

# River 2 Lake News

Photo by Karen Nichols

Welcome to the River to Lake monthly newsletter.

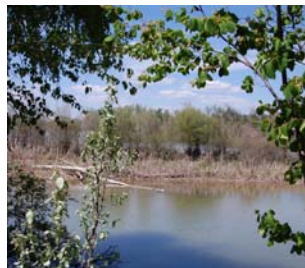
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## Land and Water Conservation

### ***Church Slough Protected!***

River to Lake partners can celebrate another conservation success along the Flathead River. Church Slough is a magnificent oxbow slough along the Flathead River north of Flathead Lake, which is rich in wildlife and bird species. The Flathead Land Trust helped landowners Ben and Maureen Louden place a conservation easement on 300 acres of wetlands, riparian habitat, floodplain and farmland. The conservation easement helps the Loudens maintain their property in one piece to pass on to their children while protecting unique wildlife, water quality, and farmland values. A USF&WS North American Wetlands Act grant, secured with the help of numerous partners, helped purchase the easement.



### ***Foys Bend River Fisheries Conservation Area management plan & draft EA coming soon.***

A draft Management Plan and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Foys

Bend Fisheries Conservation Area along the Flathead River will be released by Montana Fish, Wildlife and

Parks (FWP) late summer/early fall for public comment. In February, FWP purchased a 243-acre property along two miles of the Flathead River for fisheries conservation. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), which funded the acquisition to mitigate for fisheries impacts of Hungry Horse Dam, holds a perpetual conservation easement on the property. The draft management plan and EA will include recommendations for public access, habitat enhancement, weed management, agricultural land uses, education, and other activities. Until the management plan is developed and approved by BPA, no public access or other land uses can occur.

### ***River to Lake projects update***

With the Church Slough conservation project completed, the Flathead Land Trust is now moving ahead with negotiations with other Louden family members to place conservation easements on three additional properties along the Flathead River. Funding for these projects was secured from a Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) grant and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Fisheries Mitigation Program. Expected closing date on these projects is September 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Funding and Programs

### ***NRCS Announces a Sign-Up Period for the Conservation Stewardship Program.***

Sign-ups for the new Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP, 2008 Farm Bill) begin August 10th and end September 30th. This voluntary program provides annual financial incentives to farmers, ranchers and non-industrial forest landowners for being good land stewards. It rewards landowners who are already doing good things for wildlife and provides additional funds to further enhance their efforts. The new CSP improves its availability and appeal to producers. To apply for the newly revamped CSP, potential participants are advised to use a self-screening checklist first to determine whether the new program is suitable for them and their operation. For additional information, contact the NRCS field office at 406-752-4242 Ext. 104 or go to [www.nrcs.usda.gov/new\\_csp](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/new_csp).

### ***Conservation Innovation Grant for North Shore gravel beach denied.***

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Flathead Lakers submitted an NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant to fund a dynamic gravel beach erosion control project on the North Shore. Unfortunately the proposal was not funded. Partners may seek funding in the future to conduct outreach to landowners and contractors about design and construction of dynamic gravel beaches and where they are applicable.

## River to Lake Outreach

### ***Flathead Lakers Annual Meeting features North Shore Conservation.***

The Flathead Lakers held their annual meeting on August 6 in Bigfork. The program featured a panel on "Flathead Lake's North Shore: Protecting a Special Place," and included an inspiring talk by Richard Hoffmaster (read by Dorothy Ashcraft in his absence), a north shore landowner; a presentation about the North Shore vision, its history and accomplishments by Marilyn Wood, Flathead Land Trust, a presentation about plans for the new state park and Wildlife Management Area by David Landstrom, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and an appeal for community support from Constanza von der Pahlen, Flathead Lakers. For more information visit the Flathead Lakers website ([www.flatheadlakers.org](http://www.flatheadlakers.org)) where a summary of the meeting will soon be posted.

### ***North Shore Outreach Plan Update.***

The Flathead Land Trust is again contacting North Shore landowners to outline conservation opportunities and funding currently available. Partners also plan to engage community leaders in a conversation about the North Shore vision.

## Cooperation and Coordination

### ***Flathead County River Commission Update.***

At the River Commission meeting on July 28, the Commission elected two at-large members and discussed river bank erosion and potential regulatory ways to address the problem. The Commission also discussed a Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) grant for conducting outreach concerning Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) to the agricultural community and heard from the Flathead Lakers about proposed Flathead River Channel Migration Zone Maps.

## Meetings, Workshops and Publications

### ***Opportunities for wildlife conservation in the NRCS Farm Bill.***

River to Lake partners are holding a meeting with Randall Gray, the Intermountain West Joint Venture's Farm Bill Coordinator on Thursday, September 24 at Fish, Wildlife and Parks at 10:00 am to learn about new programs and opportunities in the Farm Bill. Please contact Constanza ([constanza@flatheadlakers.org](mailto:constanza@flatheadlakers.org)) if you plan to attend and haven't already confirmed.

## Capacity Building

### ***Flathead Lakers hire new part-time staff.***

Christi Buffington will join the Flathead Lakers staff to coordinate outreach and education for the Flathead Lakers. Christi will work on general education and outreach activities. She begins work on September 8.

Please send news and information that you would like to share via the River to Lake E-News the first week of each month to [criticallands@flatheadlakers.org](mailto:criticallands@flatheadlakers.org).

