

**Commissioner Gale Decker**  
**Presiding Officer**  
**Lake County Commissioners**

Members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Polson, Montana, the County seat of Lake County, is situated on the southern shore of Flathead Lake. Each day that I drive to work I see again the natural beauty of the Lake and the Mission Mountains that border it to the east.

Thanks to the efforts of Caryn Miske and the Flathead Basin Commission, Lake County has been aware of the potentially disastrous consequences of the introduction of aquatic invasives in Flathead Lake.

Two weeks ago I testified in Helena about the effect of lands being put into Tribal trust and how that impacts property tax collections in our County.

I am here today to try to impress upon this committee the impact on property values and ultimately property tax collections in our County if Flathead Lake becomes infested.

The Flathead Lake Biological Station has posted on its website that economists estimate that Flathead Lake boosts shoreline property values by 6-8 billion dollars. That's a six followed by nine zeroes! Estimates of property tax revenue loss are placed somewhere between 10% and 20%, which I believe are far too low. Based on last year's total property tax collections for all entities, the lost property tax revenue could be as high as eight million dollars. This loss would impact not only our County services, but also schools, fire departments, senior citizen centers, etc. and once lost can never be recovered.

Failure to allocate dollars at the present time, will only delay preventive measures that may save our lake, and in reality the entire Columbia Basin River System.

Thank you.