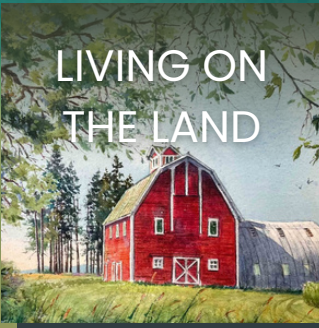




LIVING IN FLATHEAD

LIVING IN THE FLATHEAD

LIVING ON
THE LAND



LIVING BY
WATER



LIVING WITH
WILDLIFE



LIVING
WITH FIRE



A NEIGHBOR'S GUIDE TO
LIVING RESPONSIBLY IN THE FLATHEAD

WWW.LIVINGINFLATHEAD.ORG

Photo by Gravity Shots

Living on the Land



Living in rural Montana is a unique pleasure and experience. Our actions on the land have a rippling effect.

Learn simple practices you can do to live in harmony with your neighbors and Montana's spectacular lands.



Native Plants and Noxious Weeds

Healthy native plant communities are part of the breathtaking experience of living in the Flathead or visiting Glacier National Park. They are also essential to our unique ecosystem... and so are you!

[Learn why Montana native plant communities are so integral and special.](#)



Hobby Farming and Pasture Management

Often people move to the Flathead to "live the Montana Dream," owning horses, chickens, or cattle. However, the realities may find landowners with a dried-up lot full of weeds and hungry animals.

[Discover sustainable farming practices to use around your homestead.](#)



Flathead Forests Management

Private landowners play a crucial role as stewards of Montana's forests. Understanding the health of your forest and adopting appropriate management practices is essential to sustain healthy and vibrant ecosystems.

[Learn more about local programs and resources to sustain healthy forests.](#)



Protecting our Special Landscapes

Everyone living in the Flathead Valley has an appreciation for our unparalleled land, water, wildlife, and their beauty. Join our community that believes in protecting our special landscapes.

[Learn about preserving our natural beauty and heritage of this landscape.](#)

Explore the Flathead Valley

www.livinginflathead.org/living-on-the-land

Whether you're new to the area or a long-time landowner, this Guide offers simple, local guidance for caring for your land and water.



Read on for what you can do to protect our land.

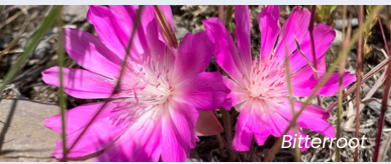
Montana Native Plants



By landscaping with native plants around your home or business, you can support the Flathead's beautiful plant diversity and extend a helping hand to local birds, pollinators, and wildlife.

Healthy native plant communities are part of the breathtaking experience of living in the Flathead and visiting Glacier. They are also essential to us and our local ecosystem, providing us with clean air and water, and animals with critical habitat and food.

Native plants and animals have evolved together over thousands of years and thrive in our local soils and climate. Local pollinators include native bees, bumble and solitary bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, birds, and flies. They pollinate over 40 agricultural crops along with flowering native plants. Without them, our local crops, native wildflowers, birds, and elk that feed on them could not survive.



Bitterroot



Indian paintbrush



Western trillium

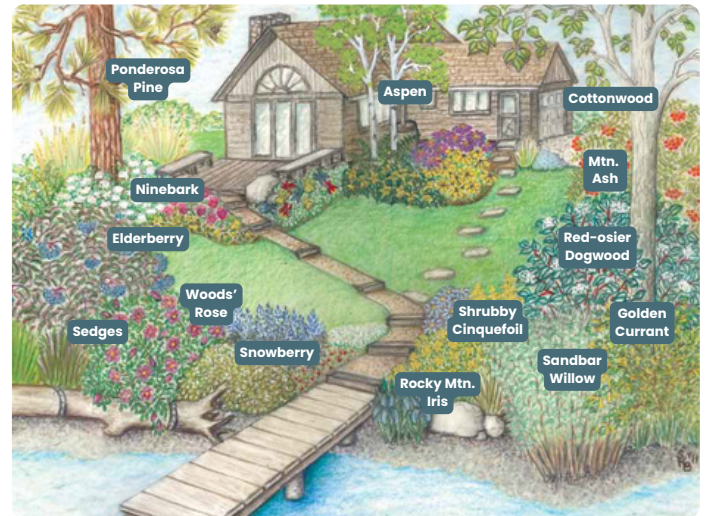


Lady's-slipper

Essential Tips to Get You Started Landscaping with Native Plants

1. IDENTIFY WHICH SPECIFIC HABITAT TYPE.
For example, riparian, grassland, forest. This step helps determine which native plants will flourish naturally on your land. They also offer food and shelter for native birds and wildlife.

2. SELECT NATIVE PLANTS.
Native plants are adapted to local soil and climate, require less maintenance, and support Flathead's unique birds, pollinators, and wildlife.



Common Montana Native Plants, Illustration by Sue Ball

Waterfront Landscapes

3. AVOID REMOVING OR DISTURBING EXISTING NATIVE HABITAT.

If it becomes necessary, minimize any disturbance and promptly reseed disturbed areas with native seeds to keep weeds out.

4. WATER AND WEED YOUR NATIVE PLANTS.

Water and weed your native plants until they are well-established. While it may take several years for them to thrive, once established, native plants typically require less watering and do not need fertilizers.

5. CREATE YOUR OWN NATIVE POLLINATOR GARDEN.

Create your own native pollinator garden to attract and support native butterflies, bees, and birds. Contact your local Conservation District for starter seed packages and assistance.

6. REFRAIN FROM USING PESTICIDES.

Instead, watch and enjoy the insects and birds that flock to your native plants, fostering a harmonious ecosystem.

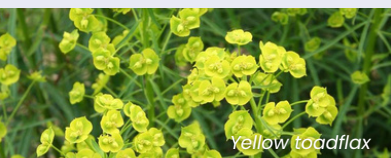
Noxious Weeds in Montana



By preventing and managing noxious weeds on your property, you help protect Montana's native ecosystems, support wildlife habitat, and reduce wildfire risk across the landscape.

Noxious weeds have a destructive impact on Montana's landscape by displacing native plant species. They reduce forage availability and degrade habitat for wildlife and livestock. They can also strain our agricultural economy and limit recreational access. Some weeds, like cheatgrass, dry up by mid to late summer and increase the risk of wildfires.

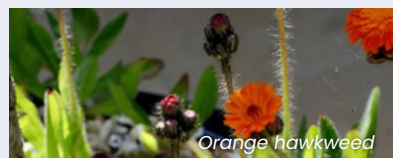
Managing noxious weeds is essential to protecting the health, beauty, and function of the Flathead's forests, grasslands, and waterways. In Montana, landowners are not only stewards of the land – they are also legally responsible for managing noxious weeds on their property. Learn to identify, control, and prevent the spread of invasive plants on your property to support Montana's beautiful native landscape and wildlife.



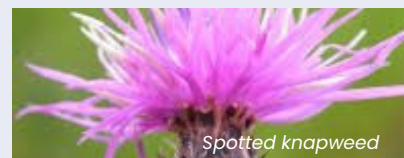
Yellow toadflax



Viper's Bugloss



Orange hawkweed



Spotted knapweed

Combating Noxious Weeds and Other Invasive Species

1

HOW DO I IDENTIFY EXOTIC WEEDS AND KEEP THEM OFF MY PROPERTY?

Get to know local weeds at mtweed.org or through MSU Extension. For help identifying plants, contact your County Weed District or send a sample to MSU's Schutter Lab.

2

HOW DO I KEEP WEEDS FROM ESTABLISHING?

Weeds thrive in disturbed areas. Reseed with natives and work with neighbors to manage them. Clean gear, pets, and vehicles to avoid spreading seeds.

3

HOW DO I CONTROL NOXIOUS WEEDS?

Weeds can be managed by pulling, mowing, grazing, or careful herbicide use. Overuse of chemicals can harm pollinators and native plants.

Most landowners can manage weeds on their own or with a contractor. For help, contact your county weed district or Extension office.

4

CAN I HAVE BEAUTIFUL LAWNS AND GARDENS WITHOUT USING HERBICIDES?

Most weeds can be managed without herbicides. Organic yards support pollinators, use less water, and reduce health risks for people and pets.

5

CAN I ENCOURAGE PLANT DIVERSITY IN MY PASTURE?

If you graze livestock on your land, you can plant perennial grasses that are good for forage, increase plant diversity, are beneficial to soil organisms and insects, and may reduce your water consumption.

6

HOW DO INVASIVE SPECIES IMPACT LAKES AND RIVERS?

Aquatic invasive species harm native ecosystems, clog waterways, and threaten recreation, health, and tourism.





People are drawn to the Flathead by the promise of the “Montana Dream”—owning horses, chickens, or cattle beneath the big sky. But that dream can quickly fade into parched ground, stubborn weeds, and hungry animals. With a few simple practices, your land can stay healthy and resilient. Learn to manage soil fertility, control weeds, and rotate grazing to keep your farm productive for years to come.

Simple steps today can lead to a thriving, productive farm tomorrow.



Build Healthy Soil For Vibrant Crops

Healthy soils are the foundation to thriving crops and gardens. Soils with a healthy layer of organic matter and a diversity of grasses are better at storing nutrients and water, resisting erosion, and supporting healthy crops. They also need less fertilizer and water.

Consider these tips to help you transition to healthy soil management practices:

→ EMBRACE COVER CROPS AND MULCHING

Reduce soil erosion, build organic matter and nutrients, and improve the soil’s water retention through increased root density.

→ HARNESS GRAZING ANIMALS’ BENEFITS.

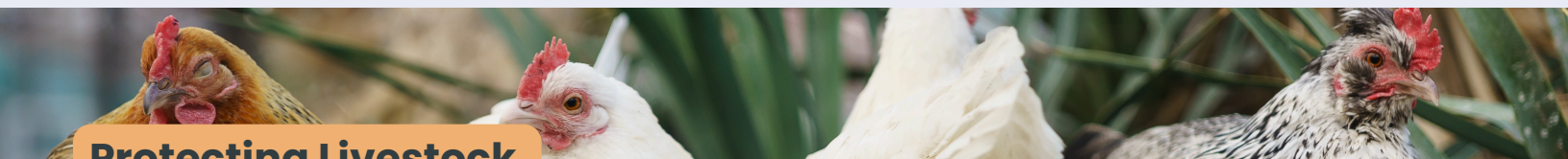
Grazing animals can improve soil health by enriching it with natural fertilizers and breaking up dead plant material with their hooves.

→ MINIMIZE TILLAGE AND PESTICIDES

To protect beneficial soil organisms, prevent soil exposure, and preserve vital nutrients.

→ MAXIMIZE DIVERSITY

By planting a variety of native perennial and annual plants. Diverse plant communities create a healthier pasture, grassland, and backyard.



Protecting Livestock

Whether you own a farm, a ranch, or simply raise livestock, make sure you are safeguarding your animals and property.

Keep all livestock feed inside secure buildings, including firm doors and windows to reduce the risk of attracting bears and other wildlife to your property.

Install an electric fence around attractants, including your chicken coop, calving grounds, beehives, and compost. These are proven to be effective in keeping bears away.

Use bear-resistant garbage containers to prevent attracting bears to your property in search of food scraps. Keeping bears at bay protects both your livestock and the bears themselves.



Sustainable Grazing Systems for Healthier Grass

How many animals should I graze on a field?

In the Flathead region, where rainfall is limited, Montana State University's range specialist recommends a grazing density of 1 (one) Animal Unit per 10 acres. An Animal Unit is equivalent to a 1,000 lbs. cow-calf pair. Keep in mind that one horse = 1.5 Animal Units, so you'll need about 15 acres per horse.

It's worth noting that this is different from what the Flathead zoning laws allow, which is 10 horses per 5 acres. Overgrazing by too many horses can quickly exhaust your pasture.

How long should a field be grazed?

In the spring, pasture grass must be allowed to grow a height of 10 inches before livestock are put on it. Animals should be removed when grass is 3" short, where most carbohydrates are stored in grasses. Grasses need this energy to regrow and survive winter. If animals are allowed to graze this tasty portion (and they will if allowed), the plant will die leaving the pasture open to weed invasion.

Consider using a rotational grazing system.

Implementing a rotational grazing system is beneficial for pasture health. Dividing the pasture into several lots, including a dry lot with shade and clean water, allows your pasture to rest. This rotational grazing approach promotes healthy grasses and soil.

Cattle Grazing Management Systems

- Continuous Grazing**
Unlimited access to a single pasture
 - Minimal overhead cost
 - Less management
 - Lower stocking rate and pasture productivity
 - More forage loss from trampling
 - Lower forage yield and quality
 - Uneven manure distribution
 - Uneven pasture use
 - Weed growth
- Simple Rotational Grazing**
Moving cattle between a few pastures
 - 20% increase in forage production and pasture condition compared to continuous grazing
 - Allows for pasture rest and regrowth
 - Better manure distribution
 - Higher fence and water system costs
 - Lower forage production and pasture use than intensive rotational grazing
- Intensive Rotational Grazing**
Moving cattle between many pastures
 - 30-50% increase in forage production and use per acre compared to continuous grazing
 - Better weed and brush control
 - Reduces the need for harvested forages
 - Stocking rates may be increased
 - More even manure distribution
 - Requires more management
 - Requires close monitoring of forage supply
 - Higher initial cost for fence and water system

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

Time to Rest Pastures

After June 21, our cool season pasture grasses lose their roots and stop growing, leaving what is known as the 'summer slump'. After this, grasses need to recover and not be under pressure by livestock grazing.

Land Stewardship: Pasture Management Webinar

www.livinginflathead.org/living-on-the-land



Local Food and Flathead Farmers



Support Local Food and Farms

The Flathead Valley is dotted with some of the most productive farm soils nationwide. Rich soils in the Creston area have been referred to as “black gold.” Rapid growth and housing development on this beautiful landscape can also mean the loss of important farms, forests, and local food security.

By supporting locally-produced foods and beverages and local farms, we can help sustain the local farming economy, food security, and a vibrant diverse community.



Local Food

When you buy food from local farmers, you not only eat delicious fresh food, but also support our friends, neighbors, and the local economy. It also helps sustain our rich farmland and beautiful open spaces.

Learn about local farms and ranches, farmers’ markets, community gardens, craft beverages, and specialty products (cheese, honey, bread, and more). Visit Abundant Montana: abundantmontana.com

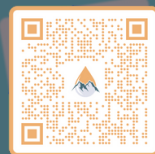
Purchase Wild-Caught Fish from Flathead Lake and support native trout conservation. Visit Native Fish Keepers. nativefishkeepers.org

Living with Farmers and Ranchers

Agricultural operations in Flathead County produce crops including hay, wheat, canola, barley, and peas in addition to fruits and vegetables. There are also livestock operations in the county with cattle, chickens, pigs, sheep, goats, and turkeys.

- ➔ **Farming and ranching is a year-round, night and day** business that may be loud, smelly, and dusty. Learn about your neighbor’s activities, what to expect, and how to be a good neighbor.
- ➔ **One of the quickest ways to antagonize your neighbors** is to let your dog chase livestock. Regardless if the livestock are on a ranch or a hobby farm, they are considered an important investment and are often regarded as part of the family.
- ➔ **Establish understandings and agreements** about shared property and management responsibilities, including access and maintenance of fences, roads, streams and ditches, weeds, forest thinning for wildfire prevention, and more.

Learn more about local food, farmers, programs for new and expanding farmers, farmland conservation, and food security



www.livinginflathead.org/local-food-farmers

Waste and Composting

Find out where you can recycle, dispose of toxic waste, compost yard waste and food scraps.



LEARN MORE

www.livinginflathead.org/waste-composting



Where Recreation, Livelihood, and Stewardship Meet

Healthy Forests & Wildfires

Historically, Flathead's forests depended on low-intensity wildfires that burned every 10 to 50 years to stay healthy and productive. Native tribes used carefully prescribed fire to enhance forage for game, and revitalize berry and camas fields.

Suppressing wildfires over the last century, coupled with recent mild winters and hotter, drier summers, has created crowded, dry, unhealthy forests. Consequently, these forests have become more susceptible to large and destructive wildfires. Growing development in wildfire-prone areas increases both the cost of firefighting and the wildfire risk to lives and property.

Learn what the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes are doing to improve forest health and build resilient forests, including restoring Whitebark pine forests.

[CSKT Climate Change Strategic Plan: Forestry](#)

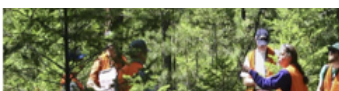
About 73% of our Flathead Watershed is forested.

Our Flathead forests are a vital source of clean water and wildlife habitat. They are also popular with locals and visitors alike for their incredible scenery and year-round activities, such as hiking, birding, hunting, fishing, camping, skiing, and more. These activities support our quality of life, as well as a strong tourism economy – with one fifth of jobs tied to tourism-related industries. The forests also support various harvesting activities, some for leisure and others more lucrative, including timber harvesting, huckleberry and mushroom picking, and skiing operations and resorts.

Sustainable Forest Management in Flathead

Private landowners play a crucial role as stewards of Montana's forests, which offer a myriad of opportunities, from timber harvesting to recreational activities like huckleberry and mushroom picking and hunting agreements with the state. They are also home to birds and wildlife, sustain pristine waters, and support local economies and our way of life. As responsible landowners, adopting appropriate management practices is essential to sustain diverse healthy forests. Learn what you can do to restore forest health and reduce wildfire risk to your home and surroundings.

Resources for forest landowners



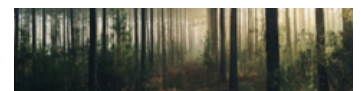
[UM Forestry Extension Forest Stewardship Planning Workshop](#)



[Forestry Laws & Best Management Practices](#)



[Reduce Wildfire Risk](#)



[Montana West Economic Development Forestry Assistance](#)



Learn more at www.livinginflathead.org/flathead-forests-management



CSKT film about Whitebark Pine restoration: bit.ly/WhitebarkRestoration

Conserve Our Special Landscapes



The Flathead Valley is growing and changing, but if there is one common value that unites our community, it is an appreciation for our unparalleled land, clean water, fresh air, abundant wildlife, and natural beauty.

Growth pressures and development can lead to the loss of scenic views, degraded water quality, loss of access, and loss of habitat. But, landowners can help protect their land forever.



Protect What Matters Most with a Conservation Easement

Support wildlife, clean water, and wide-open spaces—now and into the future



Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements that allow landowners to protect the conservation values of their property while continuing to own and manage it. These agreements are tailored to each property and landowner's goals, and they ensure that important natural features—like forests, wetlands, farmland, wildlife habitat, and open space—are protected from future development or degradation.

Choosing a conservation easement means committing to the long-term care of your land. It's a way to preserve what makes your property special while contributing to the broader health and beauty of the Flathead landscape. Many landowners use conservation easements to protect the places they love and pass on a lasting legacy to future generations.

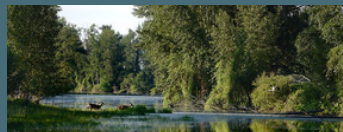
Whether you want to support clean water, healthy wildlife populations, agricultural traditions, or scenic views, conservation easements offer a meaningful path to lasting stewardship.



Flathead Land Trust

The Flathead Land Trust is dedicated to protecting northwest Montana's spectacular land and water legacy through community-based conservation.

flatheadlandtrust.org



Montana Land Reliance

The Montana Land Reliance partners with Montana's landowners to permanently protect agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and open space.

mtlandreliance.org



Habitat Montana Program

The Habitat Montana is the state's program to protect critical wildlife habitat, provide public access and helps landowners protect their private lands.

fwp.mt.gov/conservation



Flathead River to Lake Initiative

R2L partners work with landowners to conserve and restore our Flathead River and Lake natural heritage. Learn about collaborative local conservation successes.

flatheadrivertolake.org

Keeping Our Dark, Starry Skies



Did you know? The darker your property, the less light you need to see — a little light goes a long way.

By making smart decisions about our outdoor lighting, we can retain Montana's rural heritage by keeping out the blight of unnecessary light. Lighting that is "night sky friendly" is also good for your neighbors, good for the planet, and good for your wallet as it will use less electricity.

You can look forward to the Flathead's dark night skies scattered thick with stars for generations. If we turn off the outdoor lighting, we can see stars, northern lights, comets, and the beautiful nightscape. Let's not take our starry skies for granted.



What is Light Pollution— and Why Does It Matter?

Light pollution is artificial light that can cause unintended ill effects. Bright lights (like LEDs) and light clutter create blinding glare, cause our pupils to constrict, and reduce our ability to see at night.

Improperly shielded fixtures dump nuisance light **trespass** onto nearby private properties and can create a dome of **skyglow** over towns and cities. These can cause serious health issues, disorient birds during migration, and blind us to the stars above.

"Montana is blessed with patches of still-dark, rural night skies. If light pollution would stop increasing, Montana would be in better shape than most states. But Flathead's population and infrastructure has grown fast, and the need for outdoor lighting is increasing.

**"In the U.S.,
light pollution
is increasing at
6% per year."**

Dark Sky International |
Montana members

Light to Protect the Night

Five principles for responsible outdoor lighting

- All light should have a clear purpose
- Light should be directed only to where needed

Light should be no brighter than necessary

Light should be used only when it is useful

Use warmer color lights where possible

Visit a Dark Sky Place livinginflathead.org/starry-skies

Energy Independence



Storms and power outages are a reality of living in Northwest Montana. Having a backup plan in place in case of a prolonged power outage should also be a reality if you live here. It is important to prepare and stay safe.

Check Flathead Electric Cooperative webpage for information on how to prepare and plan for outages.

What to do if your power is out:



Check your fuses or breakers, the breaker below your meter, and if your neighbors have electricity. Check Flathead Cooperative Outage Map, or call them at **(406) 751-4449**.

Call **911** if you see downed power lines or have any other emergency.

Plan for Outage:

1 Keep extra water in your pantry and extra provisions for your animals, alternative provisions if you rely on electricity for medical purposes, and flashlights and batteries.

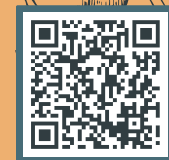
3 Consider having a backup heat source.

2 Have a plan to keep pipes from freezing during winter outages and food from spoiling during summer outages.

4 Consider removing trees that could fall and disrupt power lines during a storm.

Stay Safe During an Outage:

- Only use generators outdoors and away from windows and never use a gas stove to heat your home.
- Never touch or drive over a downed power line, or touch anything the line may be touching. Stay at least 10 or more feet away, call the power company, and, if the line is sparking, call 911.
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer closed up to 24 hrs. If the outage last longer than that, arrange to store your food at another location. Have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or using power-dependent medical devices. Unplug all other appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges.



If safe, go to an alternate location for heat or cooling.

Check on your neighbors.

Climate and Health



Stay safe
and healthy.

Record-breaking heat waves and intense fire seasons are becoming more frequent in the Flathead.

Extreme Heat

Increased summer temperatures and periods of extreme heat – with many days over 90 degrees – not only worsen heat-related health problems such as dehydration, heatstroke, and respiratory and cardiopulmonary illnesses, but also contribute to longer growing seasons and higher pollen levels, which can aggravate allergies and asthma. Prepare and plan for safety by checking for heat warnings, extreme heat guidelines, and having a plan for cooling down during extremely hot days.

Wildfire Smoke and Air Quality

Wildfires reduce air quality and result in increased emergency room visits due to asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cardiovascular conditions, including stroke, heart attack, and heart failure.

Learn how to protect yourself and your family during smoke events.

Drought and Floods

Drought and floods can endanger lives, contaminate water supplies, impact our health, and stress our local agriculture.

Learn more about your flood risk, how drought is affecting your neighborhood, and how to prepare for an emergency.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
AND OTHER CONCERNS CONTACT:**

Flathead County Sheriff Department

920 South Main Street, Suite 100, Kalispell,
(406) 758-5585

Resources to help with extreme heat



- Heat National Forecast Maps
- MTHPHC's [Health Toolkit](http://www.montanahphc.org/healthtoolkit.html) www.montanahphc.org/healthtoolkit.html for information and resources to help you and your pets stay safe in extreme summer heat.

Resources to help with wildfire smoke and air quality



- Today's Air Quality: <https://fire.airnow.gov>
- Wildfire Smoke & Health Impacts: www.montanawildfiresmoke.org/health-risks.html
- Indoor Air Quality: www.montanawildfiresmoke.org/clean-indoor-air1.html

Resources to help with drought and floods



- Flooding Inundation Map: <https://fim.wim.usgs.gov/fim>
- Drought and Health: <https://www.montanahphc.org/drought.html>
- Flathead County Emergency Division: <https://flathead.mt.gov/departme nt-directory/oes/emergency-management>

Flathead County Health Department

1035 1st Avenue West, Kalispell,
(406) 751-8101

Living on the Land



Access these resources and more at

Living on the Land

www.livinginflathead.org/living-on-the-land

Safe and Responsible Recreation

www.livinginflathead.org/safe-responsible-recreation

Local Food and Farmers

www.livinginflathead.org/local-food-farmers

Energy Conservation and Safety

www.livinginflathead.org/energy-conservation-safety

Waste and Composting

www.livinginflathead.org/waste-composting

Climate and Health

www.livinginflathead.org/health-climate

Keeping Our Starry Skies

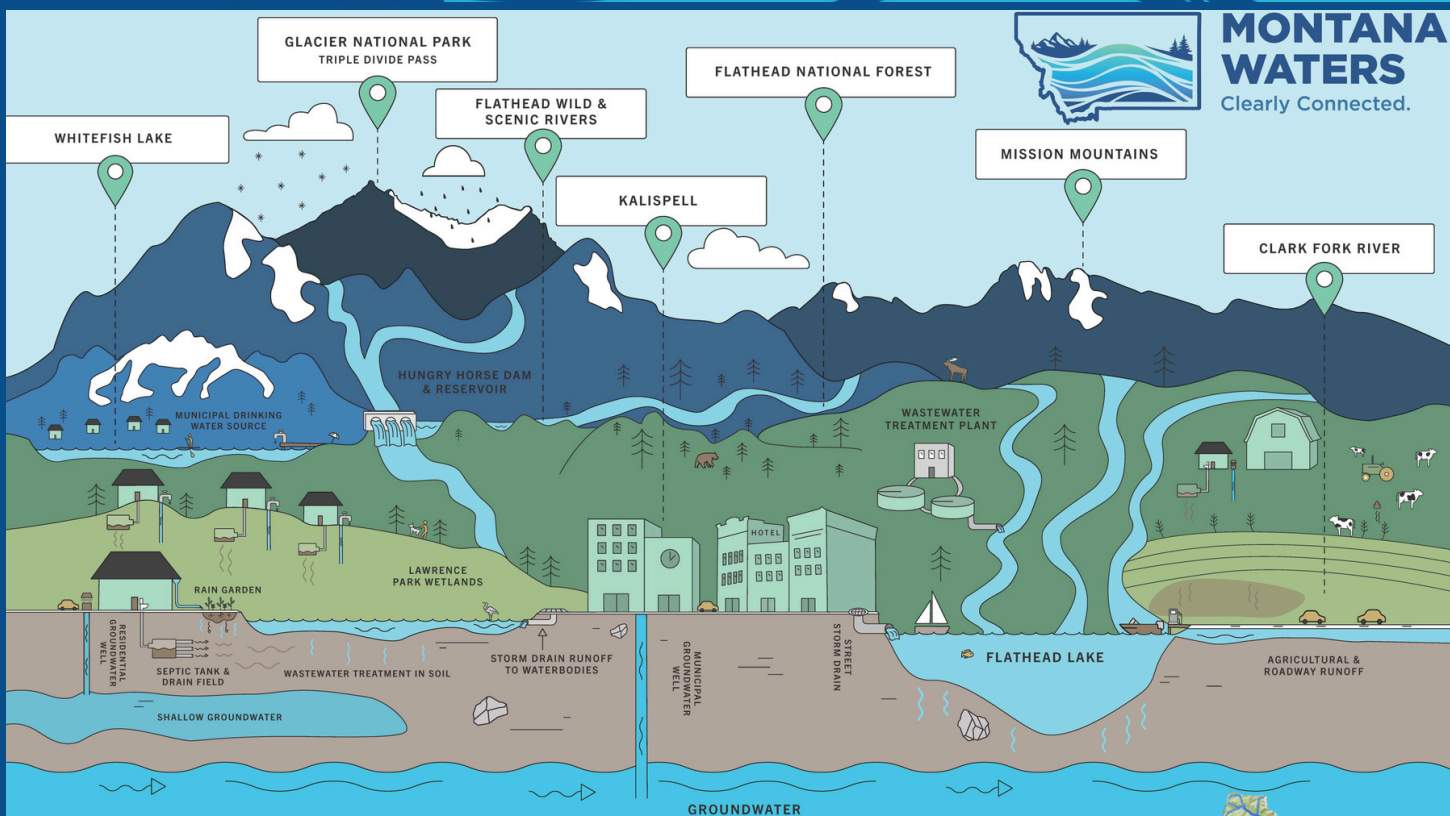
www.livinginflathead.org/starry-skies



LIVING ON THE LAND HANDOUT CONTRIBUTORS



Living by Water



The Flathead Watershed

We all live in and impact a watershed

Clean water is one of our most valued – and most threatened – natural resources. Our lakes, rivers, and streams provide recreation, drinking water, scenic value, and habitat for fish and other wildlife. Despite these critical roles, few fully understand how their daily activities can impact the health of our freshwater.

Even if you live miles from a lake, your actions can directly affect water quality.

As a resident of northwest Montana, you live within the Flathead Watershed. This means that all the water around you eventually drains into Flathead Lake and the Clark Fork River, before continuing on to the Columbia River and Pacific Ocean.

The waters of the Flathead, Stillwater, Whitefish, and Swan rivers all join in Flathead Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River. Altogether, the Flathead Watershed drains six million acres of scenic landscapes.

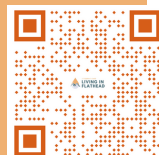


Everyone can help protect our precious clean water.

Living here, it is important to understand that our actions can pollute streams, rivers, lakes, and groundwater.

Whether you are a new resident, a long-time landowner, or a visitor, this Guide is an introduction to responsible land and water stewardship.

Read on for what you can do to protect our clean water.



Explore the Flathead Watershed

www.livinginflathead.org/living-by-water

CLEAN. DRAIN. DRY.

HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES



Flathead Lake and Watershed are at risk for an accidental introduction of aquatic invasive species. Our region's scenic beauty is a magnet for visitors from out of state.



QUAGGA MUSSELS ON ABS PIPE FROM LAKE MEAD

Invasive mussels are one of the most damaging aquatic organisms to invade the US. Early detection of invasive mussels is paramount to preventing an infestation. Once mussels are established, it is impossible to get rid of them.

Zebra and quagga mussels are voracious filter feeders, removing substantial amounts of phytoplankton from the base of the food web.

As a result, we could see dramatic changes in the Flathead Watershed ecosystem, including crashing fish populations, losing native flora and fauna, declining water quality, and increasing frequency of toxic algal blooms.

Keep aquatic hitchhikers, like the zebra mussel, out of Flathead waters by cleaning your boat and gear, and stopping at all watercraft inspection stations.

FIND AN INSPECTION STATION

fwp.mt.gov/ais  406.444.2440



CLEAN off visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud from all equipment before leaving water access.

- Rinse equipment and boat hulls (with high pressure, hot water when possible)
- Rinse interior compartments of boats with low pressure, hot water (120°F)
- Flush motor with hot water (120°F) for 2 minutes (or according to owner's manual).

DRAIN motor, bilge, livewell, and other water-containing devices before leaving water access.

DRY everything for at least five days OR wipe with a towel before reuse.

LANDSCAPE

FOR CLEAN WATER



Check out these strategies to help keep nutrients in the soil and out of storm drains, streams, and lakes. Beautiful buffer gardens help reduce flooding, replenish our aquifers, and protect aquatic life.

4. COMPOST OR MULCH YOUR YARD WASTE.

Keep leaves and grass off storm drains, sidewalks, streets, and streams. Clogged storm drains can flood the streets and harm aquatic life.



1. AVOID MOWING ALONG THE WATER'S EDGE.

Avoid mowing along the water's edge to prevent loss of essential root mass and maintain a 15 to 50 foot buffer of native plants.



2. BUILD ON UPLAND AREAS.

Build on upland areas away from the water's edge and the outer edge of river bends where erosion is more likely.

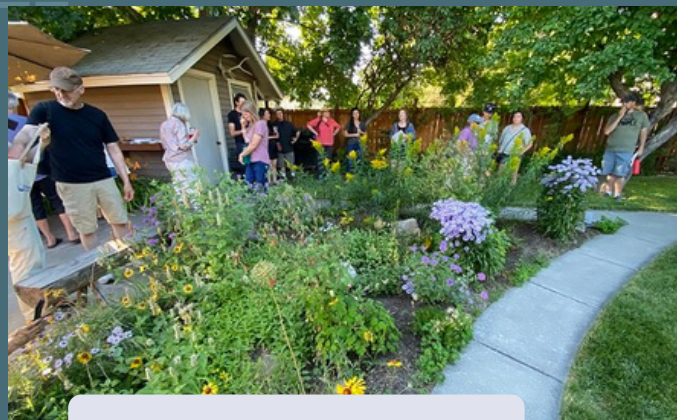


3. COVER EXPOSED SOIL.

Cover exposed soil with wood chips or mulch to reduce erosion and protect the soil.

5. RETAIN OR PLANT BEAUTIFUL LAKESHORE AND RIPARIAN BUFFER GARDENS.

Use a diversity of native plants, including trees, shrubs, and grasses, instead of lawns – these need less water, and once established, and have deep roots which help retain water in the soil, filter pollution, and prevent erosion. To maintain your view, plant tall, deep-rooting species along the sides of your view and shorter plants in the middle.



BUILD A RAIN GARDEN.

6. USE NATURAL YARD CARE SOLUTIONS & LIMIT FERTILIZERS.

Leave grass 3-4 inches tall so less water and fertilizer are needed. A mulch mower provides nutrients to lawns and retains more water.

Limit fertilizers and do not fertilize within 20 feet of water. Consider using organic fertilizers which are safer for people, pets, and wildlife.



7. Rain gardens capture, filter, and absorb runoff from roofs and pavement. They also reduce erosion and flooding while providing habitat for birds and insects and enhancing beauty.

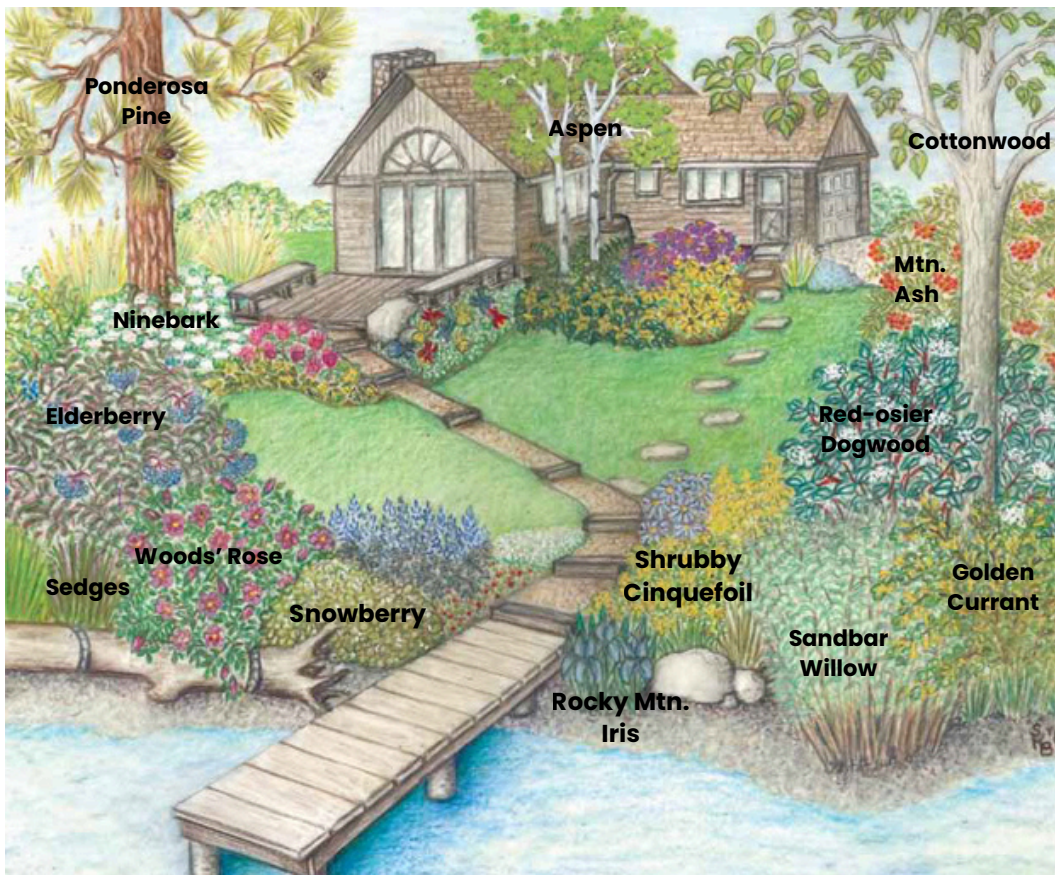
8. BE WATER WISE. Reduce how much water you use in the garden. Sprinkle at dawn and dusk every other day, use soaker hoses, versus sprinklers, and don't water while it's raining.

WATERFRONT LANDSCAPES

Keep the view plus a whole lot more



Save time and money, and enjoy clean water and scenic beauty by adding native plant landscapes to your waterfront property.



- Retain existing native plants along shore
- Plant native vegetation that includes trees, shrubs, forbs, and ground cover
- Select native plants that match your site conditions
- Plant taller trees and shrubs at edge of the property; transition to shorter plants where you want to focus your view
- Keep turf grass areas small and near house
- Mulch, water, and weed until plants are well established



Why Native Landscapes Add Value To Your Waterfront Property:

- Protect your property from erosion
- Protect privacy and enhance scenic beauty
- Keep sediment and pollutants out of water
- Protect and recharge groundwater

Why Native Species are Best:

- Their deep root systems help stabilize shorelines and river banks
- Use less water once established
- Provide food and shelter for wildlife
- Are low maintenance once established
- Resist fire and deer damage

If you are planning to work in or near a stream, you must get a 310 permit first.

It's the Law. Contact your local Conservation District for information and assistance.

When working in or near a lake, county, tribal, or state permits may be required.



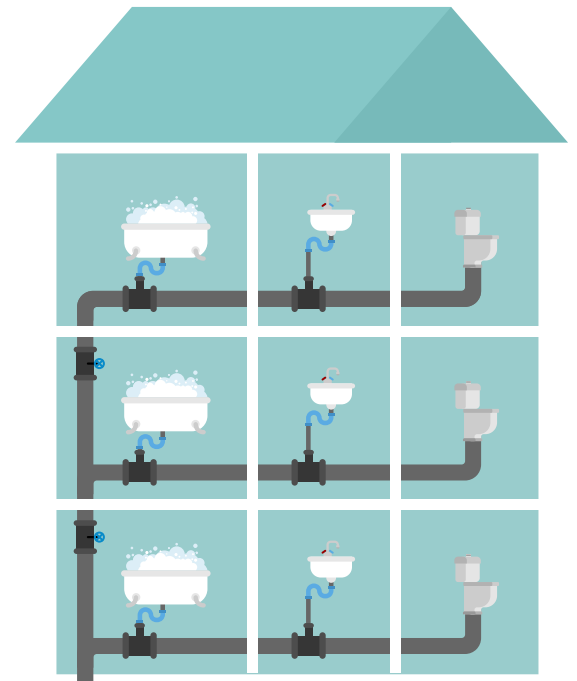
Maintain Your Septic System

You can protect Montana's clean, clear, cold and connected waters

Septic systems hold, treat, and dispose of household wastewater. Wastewater contains bacteria, viruses, household chemicals, and nutrients which can cause health problems and pollute groundwater and surface water.

Prevent contamination of our waters:

- Pump and inspect your septic system every 3 to 5 years. It can help your system run longer, save money, and protect water quality.
- Aging septic systems must be replaced every 20-25 years (depending on use, size, and condition). Contact your County Environmental Health Department for more information.



"Watch what you toss down the drain! toilet, or storm drain—stuff like oil, paints, pesticides, household chemicals, meds, hygiene products, diapers, wipes (even the 'flushable' ones), and coffee grounds can mess up the microbes that septic systems need to work."

Be a Responsible Septic System Owner



Inspect your septic system every 3 to 5 years.

Be very selective about what goes down the drain.

Clean with biodegradable cleaning products.

Limit or don't use a sink garbage disposal.

Avoid compacting soil over the drainfield.



Visit www.WasteNotProject.org for ways to dispose of hazardous waste in the Flathead.

For more information contact your County Environmental Health Department

Visit www.epa.gov/septic





Photo by Gravity Shots

Stop Pollution at its Source

What is Nonpoint Source Pollution?

Pollution that originates from numerous sources across the landscape is known as nonpoint source pollution. It can end up in rivers, lakes, and groundwater when it rains or snow melts.

What you can do

A few simple steps you can do to reduce nonpoint source pollution and your impact on the Flathead Watershed:

Apply fertilizers and pesticides sparingly, sweep up any excess from driveways and sidewalks

Collect and dispose of pet waste in the trash.

Dispose of oil and household chemicals properly, never dump anything in a storm drain.

Use a commercial car wash and maintain your car.



NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION SOURCES INCLUDE:

- Excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from residential and agricultural areas.
- Oil, grease, antifreeze and other toxic chemicals from urban runoff.
- Sediment from eroding stream banks and improperly maintained construction sites, croplands and forest lands.
- Failing or aging septic systems, pet waste, yard waste and trash.

LEARN MORE
www.livinginflathead.org

Consider anything that can be washed down the drain and end in our rivers, lakes, or groundwater.





IS OUR WATER QUALITY AT RISK?

While the Flathead Watershed has some of the cleanest waters in the country, many of our lakes and rivers are experiencing declining water quality. Algae blooms can be caused by underperforming septic systems, fertilizers from lawns and farms, polluted stormwater runoff from roofs and streets, warmer water temperatures, and more. These can be toxic to humans, pets, and wildlife.

How we use water, recreate, treat the land, and what we leave on the landscape affects water quality.

It's everyone's responsibility to understand how we can protect our clean water.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR DRINKING WATER COMES FROM? AND, IS IT CLEAN?

Drinking water in the Flathead Watershed comes from public and private groundwater wells and surface waters. For example, the City of Whitefish utilizes surface water from Haskill Basin and Whitefish Lake, while the City of Kalispell sources water from numerous deep wells.

Public drinking water systems are regularly monitored and more strictly regulated than bottled water. If you are on a private well, it is your responsibility to protect and test the water to ensure it is clean. The aquifer you tap into is shared with your neighbors.

WHO OWNS THE WATER?

In Montana, all waters are owned by the state. A water right allows the permit holder, in a specific location, to use a certain amount of water in a prescribed manner.

If a water right is attached to your land purchase, an ownership update must be registered with the Department of Natural Resources, Water Rights Bureau. Search, apply for, or update a water right at [DNRC Water Rights](#).

Montana has 18 negotiated Water Rights Compacts. These are water rights held by Indigenous American Reservations, National Parks, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Learn more about the history and current status of reserved water rights at [Montana Water Right Compacts](#).



WATER RESOURCES

MONTANA WATERS



Access these resources and more on our website

www.livinginflathead.org/living-by-water

Did you know?

Montanans highly value and rely on the quality of our natural resources. There are protections in place that help prevent pollution and safeguard water quality.

If you work near water, it's important to be aware of the following regulations and Best Management Practices to ensure clean water.

- A Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems
- Recycling and Hazardous Waste Disposal
- Car Washing
- Lawn & Garden Care, Rain Gardens
- Pet Waste
- Voices of Our Lakes
- Montana Lake Book
- Flathead Lake Swim Guide
- Northwest Montana Lakes Network
- Monitoring Montana Waters
- Lake, Stream, and other Permits

Learn about Safe and Responsible Recreation



www.livinginflathead.org/safe-responsible-recreation

PERMITS

Conservation Districts Stream Permits

Flathead (406) 751-8130

Lake County (406) 747-0895

Planning & Zoning Departments

Floodplain and shoreline permits

Flathead County (406) 751-8200

Lake County (406) 883-7235

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Shoreline Protection Program

CSKT (406) 675-2700

csktnrd.org/ep/shoreline-protection

DNRC Water Rights - Flathead & Lake Co.

Kalispell Regional Office (406) 752-2288

dnrc.mt.gov/licenses-and-permits

Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality

Water and other permits

(406) 444-2544

deq.mt.gov/Permitting

LIVING BY WATER CONTRIBUTORS



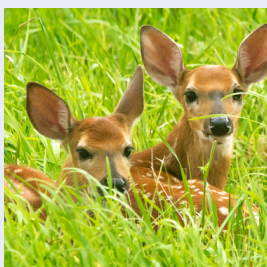
Living with Wildlife



The Flathead Valley lies within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem, one of the most pristine landscapes in the lower 48 states. This area is home to bears, wolves, elk, and other diverse species of wildlife, as well as thousands of migratory birds that rely on its wetlands. Its glacier-fed rivers host iconic species like bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout.

Living alongside wildlife in Montana is a unique privilege, and residents, landowners, and businesses play a key role in supporting wildlife, reducing conflicts, and preserving Montana's natural heritage.

Living with and enjoying Flathead's wildlife.



A baby deer was left by its mother. Should I help?

Never pick up wildlife. It's natural for deer and elk to leave their young alone for extended periods of time in spring.

If you see a baby animal, whether a goose or a grizzly, keep your distance and leave it alone.



It's been a harsh winter. Should I feed wildlife?

Feeding wildlife, other than birds, is illegal and puts animals, people, and pets at risk. Leaving out food sources encourages wildlife to become dependent on handouts that are not part of their natural diets and can lead to animals being euthanized for safety.

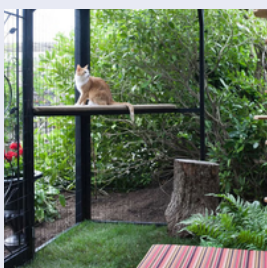
When feeding livestock or birds, ensure it doesn't attract ungulates, bears, or wild turkeys.



Do wildlife-friendly fences work for livestock?

Wildlife-friendly fences prevent injuries to wildlife and allow them to travel the land, while keeping livestock in. These fences also save you time and money from frustrating repairs caused by animals breaking through fences.

Learn how to install and maintain one by scanning the QR code below.



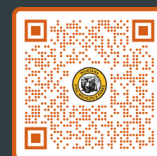
Can I let my cats and dogs roam outside?

Pets that encounter wildlife can spread diseases, and dogs chasing livestock and wildlife may face severe consequences. Cats should stay indoors - they kill over one billion birds every year in North America.

Keep pets controlled to protect livestock and wildlife, especially in spring when newborns are most vulnerable.

Learn more about living with wildlife
fwp.mt.gov/conservation/living-with-wildlife

Have more questions?
Explore here.



KEEPING WILDLIFE WILD

AND PEOPLE SAFE



PROTECT WILDLIFE: TEST FOR CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Chronic wasting disease is a contagious neurological disease that affects deer, elk, and moose. Although it poses no known risks to humans, it is always fatal to infected animals and can have significant impacts on local wildlife populations if left unchecked. The disease is spread through prions, which persist in the environment and can be transmitted via saliva, feces, urine, and carcasses of infected animals. Learn how to safely collect tissue for testing, dispose of carcasses, and more.

Learn more
fwp.mt.gov/CWD



KEEP WATERWAYS HEALTHY: REHOME PETS RESPONSIBLY

Illegally dumping fish or aquarium pets into rivers, lakes, or other water bodies is harmful and can disrupt the delicate balance of aquatic ecosystems. Non-native fish can out-compete native species for food and habitat, spread diseases, and harm the local environment. This can lead to the decline or extinction of native fish populations, harming fishing, recreation, and the overall health of the ecosystem. It's important to follow legal guidelines to protect our waterways and the life they support.

Learn more
www.dontletitloose.com



DRIVE SAFELY: PROTECT WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE

Driving safely and avoiding wildlife collisions helps protect both people and animals. Many animals are most active at dawn and dusk, so reduce your speed and stay alert, especially in areas marked with wildlife crossing signs.

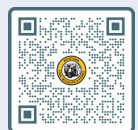
Use your high beams when possible to spot animals' eyes reflecting light, but be prepared to brake rather than swerve, as swerving can cause more serious accidents. If you see one animal, expect others may follow. Staying cautious and aware helps keep roads safer for everyone.



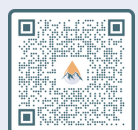
SALVAGING ROADKILL IN MONTANA: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Montana allows for the salvage of deer, elk, moose, and antelope killed in a collision with a motor vehicle. A person may also pick up an animal that they did not hit. Anyone salvaging roadkill must obtain a salvage permit.

Learn more and get a permit
fwp.mt.gov/buyandapply/vehiclekilledsalvagepermit



Learn more - avoid collisions
www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/people/watchforwildlife.aspx



LIVING IN BEAR COUNTRY



Living in the Northern Rockies means living, working, and recreating alongside wildlife, including bears. Taking precautions to ensure your property does not attract bears will keep you and your property safe, and wildlife wild.

3. DON'T INVITE BEARS TO BBQS

If you barbeque, clean your grills after each use and store them in a secure, hard-sided building. Make sure fire pits are cleared of food residue.



4. BEARS LIKE PET FOOD TOO

If you have pets or animals, keep their food in secure, hard-sided buildings. Avoid feeding pets outside or be sure to bring in food dishes at night – even empty dishes can attract bears.

Feed birds when bears are hibernating. This is usually from November – March.

➔ **Report bear conflicts** promptly to MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks at (406) 752-5501.

KEEP FOOD ATTRACTANTS AWAY

STASH YOUR TRASH

Garbage and food odors attract bears. Store garbage in a secure, hard-sided building until trash pick-up time or until you dispose of it.



USE BEAR-RESISTANT TRASH CONTAINERS

Use bear-resistant containers to secure trash and ensure they are properly closed and locked. Contact your trash collector for information on how to obtain a bear-resistant can. They can also be found at several hardware stores. For a list of bear-resistant products, check igbconline.org.



5. SECURE YOUR COMPOST

Bears love compost. If you compost, secure it with bear-resistant containers or electric fencing. Or use a professional composting service.

6. INSTALL ELECTRIC FENCES

Install an electric fence around your chicken coop, calving grounds, carcass piles, beehives, compost, and fruit trees, or pick up fruit before it ripens, and let it ripen in a secure place.

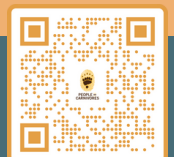


Bears can smell odors from up to 20 miles away!

KEEP BEARS AWAY FROM

- Anything with a food scent!
- Garbage
- Human and pet foods
- Birdseed
- Fruit trees
- Small livestock
- Dirty grills
- Coolers

Learn more about living in bear country
www.peopleandcarnivores.org



RECREATING IN BEAR COUNTRY

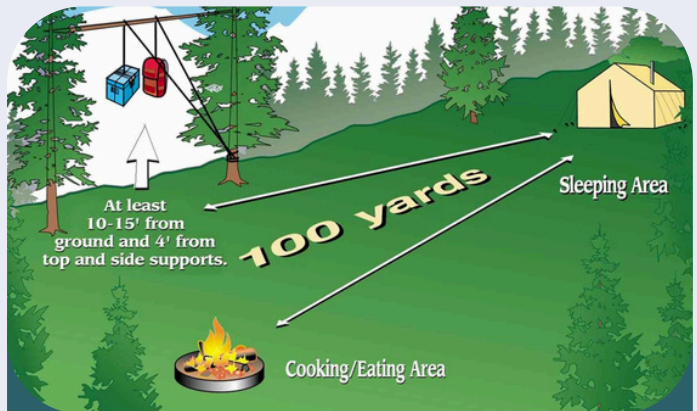
The Northern Rockies is home to black and grizzly bears. With awareness and preparation, you can safely recreate in bear country.

STAY SAFE WHILE HIKING OR BIKING

- **Carry bear spray in an accessible location on you at all times, and know how to use it.** Each person should carry a full can of EPA-certified bear spray. Make sure it is not expired.
- **Stay alert** and be ready to deploy bear spray in limited visibility areas.
- **Watch for bear sign** like tracks, scat, scratch marks, bear hair, overturned rocks, and bear feeding sites.
- **Travel in groups and make noise** to alert bears.
- **Keep dogs on a leash** to prevent spooking and triggering a chase from a bear.
- **Slow down when biking or running** to avoid surprising a bear.
- **Avoid recreating at dawn and dusk** when bears are most active.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR

- **Stay calm and never run from a bear.** Running can trigger a chase and you cannot outrun a bear. If the bear is uninterested, back away quietly and slowly.
- **If a bear approaches you and is agitated,** remain still while speaking calmly until it moves away.
- **If a bear charges,** stand your ground and use bear spray when within range (25-30 feet).
- **If the bear is making a defensive charge** (defending cubs or a carcass), play dead if the bear makes contact, and cover your neck and head.



Camping in Bear country

- Before you go, check with agencies about bear activity and food storage rules where you are going.
- Avoid camping near bear signs - tracks or scat.
- Remove and dispose of garbage and never burn or bury it.
- Do not leave scented items in your tent, such as food, sunscreen, and toothpaste.
- When you are not at your camp or picnic site, store all food, garbage, and pet food in bear-resistant containers. Coolers and plastic storage boxes are not bear resistant.
- Keep bear spray with you at all times, including in your tent at night.
- **If a bear follows or enters your tent,** fight back aggressively.

Learn more about recreating in bear country

fwp.mt.gov/bear-aware



Birds and Their Habitat

The Flathead Valley is home to an incredible diversity of birds, owing to its diverse landscape, which includes grasslands, farm fields, wetlands, forest, and alpine areas. Thousands of migratory birds pass through the valley each spring and fall, using its lakes and grasslands for feeding and resting.

Birds not only captivate us with their songs and vibrant plumage, but they also play crucial roles in our ecosystem, such as controlling insects, dispersing plant seeds, and aiding environmental cleanup. However, bird populations have been declining at an alarming rate. Over the past 50 years, researchers estimate that 3 billion breeding birds have been lost in North America. Major causes include predation by cats, habitat loss, and collisions with windows.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT BIRDS IN MY BACKYARD?

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH DEAD AND DYING TREES ON MY PROPERTY?

Dead and dying trees are essential to birds for foraging, cavity nesting, food storage, and drumming (communication). In a ponderosa pine forest, for instance, leave 2-3 large snags (>20 inches in diameter at breast height) or more per acre for cavity nesting birds. Find more resources about cavity-nesters and their needs on our online Guide.

WHY SHOULD I TURN OFF MY LIGHTS IN THE SPRING AND FALL?

You can help birds during their migration by turning out the lights. In the spring and fall, excessive outdoor and indoor lighting can disorient migrating birds, often resulting in collisions with buildings. Learn more at www.livinginflathead.org/starry-skies.

WHY SHOULD I CLEAN BIRD FEEDERS AND BATHS EVERY ONE TO TWO WEEKS?

Keep birds healthy, mosquitoes and mold away, by cleaning bird feeders every one to two weeks, and bird baths every day. Learn how at flatheadaudubon.org/birds/helping-birds.

CAN I PREVENT BIRDS FROM HITTING MY WINDOWS?

Birds hit windows when they see nature reflected in them or if they see out through yet another window. Effective solutions include placing bird feeders either very close to or far from windows, where there is little time for them to hit windows at high speed. Other solutions include installing exterior screens and blinds, or placing stick-on dot patterns to the exterior of the window. For more information and additional solutions visit abcbirds.org/solutions/prevent-home-collisions.

WHY SHOULD I KEEP MY CATS INDOORS? BENEFITS AND HOW-TO GUIDE.

Pets bring us joy and companionship, but outdoor cats pose a major threat to birds and small mammals. Learn how to provide a safe, enriching environment for your cat while also protecting our avian friends. Keep cats indoors or in a secure outdoor space called a 'catio'. Indoor cats live longer, healthier lives. Train your new cat to a leash to give your cat important outdoor exercise.

Learn more about birds and bird-watching hotspots
flatheadaudubon.org



SUPPORTING WILDLIFE

AROUND MY PROPERTY



How are Montanans protecting wildlife habitat?



Montanans put tremendous value on open spaces, abundant fish and wildlife, and hunting and recreational opportunities. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Flathead Land Trust, and Montana Land Reliance work with landowners to protect wildlife habitat and migration corridors, key wetlands for sandhill cranes and other birds and wildlife.

Contact a local land trust or wildlife state agency to learn more about our local wildlife and ways to support vital bird habitat in the Flathead.

HOW CAN I PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT AROUND MY HOME?

1. PLANT NATIVES

Discover the ideal native plants for supporting birds and insects in your area by entering your zip code at www.audubon.org/native-plants. Create a Pollinator Garden. Contact your local Conservation District for assistance.

2. MAINTAIN WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN FORESTS ON YOUR PROPERTY

These areas, including isolated wetlands, retain water during the spring and early summer or after heavy rains. Give them space and enjoy the birds they attract!

3. CONTROL INVASIVE AND NOXIOUS PLANTS

Noxious weeds displace native plants and reduce forage and habitat for wildlife and livestock. Learn how to keep weeds from establishing, control existing weeds, and more at www.livinginflathead.org/native-plants-noxious-weeds.

4. REDUCE AND RECYCLE PLASTICS WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Plastic lids, bags, and other items, if ingested by birds, can cause injuries or death. When plastics break down into microplastics, they enter rivers and lakes and can impact animal health.

5. LEARN ABOUT OUR LOCAL BIRDS

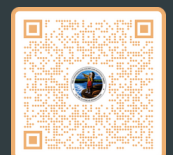
Join a bird tour or consider volunteering with Flathead Audubon Society to teach our youth about birds. Learn more at www.flatheadaudubon.org.



Learn more about living with wildlife

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes Wildlife Program

cskt.org/natural-resources/wildlife-management/#living-with-wildlife



WILDLIFE RESOURCES

LIVING IN FLATHEAD

Access these resources and more on our website

www.livinginflathead.org/living-with-wildlife

- Living with Wildlife
- A Landowner's Guide to Wildlife Friendly Fences
- Bears Safety Information and Securing Attractants
- Recreating Safely and Storing Your Food in Bear Country
- Protecting and Improving Bird Habitat
- Keeping your Cats Indoors
- Birding Hotspots in the Flathead
- Planting Pollinator Gardens

Wildlife App

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
csktfwapps.org

General Wildlife Questions & Reporting Wildlife Conflicts

- MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Kalispell, (406) 752-5501
- Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes Wildlife Program, (406) 883-2888
- USDA Wildlife Services Bear-Livestock Conflicts, (406) 657-6464

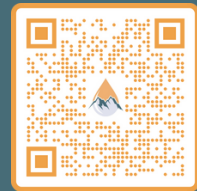
Promptly report bear conflicts to prevent them from becoming conditioned or habituated to food.

Report Possible Wildlife Crimes

- Report crimes against natural resources – such as poaching, littering, cultural resource theft, or other natural resource crimes – contact your local warden.
- Learn more at tipmont.mt.gov.

You can make a difference

- Join your neighbors in volunteering, participating in local events, and protecting our lakes, wildlife, and more. Scan the QR code to learn more.
- Discover additional ways to support local communities and wildlife – like reducing plastics and turning off unnecessary outdoor lights at night – by visiting www.livinginflathead.org/living-locally.



GET INVOLVED

www.livinginflathead.org/take-action

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE HANDOUT CONTRIBUTORS



Living With Fire



No matter where you live in Montana, the land that you call home burned naturally and will burn again at some point. We must both learn to live with fire and take action to protect our families, homes, and communities.

The Flathead landscape depends on fires to stay healthy and productive. However, fire suppression for the past 100 years, combined with recent mild winters and hotter, drier summers, has led to forests that are crowded, unhealthy, and susceptible to large and hot wildfires.

Today, wildfire seasons are getting longer, fires are burning more area, and those fires are getting much harder to control.

We must both learn to live with fire and take action to protect our families, homes, and communities.

Can wildfires benefit forests and people?

In the right place at the right time, wildfire can create many environmental benefits, such as reducing grass, brush, and trees that can fuel large and severe wildfires, and improving wildlife habitat. However, in the wrong place or time, wildfires can threaten lives, homes, communities, and natural and cultural resources.



After years of fire suppression, forested stands have become dense and crowded with small trees, dead and downed trees, pine needles, and sticks.



These built-up fuels can move a wildfire from the ground to the crowns of the larger trees, creating a more intense and dangerous wildfire.



When dry mixed conifer forests are treated with prescribed burns, or a combination of thinning, pile burning, and prescribed burns, wildfires are often less severe.

© Erica Sloniker, The Nature Conservancy

For thousands of years, Indigenous people in the valley deliberately and carefully started low-intensity fires to manage the landscape for both people and wildlife, to augment materials and foods.

Learn more from Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes:

Fire on the Land

<http://fwrconline.csktnrd.org/Fire/FireOnTheLand>



What can I do as a homeowner or landowner?



In western Montana, more homes are being built in forested areas at high or moderate wildfire risk – known as the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The most effective way to protect homes and structures is in the Home Ignition Zone, within 200 feet of a building. This zone may need to extend even farther on steeper slopes and in certain forest types.

By performing simple maintenance tasks, removing fuels and choosing fire-smart materials within the Home Ignition Zone, you can greatly reduce the chance of losing your home to wildfire.

Determine Your Wildfire Risk

Check the [Wildfire Risk Portal](#) to learn more about wildfire risk in your community and how to reduce it. [Schedule a Free Visit](#) with a DNRC forester, to assess your home and forest's wildfire risk and learn what you can do.

Prepare Your Property

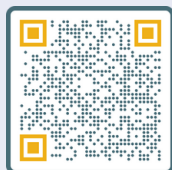
By performing simple maintenance tasks and reducing fuels within the Home Ignition Zone, you can greatly improve the chance of your home surviving a wildfire.

HOME IGNITION ZONE



Request a FREE Home Wildfire Risk Assessment

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation offers free home risk assessments to help reduce wildfire risks and protect your property.



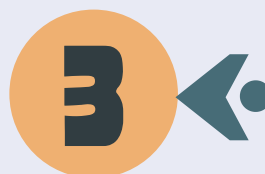
ZONE 1: 0-5FT AROUND YOUR HOME

Use fire-resistant roofing, siding, deck materials. Clean & screen chimney. Trim overhanging branches. Clean roof & gutters of leaves, debris. Cover vents with 1/8" metal screening. Use flagstone or gravel around home. Locate propane tanks at least 30 feet away.



ZONE 2: 5-30FT AROUND YOUR HOME

Mow grass and water vegetation regularly. Keep lawns and native grasses mowed. Remove limbs 6' to 10' from the ground. Grow non-woody, low herbaceous plants. Clear plants around fences, sheds, furniture, and play structures. Clean fallen leaves.



ZONE 3: 30-100FT AROUND YOUR HOME OR FARTHER*

Keep firewood 30 ft away from structures and fuel tank. Keep trees pruned and sparse. Keep driveway accessible for fire trucks.

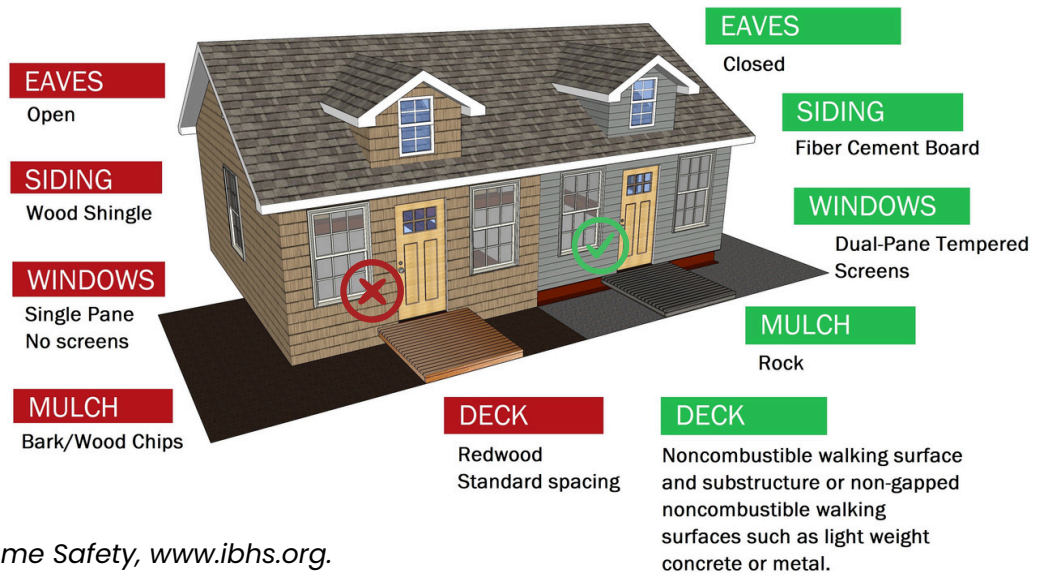
*This zone could change depending on slopes and forest type.

CHOOSE FIRE-RESISTANT MATERIALS

Make the "RIGHT" Choices

The exterior materials and design of a home can greatly impact a home's potential to ignite during a wildfire.

Firescape designs reduce the possibility of ignition, lower fire intensity and slow down the spread of fire.



Source: Institute for Business & Home Safety, www.ibhs.org.

Be Ready to Evacuate Early During a Wildfire:

Stay prepared with community alerts, evacuation routes, and a family emergency plan.

- ➡ Pack a "go kit" with emergency supplies, prescription medications, and important documents.
- ➡ Plan and practice multiple escape routes from your home and neighborhood.
- ➡ Stay alert, monitor local alerts, grab your go kit, and evacuate early when a wildfire threatens.

For more information, visit: bit.ly/evacuate-ready

Wildfire Smoke – Learn how to protect yourself and your family

Particulate matter from wildfires traps heat, reduces visibility, and creates dangerous air quality conditions – resulting in more emergency room visits due to asthma, strokes, heart attacks, and more.



Today's Air Quality

Check air quality, smoke, and fires near your home. >



Clean Indoor Air

Learn how to create healthy indoor air and protect your health by limiting exposure to harmful, smoky air. >



Smoke and Health

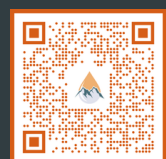
Understand the health impacts of wildfire smoke, who is most at risk, how to stay healthy during smoke events, when to exercise, and what to do if you have to stay outside. >



Allergy Forecast

Rising pollen levels in the warmer seasons are worsening allergies and asthma. Prepare by checking both the current and forecasted pollen counts, and ways to manage your allergies. >

For information on Human Health and Wildfire Smoke visit:
www.livinginflathead.org/health-climate



FIRE RESOURCES

Did you know?

- Visit FireSafeFlathead.com to learn about wildfire events happening year-round.
- Check out the Living with Fire Guide online to discover grant opportunities and other resources available in your area.
- Healthy forests are home to birds and other wildlife. Learn how you can protect bird habitat, how many dead or dying trees to leave for nesting birds, and more at www.livinginflathead.org/birds-habitat.



Access these resources and more at livinginflathead.org/living-with-fire

- Schedule a free visit to assess your home's wildfire risk
- Firesafe Flathead
- Financial Assistance Opportunities
- Wildfire Risk to Communities
- Current Fire Danger in Flathead Valley
- MT Fire Information
- Wildfire Evacuation Readiness
- Wildfire Smoke and Human Health
- Learn more from Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes: Fire on the Land
- Check out mylandplan.org, for tools to help you create a forest management plan on your property.

BURN PERMITS

Burn permits are required for burning debris. Call your local county office for permit information and burning dates which vary by county.

Flathead County
(406) 751-8130
app.egovmt.com/burnpermit

Lake County
(406) 676-2550
lakemt.gov/248/Burn-Information

Debris Burning Inquiries
1-866-207-2577

Report out-of-control burns to 911.



Explore the Guide

Landowner Assistance

Check out landowner assistance programs from around the Flathead that assist the Flathead community with living in one of the most unique places in the world.

www.livinginflathead.org/landowner-programs

Volunteer in Your Community

Around the Flathead, our community partners are putting on educational programs, monitoring local lakes, and participating in citizen science. Join the effort.

www.livinginflathead.org/volunteer-opportunities

Living Locally

Learn about Safe and Responsible Recreation, planning for power outages and staying safe during extreme weather conditions, where you can recycle, dispose of toxic waste, compost food scraps and yard waste, repair your belongings, and more.

www.livinginflathead.org/living-locally

Local Events

From Rain Garden Initiatives to Watershed Team Clean-ups to Family Forestry Expos, everyone can find a way to get involved. Check out events and workshops happening in the Valley.

www.livinginflathead.org/events

Learn More

Sign-up for community groups' E-Newsletters to learn about fun, educational events and opportunities, current conservation news, funding programs, and more.

www.livinginflathead.org/local-partners-newsletters

Download & Share the Guide

Share the printable Guide with your friends, neighbors, and family.

Share the Guide and Resources via social media and tag us #LivinginFlathead.

www.livinginflathead.org/take-action

www.livinginflathead.org/about-us

About Us

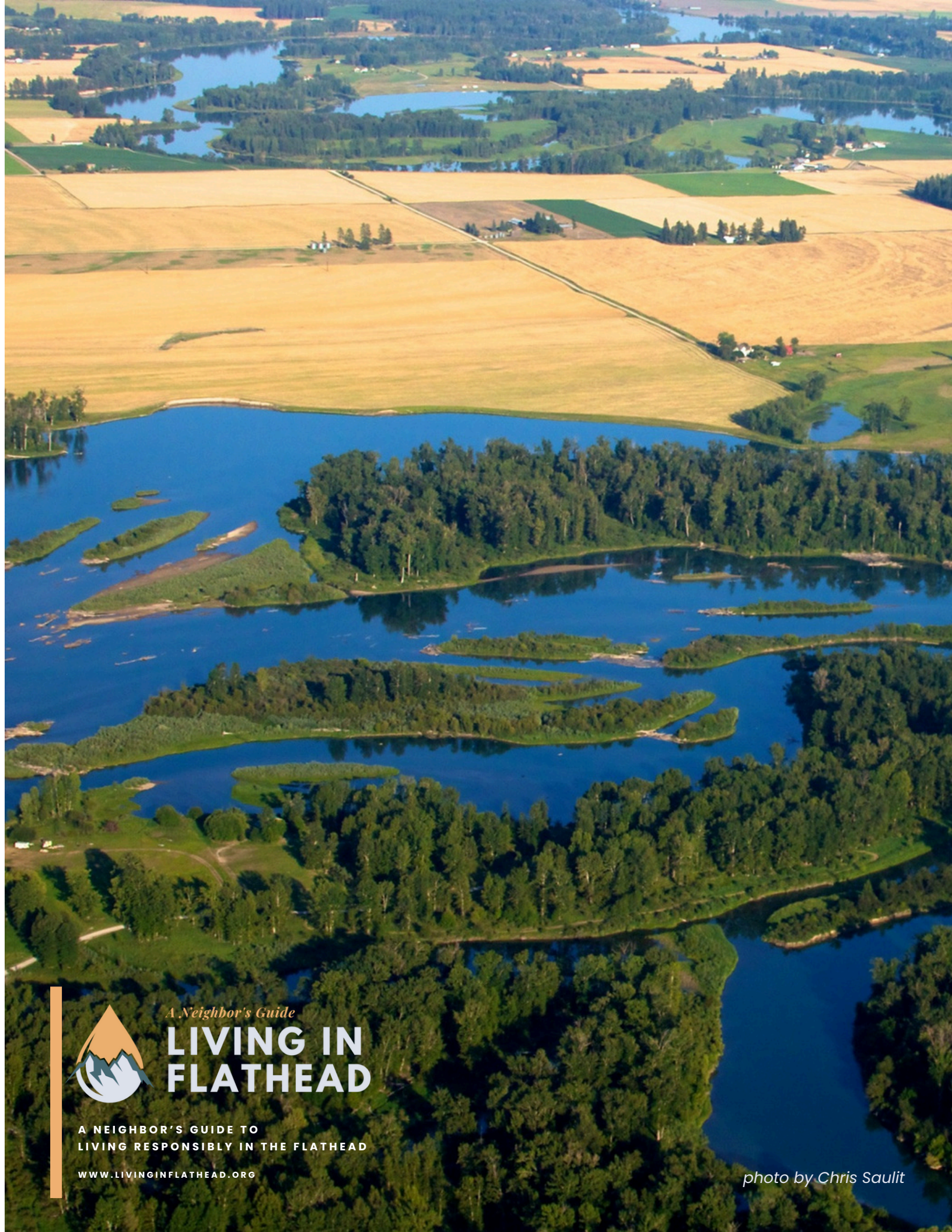
Over 25 contributors compiled this guide as an introduction and an invitation to land stewardship.



The development of the guide was led by the Flathead Lakers, a non-profit organization working for water quality, healthy ecosystems and quality of life in the Flathead Watershed. The Flathead Lakers are solely responsible for the content of this guide, and any errors or omissions.

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Disclaimer: The Living in the Flathead Guide is merely informative and not a regulatory document. The information provided is not intended to constitute legal advice. All information, content, and materials available are for general informational purposes only.



A Neighbor's Guide

LIVING IN FLATHEAD

A NEIGHBOR'S GUIDE TO
LIVING RESPONSIBLY IN THE FLATHEAD

WWW.LIVINGINFLATHEAD.ORG

photo by Chris Saulit