



Welcome to the Flathead River to Lake Newsletter.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 23 | January 2015

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## Conservation and Restoration

### Welcome new Big Sky Watershed Corps member

Megan Stockfisch joined the Flathead River to Lake Initiative at the beginning of the year to help continue and expand our Flathead River Steward program.

This is the third year the Flathead Lakers are hosting a Big Sky Watershed Corps member to help initiative partners and interested landowners restore riparian areas along the Flathead River and the north shore of Flathead Lake.

Megan will be assisting landowners and partners plan and implement restoration projects, such as riparian fencing, planting, and weeding. She will also help coordinate volunteers to help with river restoration, clean-up, and education projects. Watch for new volunteer opportunities next summer!

Megan will work closely with Aaron Clausen, who served as our Corps member last year. Aaron is staying on with the Flathead River Steward program to help transition and build the program from a two-year pilot project into a permanent program.

Megan graduated from University of California Davis with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences. Megan loves to fish, hike, camp, kayak and anything to do with plants. She is looking forward to



engaging with river landowners to learn about their concerns and help with restoration challenges.

Megan and Aaron are based at the Natural Resource Conservation Service office in Kalispell. They can be reached at 406-752-4242 extension 109. Megan can be reached by email at [riversteward15@gmail.com](mailto:riversteward15@gmail.com). Aaron can be reached at [riversteward@outlook.com](mailto:riversteward@outlook.com).

Welcome to the Flathead and the River to Lake Initiative, Megan!

### ***\$1 Million Grant Approved for Conserving Migratory Bird Habitat***

The Flathead Land Trust received final confirmation that Congress approved funding for the North American Wetland Conservation Act grant program. A \$1 million NAWCA grant for River to Lake Initiative conservation and restoration projects was previously approved contingent upon available funding. Partners are excited to launch several new projects this year that will add to the network of critical lands conservation along the Flathead River and Flathead Lake's north shore.

### ***Flathead Lake Watershed Restoration Plan approved***

The Flathead Lakers' Flathead Lake Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP) has been approved by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), opening the door for groups to apply for grants for projects that reduce nonpoint source water pollution within the Flathead Lake watershed boundaries. DEQ administers the Montana 319 grant program under Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act.

The purpose of the Flathead Lake WRP is to identify opportunities to protect and restore water quality in Flathead Lake and its watershed. The plan describes existing conditions, identifies problems, and proposes actions to reduce nonpoint source pollution.

The area covered by this WRP comprises the lands, rivers, and streams draining into Flathead Lake, including the mainstem Flathead River, from just north of Hungry Horse to the outlet of Flathead Lake at Polson. It includes the Ashley Lake and Lake Mary Ronan subwatersheds.

The Flathead Lake WRP includes a broad range of activities that help reduce nonpoint sources of pollution. It is specific to the Flathead Lakers' goals and planned activities. However, other groups interested in applying for 319 funding can qualify based on the approved WRP as long as their activities help accomplish the WRP's goals. [Click here](#) to view or download the Flathead Lake WRP.



### ***Flathead River Channel Migration Zone Study and Maps available on the Montana State Library website***

Channel Migration Zone maps and studies completed throughout Montana, including the study completed on a section of the Flathead River from Old Steel Bridge to Flathead Lake, are now available through the [Montana State Library](#). The Flathead River CMZ Study was completed in 2010 to provide data to identify potential problem areas that may affect the 24 miles of the river above its confluence with Flathead Lake. It provides potential rates of lateral river movement for the next 100 years based on analyses of historical aerial photos.

The study and map are useful for adjacent land owners, planners, river restoration and construction professionals working near the Flathead River, and others who make decisions that could be affected by river movement.

### ***Flathead Land Trust Conservation Plan receives public input***

The Flathead Land Trust hosted a public meeting last October to receive public input on their draft 5-year conservation plan. Over 30 people attended the meeting to discuss the future direction of private land conservation in the Flathead and the role of the land trust. The land trust board and staff will incorporate ideas and comments into the plan. For more information or questions contact Ryan Hunter, Flathead Land Trust Land Protection Specialist. Ryan can be reached at 752-8293 or [rhunter@bigsky.net](mailto:rhunter@bigsky.net).

### ***Farewell to Dan and Susannah Casey***

Flathead River to Lake Initiative partners gathered to thank and recognize the contributions of our partners, Dan and Susannah Casey, in December before they moved to Billings. Dan accepted a new position with Ducks Unlimited and the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture.

Dan and Susannah made significant contributions to conservation in the Flathead over many years. Dan's extensive knowledge about birds and their habitat needs helped set goals for bird conservation in the region, secure significant funding to protect and restore important bird habitat, and increase local appreciation for birds and habitat. Susannah's mapping skills and dedication to conservation clearly conveyed important information to partners, funders, landowners, and the public, resulting in successful conservation projects.

Thank you and best wishes, Dan and Susannah! We will miss you.



## **Education & Outreach**

### ***Flathead Audubon hires new Conservation Educator***

Flathead Audubon recently hired Patti Mason as its new Conservation Educator. Patti will develop and conduct conservation education programs for people of all ages. She brings to the position an extensive background in building relationships, habitat restoration, natural resources conservation, and education and outreach. Patti can be reached at 270-0831 or [auduboneducator@gmail.com](mailto:auduboneducator@gmail.com).

## **Events**

### **Third Monday of the month**

#### ***Flathead River Commission monthly meetings***

The Flathead River Commission meets the third Monday of every month from 7 to 9 pm at Flathead County's Earl Bennett Building in Room A&B in Kalispell. Meetings are open to the public. For more information contact Rusby Seabaugh at [rusbyseabaugh@gmail.com](mailto:rusbyseabaugh@gmail.com).

### **March 18**

#### ***Flathead River to Lake Initiative quarterly meeting***

The next Flathead River to Lake Initiative quarterly meeting will be held Wednesday, March 18 from 9:00 am to noon at MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks in Kalispell. For more information contact Constanza von der Pahlen, Flathead Lakers Critical Lands Program Director, at 883-1341 or [criticallands@flatheadlakers.org](mailto:criticallands@flatheadlakers.org).