P.O. Box 70 • Polson, MT 59860
406-883-1346
Fax: 406-883-1357
lakers@flatheadlakers.org
www.flatheadlakers.org

FLATHEAD LAKERS

Flathead Lakers:
Working for clean water, a healthy ecosystem, and lasting quality of life in the Flathead Watershed.

March 16, 2005

Jim Peterson, Chairman
Montana House Natural Resources Committee
State Capitol
PO Box 200400
Helena, Montana 59620

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 3.16.05
SB 138

Dear Chairman Peterson and House Natural Resources Committee Members:

As President of the Flathead Lakers, and a newly appointed citizen member of the Flathead Basin Commission, I write in support of Senate Bill 138.

Flathead Lakers is a nonprofit, grassroots organization which has worked for 46 years to protect water quality in Flathead Lake and its watershed. The Lakers currently have over 1,000 members.

Flathead Lake and its tributaries are magnificent assets of the State of Montana. Their protection is a compelling purpose for the state, both in terms of good stewardship and to foster and enhance the economic benefits they generate.

The Lakers support the Flathead Basin Commission. It plays a critical role in protecting Flathead waters. The Commission brings together land and resource managers with responsibilities in the basin, including the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Province of British Columbia. This provides a multi-jurisdictional focus, and the opportunity for cooperation on water quality and other watershed concerns that does not exist in any other entity. SB 138 assures continuance of this important governor's commission, makes permanent its administrative basing in the DNRC, and strengthens its membership.

The Commission was created twenty years ago to address the ramifications of proposed coal mining within the Flathead Basin watershed, in Canada. The Commission continues to play a leadership role in protecting the basin from potential threats of coal field development in Canada.

The Commission has achieved important education, water quality monitoring and stream restoration accomplishments. These include involving numerous citizens in protecting water quality through local watershed groups and educating citizens about how to mitigate contaminated water running off their property. The commission has coordinated volunteer water quality monitoring programs throughout the basin, complementing the core programs performed by the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, and by the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay. It has restored a number of disturbed riparian sites.

With continued population growth and the likelihood of new coalfield development proposals in British Columbia, the Flathead Basin Commission is needed now more than ever. The Commission has functioned with modest core funding authorized by the legislature to generate substantial grant funding for its programs, multiplying the state's financial support by seven to eight times.

I strongly urge the Committee to support SB 138.

Sincerely,

Paul Williams
President