 31) go to [www.fwp.mt.gov/news](http://www.fwp.mt.gov/news) and click on Public Notices.

### September 11-13

#### ***Crown of the Continent Roundtable Conference***

The Roundtable annual conference, "Building Partnerships: Linking Local Actions and Landscape Outcomes," will be held September 11-13 at Glacier Park Lodge in East Glacier Park. For more information visit the website [www.crownroundtable.org/4thconference2013.html](http://www.crownroundtable.org/4thconference2013.html).

### September 18

#### ***River to Lake Initiative meeting***

The next River to Lake Initiative partners quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18 in Kalispell. For more information contact Constanza von der Pahlen, Critical Lands Program Director, Flathead Lakers, at 883-1341 or [criticallands@flatheadlakers.org](mailto:criticallands@flatheadlakers.org).

### October 10

#### ***Montana Wetland Council meeting in Kalispell***

The Montana Wetland Council will meet in Kalispell on Thursday, October 10 from 8:45 am to 4:15 pm. For more information contact Lynda Saul, Wetland Program Coordinator, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, at (406) 444-6652 or [lsaul@mt.gov](mailto:lsaul@mt.gov). River to Lake Initiative partners are helping host the meeting.

### October 15-17

#### ***Montana Watershed Symposium***

The Montana Watershed Coordination Council's symposium "20 Years Together...looking back, moving forward" will be held at the Holiday Inn Parkside in Missoula Oct. 15-17. For more information, visit the website: [www.mtwatersheds.org](http://www.mtwatersheds.org)

### October 22

#### ***Montana's Wetland/Riparian Conservation Summit***

Montana Wetland Council and Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks are hosting a meeting in Helena to discuss the first objective in the new Wetlands' Strategic Plan, "Priceless Resources: A Strategic Framework for Wetland and Riparian Area Conservation and Restoration in Montana 2013-2017." The goal is to assess needs for coordination on wetland and riparian conservation. For more information contact Lynda Saul at (406) 444-6652 or [lsaul@mt.gov](mailto:lsaul@mt.gov).

Visit the River to Lake Initiative website for additional news and events at [www.flatheadrivertolake.org](http://www.flatheadrivertolake.org).



*Aerial photo of proposed North Shore project by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks*