

The Flathead River to Lake Initiative - Diverse Partners Effectively Collaborating to Save a River Corridor

Kris Tempel, Wildlife Division, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Kalispell

*Indicates Presenter

**Indicates Student Presentation

Twenty years ago, agencies, NGOs, tribes, and landowners came together to protect the natural heritage of Flathead River and Lake: excellent water quality, abundant fish and wildlife and their habitat, outstanding scenic and recreation values, and prime farmland. In the early 2000s, the Flathead Valley was experiencing rapid growth and development. Farms throughout the valley, but especially along the river and lake, were being sold and subdivided threatening this important natural heritage. Using the power of partnerships and leveraging multiple funding sources, the River to Lake Initiative has successfully knitted together a patchwork of relatively small private ownerships into an ecologically functional unit. Landscape-scale habitat protection is often the focus of conservation efforts, but small-scale, focused conservation can also play a critical role preventing wildlife conflicts and providing for movement corridors. This presentation highlights how long-term, collaborative partnerships can achieve meaningful conservation and are essential to weathering the ups and downs inherent in any conservation effort.