

## **Streamside Setbacks Protect Things that Belong to All of Us!**

- The Flathead Valley is blessed with some of the cleanest water anywhere.
- Unlimited development lining our streams and rivers will gradually and steadily pollute our water. Water quality in Flathead Lake, where our stream and river water ends up, has been declining for years.
- The 1964 flood damaged over a 1,000 homes and cost \$25 million in Flathead County alone. We have a responsibility to plan ahead.
- Proposed setbacks are reasonable limits guided by *local* scientists with a lifetime of Flathead Valley experience.
- Studies have demonstrated that protecting clean water and healthy waterways enhance the value of your home. Setbacks are *flexible* to protect landowners' rights to use, sell and develop their land.
- New setbacks apply *only* to developers when they subdivide, **not** existing homes, lots, or traditional land uses like logging and farming.

### **A well-designed streamside setback:**

- provides a natural area between the stream and your home and buildings.
- filters pollutants that can harm water quality, fish, wildlife, and their habitat.
- reduces the risk of losing your investment to flooding and erosion.
- increases your property values and retains your privacy.

### **The Proposed setbacks for Flathead County recommended by local scientists are:**

- Practical, effective, and fair. When needed due to lot size or other constraints, an exemption process will allow reasonable development.
- Simple as 1-2-3: A maximum building setback of 100 feet on each side of smaller streams; 200 feet on the Swan, Whitefish, Stillwater, Pleasant Valley/Fisher Rivers and Ashley Creek; 300 feet on the Flathead River and its three forks.
- Designed to filter pollution by keeping up to half of the setback in natural plant cover.
- A conservative solution. Other Montana communities have setbacks that are much larger — some extending miles from the river.
- Reasonable. In fact many developers *already* live up to the proposed setback standards.

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### **Ask our Planning Board and County Commissioners to:**

Please make my comments part of the public hearing record. Clean water is one of the Flathead Valley's most valuable resources, vital for life, for our economy and for our unique, Flathead way of life. Please conserve it.

Please adopt clear and strong streamside and river setbacks as part of Flathead County's subdivision regulations to protect our clean water.

I support the setbacks recommended by local scientists that call for setbacks of 100 feet for smaller streams; 200 feet for the Swan, Whitefish, Stillwater, Pleasant Valley/Fisher Rivers and Ashley Creek; and 300 feet for the Flathead River and its three forks.