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Welcome to the Flathead River to Lake Newsletter.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 20 | January 2014

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Conservation and Restoration

Welcome new Flathead River Steward

Aaron Clausen is joining the Flathead River to Lake Initiative as our 2014 Flathead River Steward.

Aaron has a background and a passion for river ecology. He recently completed a Masters degree in Science, with a focus in Riparian Ecology, at Eastern Washington University and moved to Montana looking to work in rivers.



The Flathead Lakers applied to host a Big Sky Watershed Corps member (an AmeriCorps program) for a second year to continue building on the successful first year of the Flathead River Steward program. Aaron will be helping partners and interested landowners plan, implement, and manage river restoration projects along the Flathead River and providing outreach about land and water stewardship and restoration opportunities to landowners and community groups.

We thank our 2013 Flathead River Steward Kirstin Gruver for her year of service and great work, and wish her good luck in her future pursuits.



Aaron is based at the Natural Resource Conservation Service office in Kalispell and can be reached at 406-752-4242 extension 109, or riversteward13@gmail.com. Welcome Aaron!

MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks acquires riparian property on the Flathead River

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks gained an additional 147 acres along the Flathead River last December through an exchange with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, which purchased the property from a willing landowner in 2011 using Bonneville Power Administration fisheries mitigation funding.

Otter Island Fisheries Conservation Area, as it is now called, is a beautiful parcel mostly in the 100-year floodplain, and with more than 100 acres of riparian forests that provide important habitat for fish and wildlife.

FWP plans to protect and restore the river banks and associated habitat for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Beaver, mink, white-tailed deer, osprey, bald eagles, waterfowl, shorebirds, and many species of reptiles and amphibians also use the area. Keeping the floodplain and the riparian forests undeveloped will help protect clean water in the river and in the shallow groundwater aquifer.

FWP will manage the Otter Island Fisheries Conservation



Area for open space, native fisheries habitat, and public recreation. This conservation project adds to the growing network of protected lands along the Flathead River that help maintain the Flathead's clean water, native fish and wildlife, and recreation opportunities.

Kokanee Bend South conservation project benefits bull trout

Last October, the Flathead Land Trust and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks worked with landowners to place a conservation easement on 70 forested acres along the Flathead River. The property includes a creek that provides important habitat for bull trout and wildlife.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks secured funding for fisheries mitigation from the Bonneville Power Administration to compensate the landowners for the conservation easement.

Rox Rogers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Coordinator, is helping the landowners place wildlife-friendly fencing between the riparian forest and adjacent grazed lands.

The fence is valuable to both the landowner and wildlife by keeping cattle off the roads and protecting the riparian forests, which provide important habitat for wildlife and help protect clean water in the river.

Education & Outreach

Conservation Successes Update

To the landowner, conservation is often about the love of place that grows from knowing and appreciating all that the land and river provide and a desire that future generations have the opportunity to enjoy those benefits.

We know that these gems in our landscape help sustain the quality of life that people enjoy in the Flathead: open space, beauty, diverse and abundant wildlife, fishing, and hiking and floating opportunities, to name a few.

But how else can we measure the community benefits that conservation projects accomplish?

The Flathead Land Trust has been providing presentations to numerous community groups about the cumulative impact of River to Lake Initiative conservation successes. An evaluation of all protected areas (public and private) in the Initiative's focus area along the mainstem of the Flathead River showed that the following have been protected:

- 41% of the 100-year floodplain
- 34% of the corridor's important agricultural soils
- 49% of high quality riparian areas
- 51% of the wetlands

- 43% of the areas overlying shallow groundwater
- 29% of the banks along the Flathead River's main channel.

These significant accomplishments will help ensure that clean water, healthy habitat, and prime farmland all remain part of the Flathead's future. And they encourage River to Lake Initiative partners to persevere in conserving and restoring these special attributes and the benefits they provide us all.

For questions or to schedule a presentation contact Laura Katzman, Land Protection Specialist, Flathead Land Trust, at (406) 752-8293 or visit our website at www.flatheadrivertolake.org.

Welcome new Conservation District Assistant Conservationist

Kari Musgrove recently joined the Flathead Conservation District as their new Assistant Conservationist. Born and raised in the Flathead, Kari has a Bachelors degree in resource conservation from the University of Montana. She previously worked in Welches, Oregon and Sitka, AK providing conservation education and as a fish culturist technician raising salmon. Visit the Conservation District's website at flatheadcd.org to learn more about their numerous education programs.

Winter Events

January 23

MT Wetland Council and MT Watershed Coordination Council meetings

MWC and MWCC will meet on January 23 from 8:45 am to 4:15 pm in Helena. For more information contact Lynda Saul, Wetland Program Coordinator, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, at (406) 444-6652 or lsaul@mt.gov.

February 12

Flathead River to Lake Initiative quarterly meeting

The next River to Lake Initiative partners' quarterly meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 30 from 9:00 am to noon at MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks in Kalispell. For more information contact Constanza von der Pahlen, Critical Lands Program Director, Flathead Lakers, at 883-1341 or criticallands@flatheadlakers.org.

March 26-29

Northwest Scientific Association's annual conference

The Annual Conference of the Northwest Scientific Association (NWSA) "*The Future of Forests and Forest Management: Change, Uncertainty, and Adaptation*" will be held at the University of Montana in Missoula.

It includes presentations on wetland ecology and wetland forest management, stream and road restoration and forestry in the urban interface, Milltown Dam removal and restoration, and ecology of lichen and mosses. For more information visit NWSA's website at www.northwestscience.org.