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MONTANA

## Community Leaders Launch ‘Living in Flathead’ Guide to the Valley

The new online resource promotes responsible living, community connections and sustainable practices in Flathead County

BY TRISTAN SCOTT

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Visitors walk the shores of Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park on Jan. 6, 2024. Hunter D'Antuono | Flathead Beacon

As the Flathead Valley grapples with challenges associated with the accelerated pace of population growth, and as a groundswell of newcomers adjusts to an evolving western landscape, a consortium of community leaders has joined forces to provide guideposts for newly minted Montanans and promote responsible land ethics in the region.

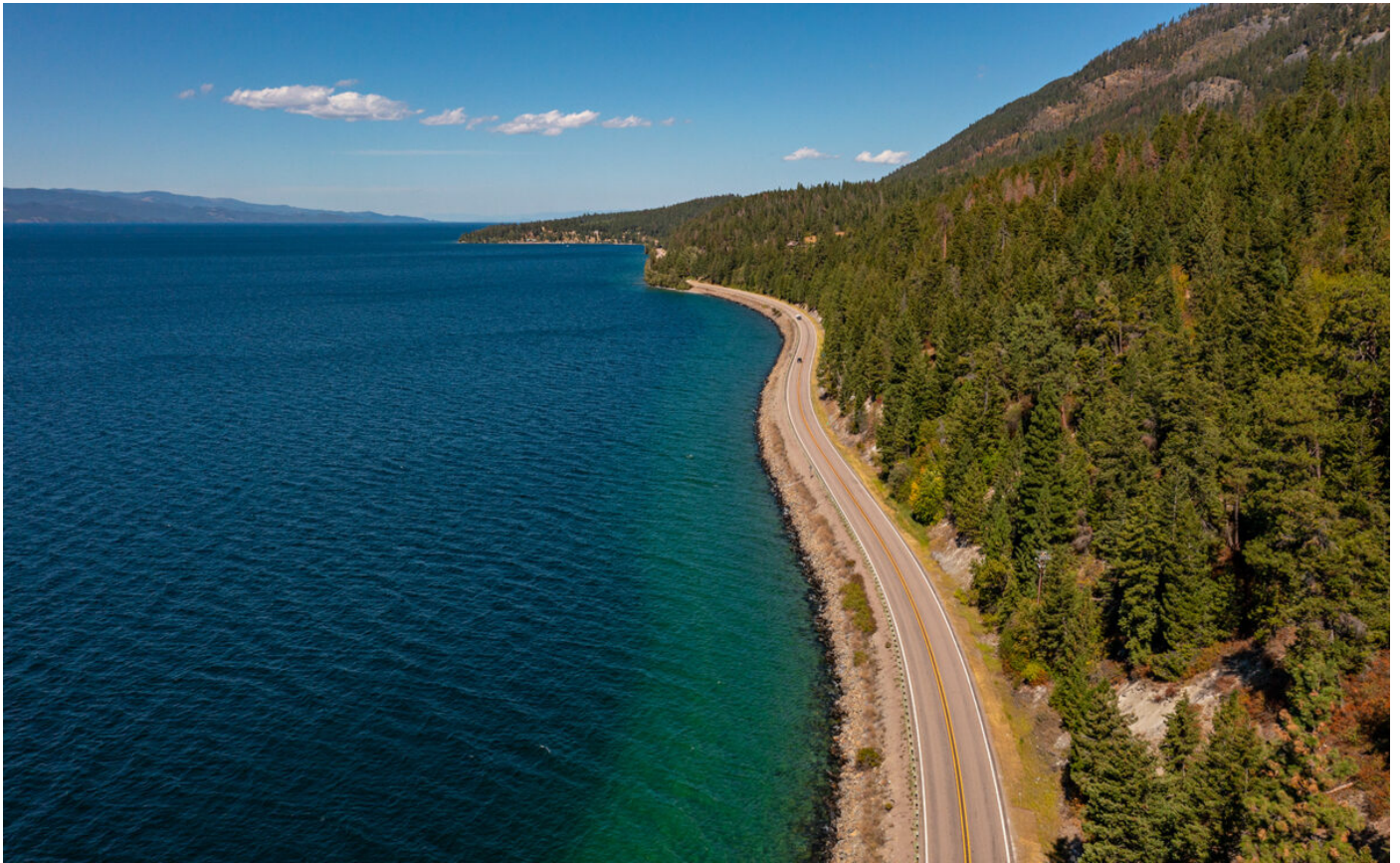
The guide to being a good neighbor is called “[Living in Flathead](#),” an online resource that its architects describe as “dedicated to promoting responsible living, community connection, and sustainable practices in Flathead County.”

“Whether you are a new resident, a long-time landowner or a visitor, this guide is an introduction and an invitation to responsible land and water stewardship,” according to the website, which includes resources dedicated to land stewardship, water quality, wildland fire, wildlife, activism, and links to help navigate the region’s network of local resources, from composting and recycling programs to power outages and air quality.

The guide was compiled by more than 20 contributors whose passion for the region runs the gamut, stretching from natural resource conservation to hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation, and it includes suggestions for co-existing on a western landscape brimming with everything from wildlife to wildfire.

The list of contributors includes land and wildlife management agencies like Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Flathead National Forest; regulatory agencies like the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the Flathead Weed Department; tribal partners like the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; utilities like Flathead Electric Cooperative; tourism bureaus like Discover Kalispell; educational organizations like the Glacier Institute; land trusts like the Montana Land Reliance and Flathead Land Trust; and a raft of nonprofit conservation organizations, including the Whitefish Lake Institute, Flathead Audubon Society, Flathead Rivers Alliance, Flathead Lakers, Climate Smart Glacier Country, People and Carnivores, and many more.

“Western Montana, with its pristine mountains, clean lakes, and abundant wildlife, is a haven for those seeking a slower pace of life and a connection to nature,” said Constanza von der Pahlen, who led and coordinated the guide, and who works as the critical lands program director for the nonprofit Flathead Lakers. “As the Flathead Valley experiences remarkable growth, the ‘Living in Flathead Guide’ provides insights into navigating the realities of living in the Flathead while encouraging practices to live in harmony with wildlife, ensure water quality, and support local communities.”



Montana Highway 35 along the east shore of Flathead Lake on Sept. 5, 2022. Hunter D'Antuono | Flathead Beacon

The “Living in Flathead” platform is designed to serve as a resource for residents, landowners and visitors, von der Pahlen said, offering insights, solutions and resources for sustainable living and responsible land and water stewardship amidst the stunning landscapes of Western Montana.

“There are so many groups and organizations doing amazing work in the Flathead, but it can be tricky to know where to go to get specific information on many topics,” according to Casey Lewis, executive director of the Western Montana Conservation Commission, which the EPA recently awarded \$7 million to help safeguard critical headwaters. “This guide provides a streamlined resource for residents to learn and find information to help keep the Flathead the special place it is.”

Samantha Tappenbeck, the resource conservationist with the Flathead Conservation District, described the new online resource as a one-stop shop for newly minted and seasoned residents alike, serving a critical function as the network of organizations sharing the unified goal of sustainable growth expands.

“The Flathead is facing new and increasing pressure on its treasured natural resources,” Tappenbeck said. “The Living in Flathead Guide is a promising tool in the toolbox of landowner education and empowerment. The Flathead Conservation

District is excited to join partners in sharing this resource with new and existing residents of Flathead County.”

Living in Flathead Guide partners extend an enthusiastic invitation to all neighbors, residents, and visitors to explore the guide and be part of the collective effort to preserve the land, water, and the places we cherish, and also foster community connections that celebrate our beautiful area and communities.



A view of Flathead Lake from Blacktail Mountain on Jan. 5, 2024. Hunter D'Antuono | Flathead Beacon

**Topics explored in the guide include:**

**Living on the Land:** Discover simple practices to live in balance with the spectacular Montana lands.

**Living with Fire:** Learn essential tips on living with fire and safeguarding your family and property.

**Living by Water:** Understand how to protect the Flathead’s beautiful lakes and rivers, vital resources for drinking water and the local economy.

**Living with Wildlife:** Embrace the special treasure of living with wildlife and discover ways to coexist and minimize conflicts.

**Living Locally:** Whether a resident or visitor, delve into topics such as local food, safe and responsible recreation, stargazing, recycling and composting, and staying safe during extreme weather conditions.

**Take Action:** Engage with the community through tours, workshops, or classes to learn more about the beautiful surroundings and take individual actions or volunteer with local groups.

“We are thrilled to launch the Living in Flathead Guide, a comprehensive yet easy-to-navigate resource for everyone, whether you are a new resident, long-time landowner, or visitor. We encourage everyone to explore the guide, take meaningful actions, join others in preserving and celebrating the natural beauty of this region,” von der Pahlen said.

Explore the newly launched Living in Flathead Guide at [www.livinginflathead.org](http://www.livinginflathead.org).

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