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Welcome to the River to Lake newsletter.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 15 | November 2012

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Conservation and Restoration

Smith Lake wetlands and farmland protected



Photo by Calypso Ecological Consulting

The Flathead Land Trust recently protected 305 acres in the Kila/Smith Lake area once destined for a luxury residential development with a private airstrip.

The land includes both prime agricultural land and critical wetlands. The Flathead Land Trust is working to deed 189 acres of critical wetlands to the Smith Lake Waterfowl Protection Area, adding protection to this popular bird-watching areas in the Flathead Valley.

Also included in the parcel are over 100 acres of open-space land, currently in agriculture. Through the terms of the conservation easement, these traditional farming practices – so important to the cultural and historic fabric of western Montana – will remain.

“This project really benefits the local community in so many ways,” said Marilyn Wood, Executive Director of the land trust. “It significantly increases the wetlands habitat of the Smith Lake Wildlife Production Area, helps protect water quality all the way down to the Flathead River, keeps another parcel of agricultural land in local food production and traditional use, and preserves the beautiful scenic views we all enjoy. It’s

just an amazing project!”

The project was completed with a US Fish and Wildlife Service grant secured by River to Lake Initiative partners and administered by the Flathead Land Trust.

Wetland Stewardship Award presented to landowners

The landowners who make a commitment to conservation are the most important partners in efforts to protect the Flathead River and Flathead Lake’s north shore.



At the Flathead Lakers annual meeting last summer, Flathead Land Trust Executive Director Marilyn Wood presented the 2012 Wetland Stewardship Award to Aileen and Jerry Brosten. The Brostens family protected a mile and a half of riparian habitat and prime farm land along the Flathead River that has been in the family for four generations.

Montana Land Reliance Western Manager Mark Schiltz presented the award to Eric and Becca Smith who conserved 97 acres of river front wetlands and riparian areas adjacent to another parcel on which they earlier donated a conservation easement.

The award was earlier presented to River to Lake Initiative partners.

Montana, Fish, Wildlife and Parks receives Stewardship Award

The Flathead Lakers presented their 2012 Stewardship Award to Montana, Fish, Wildlife and Parks for their work to protect wetlands, riparian habitat, and floodplains along the Flathead River and north shore of Flathead Lake.



Montana, Fish, Wildlife and Parks is an important partner in protecting and restoring important fish and wildlife habitat along the river and lake's north shore, also helping protect clean water, working farms, and recreational opportunities.

Recognition was given to Regional Fisheries Mitigation Coordinator Joel Tohtz, Wildlife Biologist Gael Bissell, Conservation Technician Kris Tempel, Wildlife Mitigation Coordinator Alan Wood, and Fish Technician John Wachsmuth.

Welcome new Big Sky Watershed Corps member

Next January, the Flathead Lakers will host a Big Sky Watershed Corps member to help landowners, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Flathead Lakers, and other River to Lake Initiative partners, restore riparian areas and wetlands along the Flathead River and the north shore of Flathead Lake.

The Corps member selected will serve as the River Steward for one year, and assist landowners with restoration planning, implementation and maintenance, riparian fencing, buffer planting, and weeding. The River Steward will also plan volunteer events to assist restoration, clean-up, and outreach activities. Watch for new volunteer opportunities next summer. The River Steward may also help landowners with applications to NRCS and other programs that provide financial assistance for restoration projects.

River to Lake Initiative website report

The River to Lake Initiative website hit 2,270 unique visits in April and has since sustained a high stream of visitors. The website has had a constant rise in visitors since first launched in 2010, starting with about 400 visits per month.

Visiting the R2L website is a good way to learn about the Initiative, find publications, maps and aerial photos, and information about recreation on the Flathead River, including the new **R2L Analysis of Conservation Success** report by Katzman and Casey, or how long it may take you to float the river from Pressentine Bar to Old Steel Bridge, and other access sites along the river.

We invite you to visit our website at www.flatheadrivertolake.org. Please let us know if you have ideas to improve it to meet your needs. Contact Constanza von der Pahlen, Critical Lands Program Director, Flathead Lakers, at 883-1341 or criticallands@flatheadlakers.org.

Events

November 14

Society of Wetland Scientist speaker series

The Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists will hold the 4th presentation in its speaker series on wetland and riparian area issues on Nov. 14 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm in Helena at the Lewis & Clark Brewery. Presentations will discuss Montana water quality standards and wetlands and water quality protection, hydrologic effect of stock ponds on a prairie watershed, and the relationship between wetlands and Montana water supply. For more information visit www.sws.org/regional/rockymountain.

November 15

Montana Wetland Council meeting

The Montana Wetland Council will hold its next meeting on Thursday, November 15 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm in Helena. The meeting will focus on wetland restoration for water quality improvement, habitat, flood storage, and overall watershed management. For more information contact Lynda Saul, Wetland Program Coordinator, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, (406) 444-6652 or lsaul@mt.gov.

December 12

River to Lake Initiative meeting

The next River to Lake Initiative quarterly partner meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, December 12 in Kalispell. For more information contact Constanza von der Pahlen, Critical Lands Program Director, Flathead Lakers, at 883-1341 or criticallands@flatheadlakers.org.