



FLATHEAD BASIN COMMISSION

TWO-YEAR WORK PLAN

2019 - 2021



DRAFT



BACKGROUND

The Flathead Basin Commission was established by the Montana Legislature in 1983. The duties of the Commission (*Montana Code Annotated 75-7-304*) include:

1. *To monitor the existing condition of natural resources in the basin and coordinate development of an annual monitoring plan. This plan must involve a cooperative strategy among all land and water management agencies within the Flathead basin and identify proposed and needed monitoring which emphasizes but is not limited to the aquatic resources of the Flathead basin.*
2. *to encourage close cooperation and coordination between federal, state, provincial, tribal, and local resource managers for establishment of compatible resource development standards, comprehensive monitoring, and data collection and interpretation;*
3. *to encourage and work for international cooperation and coordination between the state of Montana and the Province of British Columbia concerning the undertaking of natural resource monitoring and use of consistent standards for management of resource development activities throughout the North Fork Flathead River drainage portion of the Flathead basin;*
4. *to encourage economic development and use of the basin's resources to their fullest extent without compromising the present high quality of the Flathead basin's aquatic environment;*
5. *to, in the discretion of the commission, undertake investigations of resource utilization and hold public hearings concerning the condition of Flathead Lake and Flathead basin;*
6. *to submit to the governor and, as provided in 5-11-210, to the legislature a biennial report that includes:*
 - a. *a summary of information gathered in fulfillment of its duties under this section;*
 - b. *information on monitoring activities within the Flathead basin concerning the condition of the basin's natural resources, with particular emphasis on Flathead Lake;*
 - c. *the identification of land use and land development trends in the Flathead basin;*



- d. any recommendations the commission considers appropriate for fulfillment of its duties and for continued preservation of the Flathead basin in the present high quality of its aquatic resources; and*
 - e. an accounting of all money received and expended, by source and purpose, for the period since the last report; and*
- 7. to meet at least semiannually within the Flathead basin.*

The Commission's authority (Montana Annotated Code 75-7-305) as stated in statute is to make recommendations to the legislature and the governor and to federal, tribal, provincial, and local agencies for maintenance and enhancement of the quality of natural resources of the Flathead basin. In order to fulfill its duties, the commission shall develop and maintain cooperative programs with federal, state, provincial, tribal, and local agencies or organizations that are responsible for natural resource management and monitoring in the Flathead basin. Participating federal and provincial agencies must be requested to provide adequate funds to participate on the commission and to monitor resources within their areas of responsibility (Montana Annotated Code 75-7-308).

The Flathead basin commission is comprised of 23 members selected as follows:

- seven members appointed by the governor from industrial, environmental, and other interests affected by Title 75, chapter 7, part 3, one of whom must be on the governor's staff;*
- one member, appointed by the director of the department of natural resources and conservation, representing the northwestern land office of the department of natural resources and conservation;*
- one member appointed by the Flathead County commissioners;*
- one member appointed by the Lake County commissioners;*
- one member appointed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes;*
- one member appointed by the United States department of agriculture, forest service regional forester for the northern region;*
- one member appointed by the United States department of the interior, national park service regional director for the Rocky Mountain region;*
- one member appointed by the Flathead County conservation district board of supervisors;*
- one member appointed by the Lake County conservation district board of supervisors;*
- five ex officio (non-voting) members appointed respectively by the chief executive of the provincial government of the Province of British Columbia; the regional administrator of the United States environmental protection agency; the regional administrator of the United States department of the interior, bureau of reclamation; a representative of the Bonneville power administration; and the holder of a license issued for the Flathead project under the Federal Power Act;*
- three ex officio members who are the director of the department of natural resources and conservation, the director of the department of environmental quality, and the director of*



the department of fish, wildlife, and parks or their designees.

PLAN OVERVIEW

The Work Plan directly supports existing Strategic Plan (2016-2021) but provides tiered prioritization system with detailed approach to each priority area/Issue. The two-year Work Plan is intended to augment the direction set out in FBC's Strategic Plan. The Work Plan will help to ensure meetings topics and work is focused on subjects that best align with priorities, as well as assist with staff time allocation. The Work Plan will be revised/reevaluated in 2021, along with the Strategic Plan.

PLAN COMPONENTS

The Work Plan is split into three categories: 'Primary FBC Focus Area,' 'FBC Support Role,' and 'Regular Business.' The three categories designate the role that FBC would play in a myriad of natural resource issues in the Flathead Basin.

'Primary Focus Areas' are those that the FBC has prioritized as issues/topics to pursue and potentially take a leadership role in the next two years. The 'Support Role' categories include topics that the FBC will stay engaged in and advocate for when needed, though probably not in a leadership capacity. 'Regular Business' categories capture those duties and program areas that are part of the Commission's regular work – engaging with local communities, building relationships, and connecting with legislators and decision makers on key natural resource issues. In the following table (below) and pages that follow, each topic is broken down into categories, objectives and tasks.

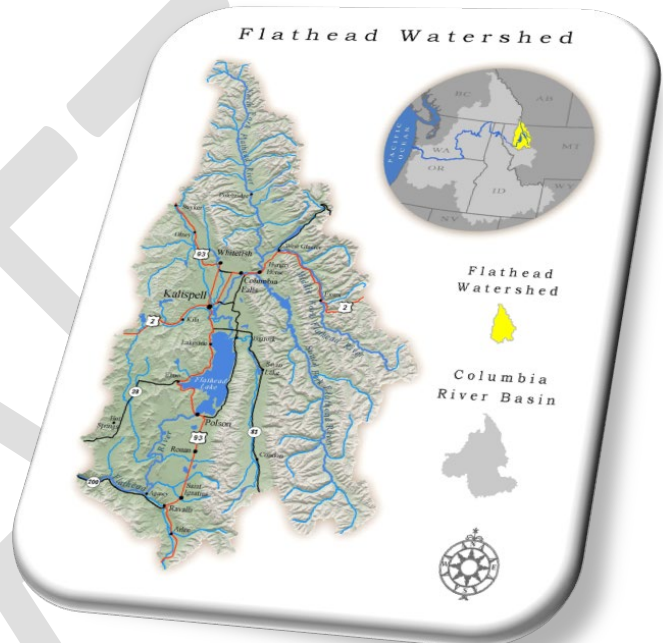


Figure 1: Flathead River Basin. Credit: Mobile LoGISTics Mapping & Montana Lake Book



FBC Focus Area	FBC Support Area	FBC Regular Business
Water Quality – monitoring, trends, protection	Aquatic Invasive Species – prevention and management	Congressional and Legislative Coordination – protect and conserve natural resources
Conservation Planning – fish, wildlife, recreation, community	Rail Safety/Spill Prevention – mitigation and response	Local and Regional Coordination – provide a forum on natural resource issues for the community, stakeholders & the public
Track & Respond to ‘Orphan Issues’ – Advocate for addressing emerging natural resource issues in the basin	Transboundary Issues – headwaters protection, international coordination	Provide a Regular Presence within the Natural Resource Community – advocate for and participate in conservation issues

Figure 2: Table of Categorized FBC Priorities (above)

1. WATER QUALITY: MONITORING, TRENDS, PROTECTION

- *Objective: Take a leadership role in nutrient water quality monitoring and protection within the Flathead Basin.*
- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*
 - *Coordinate with agencies and partners doing active monitoring*
 - *Work with partners to build support for addressing non-point source pollution (initial focus – septic leachate, stormwater)*
 - *Provide support/forum for addressing any gaps or resources needs in long term water quality monitoring*
 - *Assist with engagement & implementation of standards and protective measures*
 - *Engagement: point & non-point source pollution (septic leachate, stormwater, surface/sub-surface water, personal care products, nutrient impairments)*



2. CONSERVATION PLANNING

- *Objective:* Protect the high quality of fish, wildlife, natural resources, recreation and community within the Flathead Basin
- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*
 - Coordinate with partners on conservation planning efforts (e.g. Flathead River Management Planning, land use, zoning, etc.)
 - Advocate for natural resource protection while also providing for tourism, recreation and community opportunities
 - Assist with raising community awareness and engagement in planning efforts

3. 'ORPHAN ISSUES'

- *Objective:* Advocate for addressing emerging natural resource issues in the basin
- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*
 - Coordinate with local and regional groups on emerging natural resource issues
 - Track and engage in proposed developments (e.g. gravel pits, ski hills, etc.) as needed
 - Climate change – advocate for resiliency and adaption in the basin

4. AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS): MUSSELS & PLANTS

- *Objective:* Ensure AIS prevention and management in the Flathead Basin remains a priority for the state, decision makers, community leaders & the public
- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*
 - Coordinate with UC³, FWP, partners in basin
 - Work with UC³ to raise profile and provide support where needed
 - Receive regular updates on AIS from UC³
 - Contribute funds where possible to assist with prevention efforts
 - Support efforts to prevent the introduction/spread of AIS

5. RAIL SAFETY/SPILL PREVENTION & RESPONSE

- *Objective:* Prevention and response preparedness in the event of a rail/vessel spill into waters of the basin



- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*
 - *Coordinate with industry, watershed groups and agencies on ensuring appropriate prevention and mitigation efforts are in place within the basin*
 - *Track development and use of response planning tools (e.g. geographic response planning, community response exercises, mitigation measures, etc.)*

6. TRANSBOUNDARY ISSUES/HEADWATERS PROTECTION

- *Objective: Track and advocate for the transboundary and headwaters protection efforts*
- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*
 - *Coordinate with regional and international partners on transboundary and headwaters protection efforts (British Columbia, Alberta)*
 - *Fill BC vacancy on FBC*
 - *Columbia River Treaty – track and follow negotiations, provide input where possible*
 - *Natural resource extraction proposals/developments – track and engage in proposals/projects as they emerge*
 - *Non-mining transboundary issues - track and engage in proposals/projects as they emerge*

7. CONGRESSIONAL/LEGISLATIVE COORDINATION

- *Objective: Enhance coordination with congressional and state legislators on priority natural resource issues within the basin*
- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*
 - *Coordinate with legislators within the basin/region on key natural resource issues to increase support and leadership for advancing protections*
 - *Ensure regular communication with decision makers, congressional and state legislators on efforts of the FBC*
 - *Provide a regular presence at events, activities and legislation sessions*

8. LOCAL & REGIONAL COORDINATION

- *Objective: Enhance coordination with local, state and regional partners on priority natural resource issues within the basin*
- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*



- *Coordinate with local leaders, organizations and industry within the basin/region on key natural resource issues to increase support and leadership for advancing protections*
- *Ensure regular communication with decision makers, local partners and natural resource organizations on efforts of the FBC*
- *Provide a regular presence at events, activities*

9. PROVIDE A REGULAR PRESENCE WITHIN THE NATURAL RESOURCE COMMUNITY

- *Objective: Engage in natural resource events, activities and issues within the basin/region*
- *Staff/Commission Tasks:*
 - *Coordinate with local groups on key happenings in the region*
 - *Follow and engage in natural resource protection efforts*
 - *Establish regular communication with stakeholders and partners*
 - *Follow emerging science and best management practices for advancing natural resource protection efforts*