



🏠 **Location:** Northwest MT History Museum
124 Second Ave. East Kalispell, MT
📅 **Date:** October 6, 2022
🕒 **Time:** 10:00 AM – 5:30 PM

FLATHEAD BASIN COMMISSION 10/06/22 Meeting Agenda

- I. 10:00 am: Call to order/Welcome & Introductions**
– Rich Janssen, Chair; Kate Wilson, Commission Administrator; All (name/organization or affiliation)
- II. 10:15 am: Public Comment**
- III. 10:30 am: Commission Consolidation Concept - Presentation & Discussion**
– Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras; Kerry Davant, DNRC Deputy Director; Mark Bostrom, DNRC CARD Division Administrator; Kate Wilson, Commission Administrator
- IV. 12:00 pm: Lunch** (for in person participants)
- V. 12:45 pm: Commission Business** – Kate Wilson; Cassidy Bender; Emilie Henry
 - Staff Presentation: Activities, Projects, Committees and Programs
 - ACTIONS: Review/Approve FBC Minutes (5/11/22) + FY23 Revised Budget
- VI. 1:30 pm: Presentation: Columbia River Basin Grant Opportunity**
– Peter Brumm, Environmental Protection Agency (virtual)
- VII. 2:00 pm: PANEL: Growth & Development in the Flathead Basin**
– Panelists (confirmed unless TBD noted):
 - *Flathead County – Pete Melnick, County Administrator; Lake County -Tiffany Murphy, Planning Director; Flathead County – Amy Dexter, Finance Director; City of Kalispell – Jarod Nuygen, Development Director; City of Whitefish – David Taylor, Planning Director; Montana Association of Realtors – Erica Wirtala; Montana Dept. of Commerce – Racene Friede, Glacier Country Tourism*
 - Panelist presentation followed by facilitated panel questions and public Q/A
- VIII. 3:45 pm: Wrap up, next steps, & next meeting** – Kate Wilson
- IX. 3:50 pm: Public Comment**
- X. 4:00 pm: ADJOURN & FIELD TRIP: Flathead Rain Garden Downtown Walking Tour**
– Led by Emilie Henry (FBC), Casey Lewis (City of Kalispell), & Samantha Tappenbeck (Flathead Conservation District)
 - *Starting at the History Museum, join us for a walking tour in downtown Kalispell to explore and visit 4-5 local rain gardens (~2 miles).*
- XI. 5:30 pm: Social at The KM Bar!** The walking tour will end at The KM Bar, please join us for some networking and socializing.

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting/ Project Name:	Flathead Basin Commission		
Date of Meeting:	October 6 th 2022	Time:	10:00pm-4:00pm
Minutes Prepared By:	Emilie Henry & Cassidy Bender	Location:	NW MT History Museum & Zoom

List of Acronyms

AIS	Aquatic invasive species	FBC	Flathead Basin Commission
BOR	US Bureau of Reclamation	FLBS	Flathead Lake Biological Station
BPA	Bonneville Power Administration	FWP	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
BSWC	Big Sky Watershed Corps (AmeriCorps)	GNP	Glacier National Park
CEMIST	Central Eastern MT Invasive Species Team	MACD	MT Association of Conservation Districts
CFC	Clark Fork Coalition	MCWD	Missoula County Weed District
CRB	Columbia River Basin	NPS	National Park Service
CRC	Clearwater Resource Council	NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
CSKT	Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes	UC ³	Upper Columbia Conservation Commission
DEQ	Department of Environmental Quality	UCLN	Upper Columbia Lakes Network
DOI	Department of the Interior	USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
DOT	Department of Transportation	USDA	US Department of Agriculture
DNRC	Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation	USFS	US Forest Service
eDNA	Environmental DNA	USFWS	US Fish & Wildlife Service
E & O	Education & Outreach	WLI	Whitefish Lake Institute
EPA	US Environmental Protection Agency	WRDA	Water Resources Development Act
EQC	Environmental Quality Council (Interim)	WRP	Western Regional Panel

1. Welcome and Introductions

Rich Janssen (Chair)	Opened the meeting. Confirmed quorum present (for voting purposes).
Welcome & Introductions (Roundtable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each participant introduced themselves including name and organization/interest that they are representing. The Flathead Basin Commission acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people. Today, we honor the path they have always shown us in caring for this place for the generations to come.

2. Attendees

FBC member(s) voting members underlined: Rich Janssen (Chair, CSKT), Casey Lewis (Vice Chair, City of Kalispell), Sandy Beder-Miller (Governor-appointed), Jasmine Courville-Brown (CSKT), Gordon Ash (Flathead Conservation District), James Ferch (Montana DNRC), Chris Downs (acting for Dave Roemer superintendent Glacier National Park), Jim Simpson (Lake County Conservation District), Kurt Steele (USFS), Jack Potter (Governor-appointed), Michael Freeman (Governor's Office), Randy Brodehl (Flathead County Commissioner), Brian Hughes (Governor appointed), Mark Bostrom (DNRC), Bill Dykes (BOR), Peter Brumm (EPA), Eric Trum (Representing Myla Kelly DEQ), Sam Bourrett (representing Lee Anderson for FWP), Kate Wilson (FBC Administrator), Cassidy Bender (FBC Coordinator), Emilie Henry (FBC Nonpoint Source Coordinator)

Absent member(s): Steve Stanley (Lake County Commissioner)

Partners/Public/Other: Kristen Juras (Lieutenant Governor), Amanda Kaster (DNRC Director), Kerry Davant (DNRC Deputy Director), Amy Dexter (Flathead Finance Director), Pete Melnick (Flathead County Administrator), Jarod Nuygen (Kalispell Development Director), David Taylor (Whitefish Planning Director), Erica Wirtala (MT Association of Realtors), Racene Friede (Glacier Country Tourism), Mike Koopal (WLI), Claire Kirk (FLBS/MMW BSWC), Saige Jibben (Lake County CD BSWC), Heidi Fleury (Lake CD), Tom Bansak (FLBS), Nanette Nelson (FLBS), Hailey Graf (DNRC), Jessica Dahlman

(Nursing Fellowship), Samantha Tappenbeck (FCD), Melissa Brickl (DNRC), D.J. Zor (BOR), Chris Runion (BOR), Mike Bullets (BOR), Kane Schafer (BOR), Meagan Gilmore (DEQ), Sheena Pate (Flathead Rivers Alliance), Jim Baker (Friends of Lake Mary Ronan), Constanza von der Pahlen (Flathead Lakers), Pat Klever (citizen), Jim Elser (FLBS), Liz Lodman (MISC), Tom Woolf (FWP), Carol Treadwell (WLI), Cynthia Ingelfinger (WLI), Marie Watson (UM graduate student), Mayre Flowers (Citizen for a Better Flathead), Diana Gray (public), Jim Wardensky (Flathead Environmental Health), Lisa Anderson (public), Rachel Malison (FLBS)

3. Agenda and Notes, Decisions, Issues

Presenter	Topic/Discussion
<p>Kate Wilson, Commission Administrator</p> <p>Public Comment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Agenda: Commission Consolidation Concept, ACTION: Approve 5/11/22 Minutes & FY23 revised budget, Staff Report (activities, budget, grants, projects, MT Waters campaign launch, strategic planning process, etc.), Columbia River Basin Restoration Grant Presentation, Growth & Development Panel, wrap up, next steps, next meeting topics, public comment & adjourn. Field trip and social to follow. • Thank you to previous FBC commissioners: Lech Naumovich (FCD) and Mark Reller (BPA). • Welcome to new FBC commissioners: Lee Anderson (FWP), Dave Roemer (Glacier NP), Gordon Ash (FCD), and James (Jim) Ferch (DNRC). • Public Comment: None
<p>Kristen Juras, Lieutenant Governor</p> <p>Kerry Davant, DNRC Deputy Director</p> <p>Mark Bostrom, CARD Division Administrator</p> <p>Kate Wilson, Commission Administrator</p>	<p>Commission Consolidation Concept</p> <p>Introduction from Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept arose from Governor Gianforte’s Red Tape Relief Initiative. State has more than 160 boards and commissions. Discussed with Senator Cuffe. Bill to consolidate the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC³) and the FBC. The goal is to provide more efficient government and improve operations while continuing to provide the best service to citizens. <p>Introduction and Overview from Director Amanda Kaster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FBC has played a pivotal role in the last 39 years in natural resource protection and meeting community needs. • However, we do see some areas where we can gain efficiencies, offer more support to watersheds in the Montana portion of the Columbia River Basin headwaters, and still ensure a focus on key water quality and AIS issues. • The FBC currently has 3 FTE, 2 of which already serve both commissions. • The annual operating budget of FBC is currently \$281,511 which includes funds for staff salaries and benefits, non-point source pollution mitigation and mapping projects, outreach and education, member travel, meetings, and supplies. We are proposing that the budgets of the two commissions be consolidated. • DNRC reviewed the organization and roles of the boards and commissions administratively attached to us to determine if their operations could be streamlined or consolidated as part of the Governor’s Red Tape Relief Initiative. • History and mission of UC³ is to “protect the aquatic environment in Montana tributaries to the Columbia River from the threat of AIS to protect water resources, downstream interests, and the economic and ecological vitality of the region.” Created in the 2017 session. • But things have changed since 2017 – FWP has made enormous improvements to the AIS program. The UC³ has worked closely with FWP to ensure that this comprehensive program is preventing AIS to the best of Montana’s ability. It is proposed that this would

continue with the new Western Montana Conservation Commission as AIS remains a specific duty in statute.

- The Columbia River Basin is of utmost importance to the west – it supports hydropower generation across the Pacific Northwest; irrigation for crops; municipal drinking water; and more. It remains that last major river drainage known to be free of zebra and quagga mussels. We intend to continue our fight to protect our waters with the standing up the new Commission this session – perhaps in new and creative ways given that the Columbia River Basin also suffers from water quality issues in many areas.
- We believe that this would be a great opportunity not only to gain efficiencies for staffing, but also to provide the adaptability to assess the needs of the many important watersheds of western MT, and to be positioned well to support, assist, and lead projects needed by the individual basins and/or communities therein.
- This would allow for the Commission to focus on protecting and conserving aquatic resources across the board in western MT and being a convener, a facilitator, and an umbrella to support and assist our western watersheds.
- We could gain efficiencies in staffing, appointments, technical services, and administrative oversight with the combining of the UC³ with the duties of the FBC.
- This consolidation would allow for FBC’s critical natural resource focused mission, and track record of community-focused projects to be expanded to the entire Upper Columbia Basin, an area critical to MT and our many downstream partners.

Overview of Bill from Kate Wilson

- Currently FBC has 14 voting members and 1 vacancy.
- New bill proposes 15 voting members. Governor shall appoint 8 of the voting members and remaining 7 voting members shall be selected by sector/association.
 - Idea behind sector selected members is that the associations/organizations making appointments know which representatives would be most interested and engaged, promotes enhanced participation.
- 8 governor-appointed members shall represent: the hydropower utility industry or an electric cooperative; a private landowner who is a member of an irrigation district; a private citizen who is at-large; a representative of a private industry; and a director, officer, staff, or member of a natural resource, conservation, or recreation organization representing different geographic areas, including upper Clark Fork River basin, lower Clark Fork River basin, Kootenai River basin, and Flathead River basin.
- 7 “sector-selected” members shall be appointed by and represent the following sectors: MACO (one representative from county larger than 100,000 residents and one representative from county smaller than 100,000 residents), MACD (2 CD representatives), MT League of Cities and Towns (one wastewater utility representative from municipality greater than 20,000 residents), MT Rural Water Association (one representative from local water and sewer district), and CSKT Natural Resource Dept.
 - Both FBC and UC³ have a CSKT voting member. In this bill we specify NRD-appointed by CSKT tribal council. A tribal council member, is the representative on UC³.
- Ex officio members (non-voting) representing: DEQ; DNRC; FWP; department of transportation (DOT); department of commerce (DOC); UM; EPA; USDA, NRCS; USDA, USFS Region 1; DOI, BOR; DOI, USGS; and BPA.
 - DOT – owns a lot of stormwater infrastructure and would improve communication with them
 - DOC – conducts studies/research on population and growth trends in MT

- UM – FLBS is a key partner on many projects, could be nominated by university president
- USFS - Current FBC statute specifies positions to serve as members (superintendent, forest supervisor), does not specific position in new bill, just specifies region.
- Kate didn't highlight aspects of the draft bill that would remain the same.
- Commission members would have staggered terms, but everyone would be appointed at the same time. To ensure there's continuity in the transition, two current commission members from both commissions (FBC and UC³) will be appointed to the new commission. Current commission members would be appointed by two commissions, and a request would be sent to the governor to appoint these members to the new commission.
- Mission: To protect the existing high quality of Western MT's aquatic environment and the natural resources and environment of Wester MT
 - "Aquatic resources" – incorporated AIS into water quality duties
- New Duties: 5-year monitoring strategy, ensure the continuation of a comprehensive aquatic invasive species prevention program
 - Many of the duties from the FBC will remain the same in new bill.
 - Biennial report
- Funding aspect remains the same as both commission in current statutes.

Discussion:

- Q: What are some examples of natural resource conservation organization?
 - A: Bitterroot Chapter of MTU, Swan Valley Connections, Blackfoot Challenge - individual members representing larger organizations.
- Q: Is two representatives enough to be fully representative of the full upper Columbia?
 - A: There was a lot of thought put into this on how to structure this to keep the commission small but allow these organizations to self-select the representatives that will have the most interest. MT Rural Water and other sectors will be asked to carefully consider and select wisely.
- Q: What if all the representatives are in a similar area within the basin?
 - A: Terms are staggered and expire every four years, so if the reps are close, they could be dispersed during reappointments or self-selections. Also, this is why there are sub-basin representative organizations built into the membership.
- Comment: There's a risk of who is appointed and potential dilution of focus when bringing two groups together that focus on different issues. We must keep the focus strong on the issues as we combine these into one group, adding in focus on AIS without diluting from water quality issues.
- Q: Would like to see how the engagement will be distributed and how responsibilities will be dispersed, both regarding commission members and staff.
 - A: These concerns pertain to creating the bylaws and would be addressed once the bill has been finalized and passed through the session. Some areas may have a need to focus on one particular issue, say if there is a group already covering AIS in an area then this commission can fill when it comes to water quality concerns. There's a lot of similarity in how FBC and UC³ are structured already.
- Q: Have you considered a representative from the MT Bureau of Mines and Geology?
 - A: Will consider, but USGS and UM (FLBS) are currently proposed (scientific perspective).
- **Action:** Edit in bill where ex-officio members are listed and correct 'National Forest' representative to 'U.S. Forest Service' representative (and throughout for consistency).

- Comment: FLBS would be glad to participate in new commission.
- Q: Both DOI and USDA are on the ex officio list twice?
 - A: No, USDA would appoint both an NRCS and a USFS representative, and DOI would appoint both a BOR and USGS representative.
- Comment: It will be tough to find someone at UM/FLBS who is familiar with the science in the Flathead, Clark Fork and Kootenai Rivers. That is a large geographic area, and the watersheds have very different geologies and water quality issues. Folks at UM in Missoula tend to focus on the Clark Fork, and FLBS focuses on the Flathead and Kootenai.
- Q: No mention of governance in the bill?
 - A: Only thing written into the bill is that the chair will be elected by the members. The rest will be developed in the bylaws upon creation.
- Q: Would this change the role of the commission from advisory to regulatory? Who will the commission answer to – would it be Director Kaster?
 - A: Section 6 of draft bill outlines commission authority. Role of commission would remain advisory/non-regulatory. All goes through the director of DNRC to the governor.
- Q: Is there a reason we haven't included eastern MT and Yellowstone in the bill?
 - A: There are similar bodies that already exist in Central and Eastern MT and a handful of councils for Yellowstone and Missouri. That doesn't exist on the west side, and this specifies/emphasizes the headwaters of the Columbia River.
 - Agriculture reigns supreme on the east/central sides of state, and the CDs do a good job of coordinating over there. CD councils are not administrative attachments; they are formed by the CDs because they choose to create them.
- Comment: USACE and BOR should have both seats at the table in the ex-officio role.
- **Action:** Explore and/or edit membership in bill to include representatives from both US Army Corps of Engineers and BOR.
- Comment: Expressed concerns about dilution. We're already having conversations within FBC about which WQ priorities we can reasonably take on given the size of the watershed, capacity, multiple partners, and limited budget – this will only become harder with a larger geographic area. Worried that this consolidation will prevent the new commission from sustaining some of the initiatives and focus that FBC has been able to make progress with.
 - Response: Maybe we set priorities per basin – would be up to the new commission to decide. All the sub-basins of the Upper Columbia would benefit from the work we've done here in the Flathead.
- Comment: Also worried about dilution of priorities. Growth in the Flathead is phenomenal – with a bigger area and more people at the table, someone will lose on this, and it's going to be the Flathead. Here there's been such a concerted effort to bring projects forward, and he sees that being lost under the larger commission. Sees a larger staff as necessary to execute the needs of the new commission with the focus necessary.
 - Response: Organizations that try to run at too big of a scale eventually fall (ex: tri-state water quality council). But with a solid staff and good representation this could be successful. Currently, water quality issues and solutions are being pulled together as one-off solutions by different groups. If there was one organization that could be a comprehensive group for the west slope, it could be successful. UC³ has the largest scale but a very narrow focus of AIS – FBC has a broad focus but a comparatively small area.

- Q: Sees how much City of Kalispell has been able to get done with FBC's collaboration. How capacity might be managed to keep the engagements of the existing partnerships with the expansion?
 - A: The strength of staff can bring this forward. There has to be engagement between NPS people and the cities that are bearing the burden of pollution control. There's a need for a more coordinated body to engage across all of the organizations and groups as multiple watersheds are affected by each other's WQ challenges. There is an advantage of the representatives in the statute across the four basins.
 - Casey sees benefit of additional staff to support the additional area.
- Comment: Consolidation would streamline administrative purposes. Maybe there is a committee for each of the subbasins to maintain focus. There is an advantage to the expanding our current Flathead projects (ex: septic risk model) to neighboring watersheds that could benefit. We could help, convene, and support so many organizations that have similar issues to what we're experiencing in the Flathead.
- Comment: Both FBC and UC³ have heavily relied on committees to provide advice to the commission and also to bring in experts on each topic/area. Committees should be well thought out in the bylaw creation. Advocates that we think about the staffing issues – more staff will likely be needed for the larger area.
- Comment: As you grow bigger, there is a little bit of dilution that inevitably occurs. One way to solve is to rely on sub-committees to not lose that focus and maintain local emphasis (ex: interagency grizzly bear).
 - Response: Once membership of new commission is approved, all of that could be structured in the bylaws – what are the priorities for the work plan, how do we structure these committees, etc.
- Comment: Supports any influx of capacity being added to the NPS issue. DEQ had a 5-year NPS plan, but amount of funding determines what projects they're able to focus on (~1 million dollars a year through EPA). Addressing NPS is voluntary and the crux of doing that is how do you convince private landowners to take the issue on – DEQ's approach is to work with local groups to focus on their priorities (ex: Clark Fork and Kootenai River Basin councils). How would the new commission work with DEQ and the local organizations together on NPS issues?
 - Response: This expanded commission with a bigger geographical area could leverage and provide the forum to pull all these partners together. Back to the idea of committees – actionable groups that could be effective.
 - Q: Does this concept step on the toes of any watershed groups?
 - Response: There won't be any stepping on toes, but it will be very complex and present challenges. Sees the consolidation as a reconfiguration of the same bureaucracy that we're already dealing with. Not seeing how the consolidation will make FCD's life easier.
- Comment: UC³ worked at the scale it did because it was working on a common threat – AIS. When it comes to WQ, there's not a lot of commonalities among the different watersheds in the Upper Columbia – the other watersheds have totally different thing than other watersheds focus on. Existing high WQ in the Flathead needs to be protected; Kootenai and Clark Fork watersheds are highly impacted watersheds (historic mining) that require restoration. The loser of this proposal is the Flathead Watershed because FBC has been around for a long time and been very successful in protecting WQ. All FBC meetings have more than enough to discuss, and we don't get to enough of the issues in the Flathead, so when we move to a bigger area there will absolutely be dilution and the

issues in the Flathead Basin will not be a top priority. Will be difficult to pull together the people who have the local knowledge of all these diverse basins.

- Comment: She's a CD specialist that represents CDs in the western portion of the state, most of which have very small staff and few resources. Because of this, CDs have little capacity to coordinate with other CDs in their area and are looking for regional coordination. With UC³ they were able to provide the zoomed-out view and provide the broader view that could be very beneficial to the bigger area.
- Q: Has anyone approached BC about this consolidation concept?
 - A: We've had a non-voting provincial seat on FBC since its conception (mining representative), but it hasn't been filled since the 1990s. On CMP, we have a BC seat, and no one is participating. It's been hard to engage with BC – they are not in the bill draft, but their participation is still desired. We'll need to approach it in different ways.
- Comment: Both these groups have been highly effective and much appreciated by NPS. We just want to ensure that this group stays effective, and you don't spread yourself too thin.
- Comment: In expanding to this larger area, we have 3 USFS regions and 3 regions with FWP. The citizens of the Flathead Basin will lose when we try to get that zoomed-out view with the larger commission. What FBC does and accomplishes is incredible for the citizens of the Flathead Valley and with the drastic amount of growth our local problems and needs are only going to increase.
- Comment: Study bill through EQC to fund CDs. What EQC found was a lack of capacity – incredible amount of attrition because they cannot pay their staff well and don't have benefits. Lots of disparity in the capacities of CDs across the state (ex: Lake CD has to come to DNRC to even afford a full-time staffer). There is a capacity issue at the watershed group level with small communities. The thing that makes FBC effective is that they can work with some functional groups. Capacity issues are being addressed with DNRC/ARPA funding, but the coordinating issue needs to be addressed – would be the main role of the new commission.
- Comment: This has been a very helpful conversation. We will be meeting with UC³ on October 27th in Helena and getting their comments. We will then be circling back as a team to discuss comments and deciding a way to move forward.
 - Themes addressed in conservation: Concerns about capacity and dilution of priorities, is staff administration going to be easier at larger geographic area?
- **Action:** Schedule a smaller virtual meeting after the UC³ meeting (Nov) for updates.
- **Action:** Prepare materials to delineate between what is created in bylaws vs. statute to discuss at Nov meeting.
- Comment: FWP has a well-run AIS program already – it's been hard to find ways to support their efforts without duplication in UC³. It would be a great benefit to cut half on administrative duties and then provide support or more focus to the issues that need more attention.
- Comment: FWP-perspective (fisheries) – there's a big difference between the types of species and challenges across the different basins, but there's not necessarily different approaches that are required to deal with them.
- **Action:** Share UC³ 10-27-22 meeting minutes with the group.
- Comment: The comments from Mark suggest that each of the communities of northwest MT deserve additional resources to manage their water resources and not a small slice of a small pie that is currently FBC. Kate and her staff have done amazing work given their capacity. Thanks Kate and team.

<p>Approval of Minutes</p>	<p>Staff Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion to approve minutes from 5/11/22 meeting (Jack). Second (Randy). All in favor. <i>Motion passes.</i> • The FBC Executive Committee meets every other Tuesday at 11:15am, meetings are open to everyone, and allow us to conduct business between quarterly meetings. If you are interested in attending, please let staff know.
<p>Staff Updates</p> <p>Kate Wilson, Commission Administrator</p>	<p>Sources of Funding FY23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State fiscal year = July 1- June 30 • Natural Resources Operating Fund FY23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$156,772- base budget & OTO now permanent (operating) • Federal: EPA Multipurpose State & Tribal Assistance Grants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete \$51,113 expended- EPA grant 1 (stormwater project, 2 years) ○ In progress \$12,777/\$26,191- EPA grant 2 (septic leachate GIS mapping; synthetic DNA study) ○ In progress \$0/\$25,576- EPA grant 3 (Nonpoint Source Pollution Coordinator + BSWC member) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ \$16, 111 to NPS Coordinator’s salary/benefits (\$66k total) ▪ \$6,250 to BSWC member (\$12,500 total) ▪ \$3,125 indirect (DNRC) <p>Existing Contracts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Design Group—septic leachate risk mapping & additional technical support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$39,800 expended/\$39,800 – COMPLETE/CLOSED • Windfall—website, water quality campaign development, reports & publications, graphic design, advertising, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$23,872 expended/\$35,000 (Balance: \$11,128) ○ Amendment in progress – requesting to add \$40,000 and one year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FBC operating funds + FY22 accrual ▪ Websites! Biennial report, campaign design/materials • Cornell University – Synthetic DNA tracer project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tracer development, lab analysis and report ○ \$9,483 expended/\$23,550 ○ \$14,898 from EPA grant; \$8,652 from operating funds • Conservation Media – Videography projects, NEW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MT Waters campaign (x3 PSA style videos); 3 years ○ \$0 expended/\$20,500
<p>Budget Updates</p>	<p>FY23 Line-Item Proposed Budget Amendments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red is amount expended to date (10/6/22); blue is proposed change • \$20,000/\$52,000 FBC Nonpoint Source Coordinator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Position to build capacity – comes out of operations until can get FTE ○ Previously approved for \$66,000; \$16,111 now coming from EPA grant • \$3,760/\$28,000 Nonpoint source/water quality projects & support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Previously approved for \$21,250 ○ May include: SDNA study (\$8,652), BSWC Member – ½ of position cost (\$6,250), stormwater mitigation and outreach (\$5,000), septic risk map – southern basin, digitization of septic permit data, monitoring, additional studies, etc. • \$7,746/\$50,000 Education & Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Previously approved for \$21,250

Kate Wilson,
Commission
Administrator

- Additional support for creation of materials, content, and website for MT Waters campaign
- **\$1,641/\$7,000** Member travel/meetings & sponsorships
- **\$1,800/\$5,000** Conference/meeting sponsorships
 - Prioritize MT-based events. Examples: CMP, NALMS, MT Stormwater Conference
 - Includes water quality rotunda event for upcoming legislative session
 - Previously approved for \$2,500
- **\$5,222/\$9,000** Staff supplies/Travel
 - Additional staff, more activities/travel require more resources in this category
 - May include: cell phones, printing, training, FBC-related travel, etc.
 - Previously approved for \$4,000
- **\$1,078/\$5,000** Other/Contingency funds
- **TOTAL: \$41,247/\$156,000 operating- \$114.753 remaining**

Discussion:

- **Motion** to approve the FY23 revised budget (Jack). Second (Gordon). All in favor. *Motion passes.*

FY23 Sponsorships

TIER 1 = MT-based org/event in MT addressing relevant natural resource issues (Up to \$5k)

TIER 2 = Outside MT but priority content (Up to \$2,500)

- Recap of FY22 Sponsorships: \$6,000 total
 - NALMS 2021 (virtual) \$2,500
 - NALMS 2022 (MN) \$2,500
 - MWCC Watershed Tour \$1,000
- FY23 Sponsorships: \$5,000
 - MWCC Annual Membership \$250
 - Western States Water Council \$1,800
 - Water quality rotunda event \$1,450
 - Crown Managers Partnership \$1,500
 - Other?

Current Committee Membership

- **Executive Committee:** Rich Janssen (Chair), Vice Chair (Casey Lewis), DNRC representative (Jim Ferch), Jasmine Courville-Brown, Sandy Beder-Miller (member-at-large), staff
- **Onsite Wastewater Treatment Committee:** Mike Koopal (Chair), Ryan Richardson (Vice-Chair), Casey Lewis (FBC/City of Kalispell), Abigail St Lawrence, Andy Crites, Beth Norberg/Pat Klever (Lewis & Clark County), Craig Kendall (USFS), Daniel Congdon (former DEQ), Rep. Dave Fern, Dean Sirucek (retired NRCS), Diana Luke (Lake County), Eric Bryson (MT Assoc. of Counties), Eric Regensburger (DEQ), Eric Trum/Meagan Gilmore (DEQ), Erica Wirtala/Sam Sill (NW MT Assoc. of Realtors), Evan Smith (CSKT), Hailey Graf (DNRC), Heidi Fleury (LCCD), Jeff Tuttle (Flathead Lakers), Jim Baker (FLMR), Karin Hilding (City of Whitefish), Keely Larson, Kelly Lynch (MT League of Cities & Towns), Kerry Nuckles/Kristal Kiel (Flathead County), Lamont Kinkade, Marie Watson, Matt Church (FLBS), Mayre Flowers (Citizens for a Better Flathead), Myla Kelly (DEQ), Nanette Nelson (FLBS), Peter Brumm (EPA), Roger Noble (Flathead County), Sam Bourret (FWP), Samantha Tappenbeck (FCD), Sandy Beder-Miller (FBC), Sandy Lang (MT Municipal Interlocal Authority), Sarah Halvorson (UM), Steve Rosso (Flathead Lakers), Susie Turner

<p>Committee & Project Updates</p> <p>Emilie Henry, NPS Coordinator</p>	<p>(City of Kalispell), Tim Burton (MT League of Cities & Towns), Todd Walter (Cornell Univ), Tom Bansak (FLBS), Tom Cowan (Carver Engineering), Tom Cox (Flathead Lakers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & Outreach Steering Committee: Casey Lewis (Chair), Lech Naumovich (co-chair), Tom Bansak (FLBS), Ian Withrow (FLBS), Samantha Tappenbeck/Gordon Ash (FCD), Kate Sheridan/Constanza van der Pahlen (Flathead Lakers), Cynthia Ingelfinger (WLI), Sheena Pate (Geotourism Council/FRA), Evan Smith (CSKT), Eric Trum/Meagan Gilmore (DEQ), Heidi Fleury (LCCD), FBC staff • Technical Committee Core Team: Mike Koopal (Chair), Myla Kelly (DEQ), Ryan Richardson (The Barn Group), Tom Bansak (FLBS), Sam Bourret (FWP), Rachel Malison (FLBS), CSKT – TBD, staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supplemental Members (based on project/need): <i>Septic leachate project(s); Stormwater project(s); Monitoring (potential)</i> <p>Discussion: NSF workshop outcomes will be taken to the ONWW treatment committee for discussion and to move forward.</p> <p>Septic Leachate Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget for Septic Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EPA Grant (2020-2022) - \$26k ○ FBC Operating Funds (FY23) - \$28k • Flathead Basin Wastewater Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thank you, Saige! – BSWC terms ends in Nov ○ \$30k in FBC FY22 operating to fund septic cost-share program, BSWC member, & support program operations • Synthetic DNA Study - Whitefish & Lake Mary Ronan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tracer deployment (May-June 2022) - <i>Complete</i> ○ Sampling (May-October 2022) – <i>In Progress</i> ○ Data Analysis (June-December 2022) – <i>In Progress</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some data received but not enough to analyze trends • Septic Risk Assessment: Report & Products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Internal Peer Review - <i>Complete</i> ○ External Peer Review - <i>In Progress</i> ○ Unpermitted Systems Analysis - <i>Complete</i> ○ Publicly available, interactive GIS risk tool – <i>In Progress</i> ○ Road show and/or webinar sharing model with planning departments, local gov, partners, etc. – <i>Complete</i> • National Science Foundation Septic/Water Quality Workshop – June 9-10 @ FLBS - <i>Complete</i> <p>NSF Septic/WQ Workshop – June 9-10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Connect science, technology, policy and education ○ Share lessons learned from policies and programs ○ Foster stakeholder communication ○ Define challenges and knowledge gaps ○ Prioritize research and scalable technology ○ Provide support/key findings to the FBC • 50 attendees representing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legislative & local leaders; researchers & scholars; regulatory & water quality agencies; interested parties and partner organizations
--	---

Committee & Project Updates

Emilie Henry,
NPS Coordinator

- **Key Takeaways:**
 - Gathered diverse group of experts, advocates, decision makers, and field staff to discuss complex scientific, social, and economic perspectives
 - The magnitude of the septic issue needs to be better understood, quantified and shared to mobilize the public/decision-makers
 - A multi-pronged solution that moves toward centralized systems, better addresses replacements, upgrades & maintenance of existing systems, incorporates cutting-edge waste management technologies is required to solve this complex water quality issue

Septic “Road Show” – Aug 31-Sept 1

- **Attendance:** Flathead & Lake Counties (Commissioners, Environmental Health staff, Planning staff, Health Board members, conservation districts), CSKT Tribal Council, Municipalities (Kalispell, Ronan), Water & Sewer Districts (Lakeside and Evergreen), Agencies and Partners (DEQ & Flathead Lakers)
- **Highlights**
 - Septic risk assessment identified as useful by staff- an additional “screening tool”
 - Support from Lake County Commissioners and Tribal Council (some data with the Salish & Kootenai Housing Authority) to digitize permit data in southern basin
- Lake County interested in possibly digitizing their permits and sharing but they needed to discuss internally, and we will follow up on this topic.
- Perk is decreasing burden on county staff because the public could find general/baseline information on their own (do they have a permit, how old is it, what is it for, etc.); would also allow for safer data storage and easier data management
- **Next Steps:** Publish online, interactive GIS risk tool (in progress); present public webinar for engineers, real-estate agents, partners, etc.

Discussion

- Q: Funding to support the building out of the model in the southern basin?
 - A: DNRC contract cap moving to \$10k so we can still utilize Ryan, will come out of the NPS project line-item budget and there are possible grant opportunities available.
- Q: What does the maintenance of the model entail?
 - A: Recommend updating every ~3 years once the county permit database is updated. Emilie getting to a point that she could do this internally.
- Comment: Use this tool for the assistance grants for a landowner to show they are in a high-risk area and in need of assistance.

Stormwater Projects

- **Rain Garden Initiative**
 - July Walking Tour: 25 participants, 40+ on waitlist; toured 5 rain gardens in downtown Kalispell
- **Adopt-a-Drain – NEW, partnership with City of Kalispell**
 - Goal: To raise awareness for stormwater pollution by encouraging residents of Kalispell to adopt and regularly clean a local storm drain
 - Website is live! – Welcome Packet and Training Video online for more details
 - Next Steps:
 - Finalizing intro/advertising video
 - Marketing and spreading the word

Committee & Project Updates

Cassidy Bender,
Commission
Coordinator

- **Approved for BSWC Member in 2023** – focus on stormwater and E&O

Education & Outreach

Montana Waters: Clearly Connected Campaign

- Primary Campaign Goals: 1) **Increase public awareness of water quality issues** threatening the pristine water quality of the Flathead Basin, ultimately enhancing personal behaviors and inspiring residents and visitors to take pride and responsibility in conservation efforts. 2) **Increase coordination and collaboration with partners** working on water quality issues in the Flathead Basin by increasing consistency of messaging, improving accessibility and awareness of available resources, and enhancing partnership opportunities.
- 9/22 E & O Committee meeting
- ‘Soft’ launch underway: Sharing promotional materials, tabling at community events, getting the logo out there
 - MT Waters table/swag at: NSF Septic Workshop @ FLBS; Flathead Waterways Cleanup @ Sacred Waters Brewing; NW Montana Fair & Rodeo; Septic ‘Pump Party’ @ Flathead Lakers; Septic Leachate/GIS Map ‘Road Show’; MWCC Watershed Tour

2022 Flathead Waters Cleanup – Aug 13th

- 210+ volunteers cleaned up 5,100+ pounds of trash and debris and improved over 140 miles of riverbank and lakeshore
- Afterparty hosted at Sacred Waters Brewing in Kalispell – wildly successful and very fun, lots of community and partner support

Currently in Development

- **Water quality PSA videos**
 - Contract with Conservation Media in Missoula
 - 4 short water quality focused videos on nonpoint source pollution issues
 - Topics: Campaign focused, stormwater, septic leachate, agricultural runoff, erosion, and/or education/outreach messaging.
- **Montana Waters website**
 - About the Flathead Watershed: Indigenous History (under review by Salish/Kootenai culture committees); GIS map of waterbodies with impairments
 - About Campaign: Interactive version of Clearly Connected graphic
 - What You Can Do: Top actions, map of partner organizations, volunteer opportunities with partner programs and links
 - Resources Available: Logo, custom waterbody logos, brand/style guide; PSA videos; billboard ads, print advertisements, social media/digital ad files; sticker, magnets and other material designs; water quality infographics, factsheets, printable brochures, flyers, etc.; contact us form to start a new project!
- **‘Clearly Connected’ Infographic**
 - Introductory messaging about what ‘Clearly Connected’ really means, showing whole picture of water quality
 - Idea originated with Living in the Flathead Guide
 - ‘Sister’ graphic with clear actions

Future Plans and Tasks

- **Internal Launch - Partner**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share within agencies/to partners with press release, video, and notice of materials available (swag, rack cards, stickers, and more)! ○ Partner meeting (with original 50+ partners) to present materials ● External Launch - Public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2023 Events: Water Quality Rotunda Event, Flathead Waters Cleanup, workshops, more pump parties, etc. ○ 2023 Outreach Plan: Billboards, video PSA runs, geo-targeting/native content advertisements, etc. ● Other Future Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flathead Rivers Alliance and FCD purchasing river clean up bags and placing 'MT Waters' bag pick up stations across the Flathead Basin ● 2023 BSWC member to focus on FBC projects and E&O! <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Q: Are there metrics for measuring the effectiveness of a campaign like this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A: Something we've thought about but it's tricky – will discuss at next E&O meeting ● Action: Address metrics for measuring effectiveness of E&O efforts with committee <p>Upcoming Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whitefish Lake Institute Science Quencher– October 14th 5-7pm, Whitefish Lodge (Emilie presenting!) ● Montana Invasive Species Council Summit– October 25th-26th, Helena ● Upper Columbia Conservation Commission Meeting- October 27th, Helena ● North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA)– Nov 7-11th Sanibel, FL ● North American Lakes Management Society (NALMS)– Nov 14-17th Minneapolis, MN ● FBC Sponsoring: Emilie & Cassidy attending/presenting ● Legislative Info Session: Invasive Species– February 22nd, 2023 ● Legislative Info Session: Water Quality Rotunda Event– March 10th, 2023
<p>Columbia River Basin Restoration Program</p> <p>Peter Brumm, EPA R8 Program Coordinator</p>	<p>Program & Basin Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program Vision Statement: “The EPA Columbia River Basin Restoration Program will be a catalyst for basin wide toxics reduction work efforts, enabling communities to access unimpaired watersheds with healthy fish and wildlife.” ● Basin Background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One of North America’s largest watersheds ○ Includes parts of 7 states including significant portions of ID, MT, OR, and WA ○ Provides vital cultural, environmental, economic, and social benefits to millions <p>Importance of Toxics Reduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Past research and monitoring show toxics are present and widely distributed across the Basin that harm fish, wildlife, and human health ● Reducing toxics in fish is critical to protecting Tribal Human Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Columbia River Basin Tribal people have lived here for more than 10,000 years ○ Tribal people eat far more fish than most other residents ○ Toxics in fish pose unacceptable health risks to Tribal people and other high fish consuming populations ○ The Columbia River Basin Restoration Program grew from our work with Tribes to reduce their exposure to toxics from high fish consumption <p>Foundational Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1992 National Study of Chemical Residues in Fish

- 1994 EPA/CRITFC Fish Consumption Survey
- 2009 State of River Report for Toxics
- 2010 Columbia River Basin Action Plan
- 2014 Strategy for Chemicals of Emerging Concern

2016 CRB Restoration Act

- Amended Clean Water Act by creating Section 123 and directed EPA to:
 - Establish a Columbia River Basin Restoration Grant Program to support voluntary actions to reduce and assess toxics throughout the Basin
 - Establish a Working Group representative of states, tribal governments, and other entities in the Basin
- Elevates Columbia to short list of nationally significant waters called out in the Clean Water Act – only CWA geographic program in R8
- Work under CWA Section 123
 - 2019 Formalized Working Group; State of the River Report Update
 - 2020 Issued 1st Round of Grants; Contaminants of Concern Framework & Reference List
 - 2022 Program Report Update; Issued 2nd Round of Grants
- CRB Restoration Working Group:
 - Collaboration among tribal governments, states, industry, NGOs, etc.
 - Meets twice annually – next meeting on 10/20/22 meeting (open to public)
 - MT participants: DEQ, Missoula Valley WQ District, Clark Fork Coalition, TU

Competitive Grants

- Eligible grant recipients: state gov, tribal gov, regional water pollution control agencies and entities, local gov, NGOs, or CDs (not included are for profit, federal agencies, and private landowners)
- Allowed Activities: eliminating or reducing pollution, cleaning up contaminated sites, improving WQ, monitoring to evaluate trends, reducing runoff, protecting habitat, or promoting citizen engagement or knowledge
- Funding Details: 2 rounds of funding to date (<\$350k projects), 3 upcoming opportunities
- Existing Grants in MT
 - 2020 UM/FLBS/CSKT – Flathead Lake food web sampling and fish consumption advisory awareness; Nanette Nelson is principal investigator; [Link](#) to view Fact Sheet
 - 2022 Grants: MT TU fish tissue study, Salmon Safe’s Trout Safe Initiative, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Kootenai monitoring, UConn selenium fish otolith Kootenai study
 - [Link](#) to more info on all grants

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding

- \$79 million BIL over the next five years + ~\$1.5 million annual appropriation = ~\$16 million a year
- Support program development, provide technology transfer, deliver grant funds, and support partnerships
- Coordinate work efforts and information exchange across the Basin to increase monitoring
- Build on previous successes
- Prioritize support to Tribes and other communities with increased risk for toxics exposure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize actions over pure monitoring projects – 100% monitoring work unlikely to be funded • 25% non-federal match required - in-kind match allowed (staff time, etc.) <p>Upcoming Grants - 3 New RFAs in late 2022/early 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal Government RFA – match requirement waived <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timeframe-RFA open 10/31/22-1/31/22 ○ Amount -\$16M total available; ~\$1M per award ○ Work period -4-7 years of funding ○ Informational webinars 9/21 & 9/27 –recordings available ○ Link to view fact sheet • Fund-the-Funder RFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timeframe–RFA targeted to open in November/December 2022 ○ Amount: Multi-million-dollar award (~\$5-8M) ○ Work period: multi-year workplan; incrementally funded ○ To support program development, fund staff, implement projects and/or run sub-award program • 3rd General RFA • Multiple entities can apply for multiple grant opportunities (i.e. Tribal gov can apply for both Tribal RFA and Fund-the-Funder RFA) • May even have monitoring specific RFA at some point in the future <p>Next Steps for Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants: Continue to manage 14 inaugural grants; complete awarding 25 new grants in Oct 2022; issue 3 new RFAs • Working Group: Continue engagement with working group and toxics monitoring sub-group; increase engagement with ID, MT, and WY • Ways to get Involved: Website link, participate in working group next meeting (10/20), reach out to Peter (brumm.peter@epa.gov), apply for upcoming grant, partner with another grantee <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q: Because the grants are competitive, is there a ranking criteria that would favor TMDLs, working plans, etc.? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A: The criteria does not get that deep, the grant process is not contingent on TMDLs. • FBC interested in partnering with another entity such as DEQ or CSKT. With the capacity discussion, this could be a great opportunity for MT. FCD was contacted by someone at EPA about our collaborative rain garden initiative – we are already doing things that could be fundable.
<p>Growth & Development in the Flathead Basin</p>	<p>Pete Melnick, Flathead County Administrator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three principles that the county has to do: Respect the traditions/past, delivering in the present, and predicting the future • County is not focused on either promoting or limiting growth; they are looking to create the space where people can grow if they want to. • County’s role is to respond to emergencies and growth challenges and to be nimble to adjust/respond to needs within the county. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q: Issue of capacity – are we meeting our responsibilities towards natural resource protection? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A: The county is building those systems to address/manage that growth.

Panel Presentations

- County Commissioners meeting on Tues 10/11 on buy/sell agreement for property for the regional biosolids facility (~\$20-million total cost). Property is adjacent to the Lakeside water and sewer district.
- **Action:** Kate to write a letter or provide testimony at meeting in support of the septic biosolids facility.
- Q: Where in the county is the most growth occurring?
 - A: West valley is growing most. County does not have a strong voice in the county in support of more zoning laws. There is a loud voice in the county in opposition of any more zoning.

Amy Dexter, Flathead County Finance Director

- Flathead County is limited in its budget. Only two ways the county can get more tax dollars: inflation and new properties.
- It can take up to 3-4 years for new properties to show up on tax revenue.
- Handout on MCA 15-10-420

Racene Friede, Glacier Country Tourism MT Dept. of Commerce

- GCT is a regional nonprofit organization with a focus on ensuring economic sustainability while preserving the quality of life for residents and quality of place for visitors
- Region: Flathead, Glacier, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, and Sanders counties
- Organizational Roles:
 - Destination Marketing: Promotes a community as an attractive travel destination and enhances its public image as a dynamic place to live and visit.
 - Destination Management: Develops partnerships with various organizations and stakeholders to support a strong tourism economy and quality visitor experiences.
 - Destination Stewardship: With a 'community-first' mindset, supports creating a thriving tourism economy that address community priorities while protecting and supporting a destination's unique assets.
- Shift after 2016 from destination marketing to destination management, to now destination stewardship
- Why this evolution? Accelerated by influx of visitors during/following COVID
 - 3 months after COVID, GCT started hearing about an influx of people moving to the state, lack of workforce, capacity, etc.
 - Really focusing now on balancing the quality of the visitor experience with the quality of life for those who live here and measuring success against the wellbeing of our environment
- Destination Stewardship Project currently underway – goal is to develop a stewardship plan and new strategic framework for GCT
- Key issues and challenges:
 - Community capacity challenges must be addressed through both seasonal and geographic visitor dispersal strategies.
 - Disrespectful and disruptive visitor behavior has increased in the past two years.
 - Lack of affordable housing is creating unlivable communities and exacerbating other challenges.
 - The impact of Montana's rapidly increasing population is sometimes confused with visitor pressures.
 - Workforce shortages in a time of increasing demand are impacting local businesses and the visitor experience.
- Core deliverable for stewardship plan is to create 5 strategic pillars with 33 actionable deliverables.

- 5 strategic pillars: Be an advocate for western Montanans; encourage responsible tourism and recreation; enhance experiences in rural communities; shape demand and disperse visitors; and foster stronger stakeholder alignment and collaboration.
- Communities surveyed will be deciding what the strategic priorities are.
- Tourism we've seen in recent years is unsustainable. We saw market correction this year in late spring likely due to global competition and borders opening back up. -22% decrease in visitors this summer, 1.63 visitor to resident ratio (2.08 previous year ratio).
- Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research statistics:
 - 12.5 million visitors in 2021 who spent \$5.15 billion in MT, (25% of this is spent in the glacier country region) - \$618 million in Flathead County and \$28 million in Lake County from nonresidents in 2021.
 - More than 68,000 jobs supported by tourism
 - \$387 million more than \$387 million generated in state and local taxes
 - Total contribution of tourism to MT's economy was \$7.56 billion in 2021.
 - 85% rate Tourism/ Outdoor Recreation as Extremely Important or Very Important to western MT's economy – tourism is in the top 2 industries for MT

Discussion:

- Comment: HH BOR has seen a huge influx of visitors and local hotels weren't giving the government rate.
 - Response: Ticketed entry at the park created a huge shift to HH BOR and river use because folks who can't get into the park until they can get into the park.
 - Average daily rate (ADR) has gone up
- GCT conducting 16 different focus groups and one-on-one interviews with prominent leaders around the counties. GCT will be circling around with those communities to touch base on those challenges and what their desired strategic planning priorities are.
 - Seeley Lake example: infrastructure issues, sewerage and difficulty obtaining septic permits, lost 2 motels to Paws Up purchasing for employee housing
 - GCT going in to see where they can help and where they can't help, maybe they can provide data.
- GCT works with Chambers of Commerce, funds them with visitor information, attends all their meetings, provides them with data, etc.
- Funded by the original lodging facility use tax

David Taylor, Whitefish Planning Director

- Whitefish is experiencing unprecedented growth – 768 new residential units in city limits since 2019, mostly single-family homes
- Some limitations in where building can take place in Whitefish due to high groundwater, steep slopes, utilities boundaries, and zoning issues. Mostly in-fill growth to avoid churning up agricultural lands on city boundary.
- Lake and River Protection:
 - Whitefish has been concerned with water quality protection for over four decades
 - 1975 Senator Bob Brown from Whitefish was concerned about water quality on Whitefish Lake and introduced a bill which became the Montana Lakeshore Protection Act
 - Gave local governing bodies primary control in protecting lakes and allowed them to adopt regulations
 - Guiding principles — work cannot materially diminish water quality, fish, or wildlife habitat, interfere with navigation or other lakeshore recreation, create a public nuisance or create a visual impact “discordant with natural scenic values.”

- Lakeshore Protection Regulations:
 - Whitefish was the first in the state to adopt local Lakeshore Protection Regulations in 1976
 - Regulations require a 20' Lakeshore Protection Zone where construction is limited to access paths and the preservation of native vegetation and trees is required.
 - In 2007, Whitefish added an additional 10' setback to the Lakeshore Protection Zone where no vertical structures could be built in order to further protect the lake and the buffer.
- 2017 Connect Whitefish Plan:
 - Whitefish has a 1999 Bike and Trail Master Plan, updated as the 2017 Connect Whitefish Plan, that calls for shared use trails along the Whitefish River
 - Shared use paths along rivers facilitate larger buffers and provide education and recreation opportunities
 - Not all sections of the trail have been built, but City has been diligent about getting easements and having developers build their portions when properties subdivide and develop
- 2022 Design Guidelines for Shared Use Paths in Riparian Areas:
 - Whitefish Parks and Public Works have put together a 2022 Design Guidelines/Best Practices manual for the construction of shared use paths in riparian areas
 - New guidelines provide a more comprehensive approach to trail construction, including tree protection, erosion and sediment control, retaining wall construction, unstable soils, and riparian vegetation protection
 - Provides predictability for coordination with other agencies such as Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and the Flathead Conservation District
- Non-Point Pollution, Septic Leachate, and Sewer Treatment
 - Whitefish Lake Institute identified Lion Mountain as a source of septic leachate into Whitefish Lake
 - City Council offered to extend sewer using a local improvement district bond without annexing them, and while some owners were on board, ultimately HOA turned down the offer due to the expense
 - The City Sewer Treatment Plant discharges into the Whitefish River. The City was issued an *Administrative Order of Consent* by DEQ in 2012 requiring us to bring our wastewater treatment process into compliance with new requirements for ammonia, nitrogen and phosphorous removal. A decade later, and over \$25M spent, the City is now operating a state-of-the-art mechanical wastewater treatment plant. The new facility was designed to meet stringent new standards, while minimizing energy requirements. Our Public Works staff is still working to optimize operations, but the new plant is another example of the City's dedication to water quality.

Discussion:

- Q: Fines for violating the riparian/lakeshore setback regulations aren't really a deterrent right now. Are there any discussions about how to make those regulations more of a deterrent for people?
 - A: Fines are set by state law – there's not a whole lot we can do. Ongoing battles to educate people.
- Q: Is there anything the City can do about Lion Mountain since they chose not to hook up to city sewer?

- A: They're out of city's jurisdiction (Flathead County), and they have septic permits. If it gets bad enough, the state can take action.
- City created ad-hoc Whitefish Community Wastewater Committee. WLI worked to get funding sources for the community, but it's a complex social, cultural issue – there are lots of reasons why people don't want to be annexed.
- Q: City helped fund Cow Creek restoration project. What was city's interest in funding that?
 - A: City is just generally interested in WQ issues.

Erica Wirtala, MT Association of Realtors

- Represents ~1300 realtors across Flathead and Lake County. Inducting ~20 new realtors, most of which are either right out of high school, undergoing midlife changes, doing side hustles, or people who have retired and want to do something on their own.
- 2019: 62 homes sold on Flathead Lake + 13 homes sold on Whitefish Lake = 75 homes total. All starting at \$1.5 million and up.
- 2020: 136 homes sold on Flathead Lake + 36 homes on Whitefish Lake = 172 homes total. Homes are dispersed around the lakes, high dollar homes.
- 2021: 85 homes sold on Flathead Lake + 13 homes on Whitefish Lake = 98 homes total
- 2022: 35 homes sold on Flathead Lake + 7 homes on Whitefish Lake = 42 homes total
- Market stats: Kalispell's median home price is decreasing at \$525,000 (peaked in April). Whitefish's median home price is \$840,000 (last month over 1 mil). Likely seeing this now because of savvier buyers/sellers and seasonal slowdown.
- In 2021, many cash offers, sight unseen, and \$50-100k over asking prices.
- Lakeside median home price going down to \$959k from 1.3 mil (peaked in Jan).
- Interest rates and inflation recently increased an average monthly payment of \$2,200 a month to around \$3,300 a month.

Discussion:

- Homes sold are likely to permanent residents. Seen an increase in corporations buying houses and using it as a short-term rental for employees. Many virtual showings during COVID – people buying houses without ever having been inside them.
- MT is one of 14 states that is a 'nondisclosure state' – this means that we don't know the final price that people pay for homes (between the buyer and their tax collector) and don't know the use of the house (Airbnb, vacation rental, etc.)
- Q: How to conduct outreach with realtors?
 - A: Realtors don't read. Erica writes an article once month in the At Home magazine. Newsletter goes out once a week.
 - They have a pot of money that goes toward outreach purchases, including the Clean Drain Dry magnets.
- **Action:** Get an article on water quality to Erica Wirtala for the NW MT Association of Realtors newsletter (coordinate with Heidi Fleury)

Jarod Nuygen, Kalispell Development Director

- [Link](#) to City of Kalispell infrastructure viewer map
- Late 90s through early 2000s, the city really started accepting and addressing the growth happening in the city – allowed them to keep on top of it
- City planned out 75-100 years regarding stormwater infrastructure, wastewater facilities, transportation. Plans all go along with the growth policy map with projected densities of commercial growth, housing, etc.
- Between 2018 and 2022, Kalispell has approved just under 5,000 units. Of that, 905 are single family homes. Current growth is not concentrated in one particular area – north, west, and south are all growing.

- Growth ebbs and flows historically, but they're not expecting that growth will slow down as much as it's done in the past.
- All these new roads constructed with these new developments are maintained by the developer. Infilling backward now – developments with wastewater, stormwater, and utilities infrastructure occurred far north that allow the city to easily fill back in the gaps with new development.
- Kalispell has annexation boundary and has development plans for all areas within this boundary if annexation was requested.
- Density increasing but is that going to be dense enough in the long run? 200 family unit apartments/condos in a relatively small area can house ~600 people that would historically have been a handful of single-family homes.
- Historical 2% annual growth, but city is currently above that.
- State minimum densities considerations with the housing task force, including providing sewer and how that affects downstream resources.
- In Flathead County, 2/3 of population is in the county and 1/3 is in the cities (usually flipped). This brings in considerations about septic, wells, etc.
- 70 to 90-foot-tall buildings will likely be the norm in the future – not only is land expensive, but it's expensive to build. Complimenting Kalispell's past while moving into the future is the goal.

Discussion:

- Q: Is there a policy regarding aging septic inside city limits?
 - A: It's a monthly or bi-monthly occurrence that septic/wells failing within the city. They can hook into city services, as long as they're in the annexation boundary. It does not require failure for the hookup, but it usually happens that way because homeowners don't want to pay impact fee for annexing (recently moved from \$12k to \$6k).
- Q: Does Kalispell's wastewater treatment plant have the capacity to keep up with this growth?
 - A: Yes – the plant was way overbuilt to begin with.
- Lakeside, Bigfork, and Evergreen are unincorporated areas and not considered cities. These communities consume a lot of county resources and are consuming more and more as they continue to grow. Getting these areas incorporated will be important for making sure growth is occurring as sustainably as possible.
- Planning for growing transportation infrastructure, police, and fire are in the works.
- Kalispell/Flathead Valley is the fastest growing micro-population area in the nation.
- USFS is at a turning point on how to think about planning and growth and need to figure out a way to get ahead and prepare for the growth (ex: Holland Lake Lodge controversy).
 - Q: Where hasn't the USFS kept up with growth? A: Operating on a declining recreation budget, so growth model is focused on reducing access instead of growing access.
- It's easy to place value metrics on people and experiences, but quantifying value of the resource is a much harder. What does it look like in 100 years, and can we sustain that level of growth in recreation? If we plan ahead, we can make sure it happens sustainably.

Facilitated Questions:

What element of growth are you seeing in your area as the greatest benefit and challenge to the Flathead Basin?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jarod: Benefit is MS4 requirement for stormwater and water quality requirements for old projects. Managing growth (logistically and culturally) is the challenge. • Erica: Challenge is dust abatement and air particulates. Wants to see these programs expanded/continued by the county. • David: Connecting failing septic to city sewer is huge benefit. Challenge is managing a way to accommodate all the folks who want to move here and do it sustainably. • Racene: We live in an area that people want to be in, and it benefits our economy. The challenge is to figure out how to educate the public on how to recreate responsibly. • Pete: Growth is always good philosophically because it brings new people and new ideas. Challenge is managing public safety and making sure we have the resources to support the growth safely – self-licking ice cream cone. <p><i>What messages do you think are most important for newcomers and how do we reach them?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racene: Windfall has been translating our WQ messages to GCT, who has the voice and venue to reach those people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Action: Reach out to Racene and sit down collectively with Windfall on how to get the MT Waters campaign cross pollinated with GCT. • David: Water quality is key message. Need to target people who have been here for years to get them to change old habits (ex: dropping oil in backyard). • Jarod: Changing mentality – lots of people who get here and want to close the door behind them. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q: Possibility for requirement for septic to be inspected before sale? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A (Erica): Likely would be some pushback from real estate community there. Term ‘inspection’ needs to be defined better – what exactly does that entail? BMP that septic are pumped before sale, and lots of good relators are already doing this, but there is pushback as it holds up big sales. • Comment: Changing the message from “come here to enjoy the Flathead” to “come here and enjoy the Flathead and take care of it.” • Septic risk map update for panel – it’s a timely discussion since there are big grants out there (City of Kalispell applied for 2 \$725k public facilities grants to connect two resident-owned communities to city sewer) • ARPA received \$1.2 billion in applications for grants. Shows how far behind MT is behind the curve.
<p>Wrap Up & Next Steps</p>	<p>FBC Strategic Priorities Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5/12/22 Strategic prioritization discussion + planning • Top three priorities: (1) Mitigating nonpoint source pollution, (2) Education & outreach, (3) Explore options to increase funding opportunities and incentives to address NPS pollution issues (serve as convener, facilitator, compliment partner activities). • Other outcomes: More communication between meetings, utilize panels to tackle tough topics, create local champions/ambassadors, creative means of incentivizing individual behaviors, research counties rules + rule-making processes, ensure measurable goals + coach partners in creating/achieving, walking in pairs to discuss big topics is fun! • Next Meeting (Winter 2023) topic ideas: Water Compact update; DEQ Narrative Standards- nutrient working group update; Conservation Presentation, FWP & Flathead Land Trust (protected areas of the last 20 years); others? Field trips?
<p>Adjourn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion to adjourn (Randy). Second (Jack). All in favor. <i>Motion passes.</i> Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.

4. Action Items				
Action		Assigned	Due Date	Status
1	Send out draft minutes	Emilie Henry, Kate Wilson	10/26/22	Complete
2	Edit in bill where ex-officio members are listed and correct 'National Forest' representative to 'U.S. Forest Service' representative (and throughout for consistency).	Kate Wilson		Complete
3	Edit in bill where ex-officio members are listed and separate NRCS and USDA (and throughout for consistency).	Kate Wilson		Complete
4	Explore and/or edit membership in bill to include representatives from both US Army Corps of Engineers and BOR.	Kate Wilson		Complete
5	Schedule virtual meeting after the UC ³ meeting (early Nov) to for updates & next steps	Kate Wilson		Completed (to be held 11/21)
6	Prepare an overview of potential bylaws vs. enabling statutes to discuss at Nov meeting.	Kate Wilson		Complete
7	Share UC ³ 10.27.22 meeting minutes with the group.	Cassidy Bender	11/10/22	Complete
8	Address metrics for measuring effectiveness of E&O efforts with committee.	Cassidy Bender	3/15/22	In progress
9	Write a letter for Flathead County in support of the septic biosolids facility.	Kate Wilson		Complete
10	Get an article on water quality to Erica Wirtala for the NW MT Association of Realtors newsletter (coordinate with Heidi Fleury).	Emilie Henry	3/15/22	In progress
11	Reach out to Racene and sit down collectively with Windfall on how to get the MT Waters campaign cross pollinated with GCT.	Cassidy Bender	4/15/22	In progress
EXISTING ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS				
	Myla will invite Jim Dunnegan to jointly present on the selenium topic.	Myla Kelly		On Hold
	Kate to reach out to Erin Sexton at the FLBS on transboundary issues and filling the BC vacancy on FBC.	Kate Wilson		On Hold with new bill pending
	Reach out to other groups in basin for discussion on priority issues and potential partnerships	Kate Wilson, Cassidy Bender	On-going	On-going
	Check with EPA and Lake/Flathead Conservation Districts (have watershed restoration plans to address TMDLs)	Kate Wilson	On-going	On-going
	Address BC rep vacancy (ex-officio)	Kate Wilson	On-going	On-going