**Locals Honored for Keeping Flathead Lake and River Clean**

For Immediate Release

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HELENA — Landowners, volunteers and agencies involved in the Flathead River to Lake Initiative were honored recently for their work protecting the clean water and healthy habitat upstream from Flathead Lake.

The Montana Wetland Council presented the **2011 Montana Wetland Stewardship Award**to the Flathead River to Lake Initiative last week in Helena.

“The clean water and stunning beauty of the Flathead River and Flathead Lake are economic engines of northwestern Montana,” said Ken Siderius, a longtime Flathead Valley resident involved in the initiative. “They also contribute to our unique way of life in ways that cannot be measured in dollars alone.”

The Montana Wetland Council praised the initiative for outstanding work helping private landowners protect and restore critical wetlands along the main stem of the Flathead River and the north shore of Flathead Lake. Wetlands act as natural filters to protect water from runoff, and are habitat hotspots for fish and wildlife.

The Flathead River to Lake Initiative includes local landowners, Flathead Land Trust, Flathead Lakers, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Flathead Audubon, American Bird Conservancy, Montana Land Reliance, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, Flathead Conservation District, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Its mission is to help landowners conserve and restore the farmlands, wetlands, streamside and lakeshore areas that keep our water clean and lake beautiful, provide for abundant hunting and fishing opportunities, and protect family farms.

“The Flathead Basin sets the global gold standard for wildlife and clean water,” said FWP biologist Gael Bissell. “By working together now, we can keep resources for future generations to use and enjoy as our valley grows and develops.”

Siderius and Bissell thanked the many generous landowners who have exercised their property rights and protected and restored habitat along the river and north shore. In particular, several members of the Louden family were recognized for their recent project to conserve 1,088 acres along 3.7 miles of the Flathead River, including Church Slough.

The Flathead River to Lake Initiative has worked with local property owners to protect more than 5,000 acres oflands along the river and at the lake's north shore. For more information visit [*www.flatheadrivertolake.org*](http://www.flatheadrivertolake.org)*.*

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