



Photo by Gravity Shots

*Water, Wildlife, Way of Life*

# Community Benefits

*A winding blue thread connects us*

People in the Flathead Valley represent all walks of life and hold a wide spectrum of beliefs. But there is a thread that connects us, that ties us together as neighbors.

That thread is the Flathead River. Water flows from headwaters in Glacier National Park, the Bob Marshall, and the Great Bear Wilderness down, through our valley to Flathead Lake, enriching our lives.

The Flathead River benefits us in the most fundamental way – we drink from the aquifer it recharges, we enjoy the fish and wildlife it nurtures. **The Flathead River also draws visitors, irrigates our fields, supports fish and wildlife, and powers our industries. It is a foundation of our outdoor way of life.**



*That thread is the Flathead River*

## BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION

We all benefit when we conserve the Flathead River, surrounding forests and wetlands, floodplains, and shallow groundwater. Here are some ways:

*We say we own (the land), but at the end of the day, we're just tenants. And it's our obligation to leave it in better shape than when we took it over. We take pride in that.*



*Now we know people will enjoy this place – will enjoy this open space – for a long time.*

Tom Siderius, farmer

**Jobs and Prosperity** – More than a million visitors come to the Flathead Valley every year, spending money enjoying our natural beauty. The natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and quality of life in the Flathead also attract businesses in manufacturing, technology, professional service and other sectors.

**Productive soils** – The floodplains of the Flathead River provide some of the richest soils in Montana. Conserving these soils helps keep farmers on the land.

# RIVER TO LAKE INITIATIVE: Community Benefits

**Abundant wildlife** – Riparian forests and wetlands provide rich wildlife habitat – habitat for popular game species, such as whitetail deer, elk and Canada geese, as well as a host of songbirds, furbearers, and soaring osprey and eagles. Hunting is a favorite pastime for many Montanans. In 2011, hunting in Montana generated over \$627 million dollars, and wildlife watching generated another \$400 million.



Ours to Protect

**Abundant fish** – Native fish, such as bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout, and popular introduced species depend on healthy river habitat. They are an important economic resource, with over \$339 million spent on fishing in Montana annually.

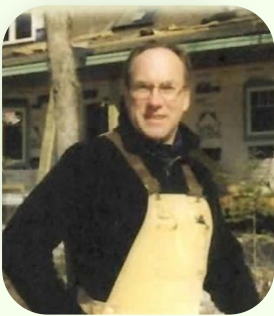
**Flood Protection** – Floodplains, wetlands, and riparian vegetation all absorb flood waters, helping protect people and their property during floods.

**Clean Water** – Wetlands and the riparian vegetation along streams and rivers are natural filters that help keep our water clean as the valley grows and develops.

*Flathead Lake and its watershed are world-class treasures. Places of such remarkable beauty and natural qualities are rare and irreplaceable... I believe that builders and developers have a particular responsibility to harmony with the*

*unique assets we are privileged to have in our care while creating a future of undiminished beauty and intact natural systems.*

– Leo Keane, North Country Builders



**Scenic Beauty** – Who is not inspired by the gorgeous vistas of the Flathead Valley with its open farm land, lakes and rivers, surrounded by snowy peaks. Conservation keeps these views to inspire us now and for generations to come.

By protecting the Flathead River system, we protect our quality of life and the thread that connects us and our communities.

## WHERE CAN WE LEARN MORE?

For more information visit: <http://www.flatheadrivertolake.org>, contact any of the River to Lake Initiative partners listed in the website, or call our land trust partners: Flathead Land Trust - 752-8293 & Montana Land Reliance - 837-2178.

**RIVER TO LAKE INITIATIVE** | [flatheadrivertolake.org](http://flatheadrivertolake.org)

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Lake  
Initiative