

**LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**  
**AND**  
**DEVELOPMENT CODE**

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**LITTLE BITTERROOT NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

*An Amendment to the FLATHEAD COUNTY MASTER PLAN*

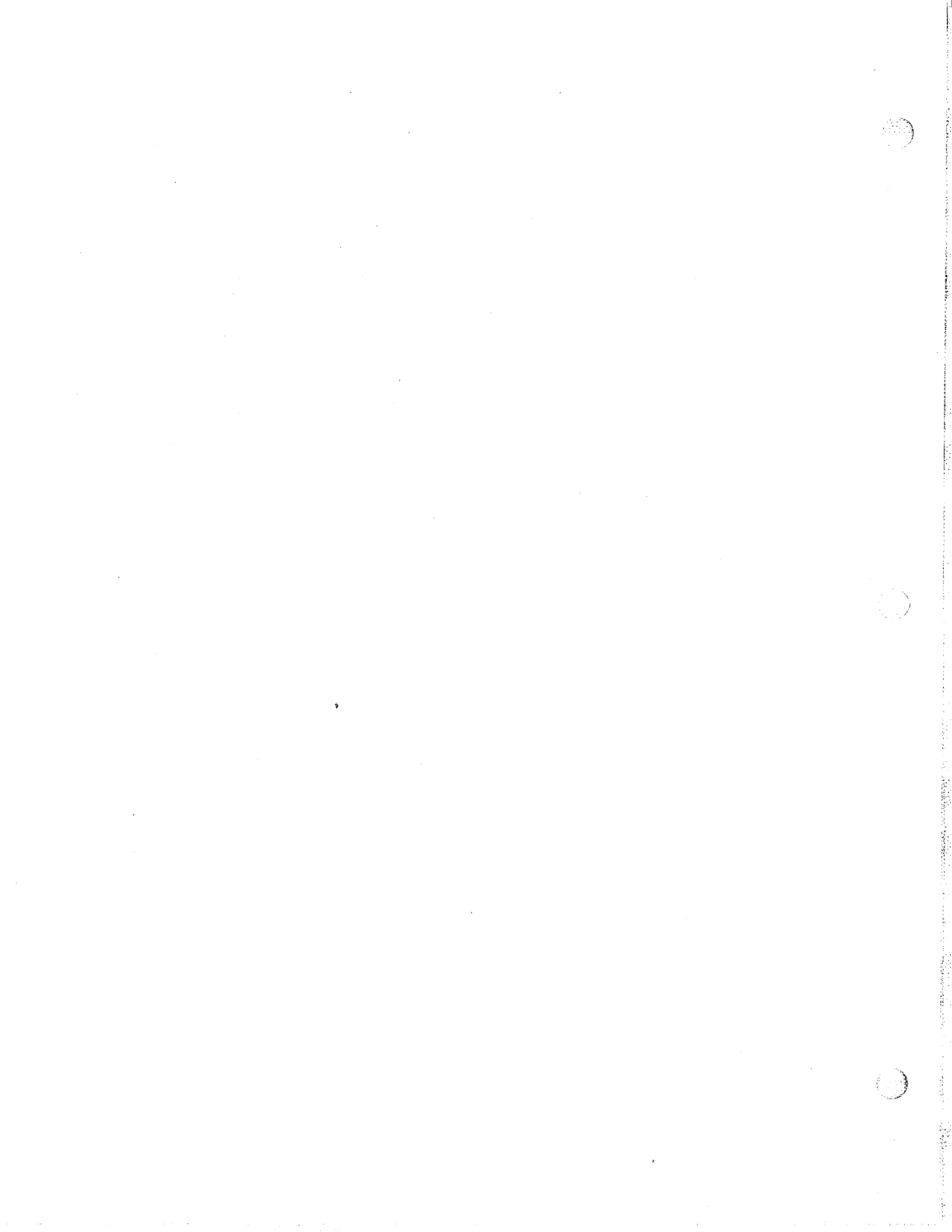
Adopted by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners  
Resolution No. 1048C  
Adopted January 24, 1996

**LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE ZONING DISTRICT**

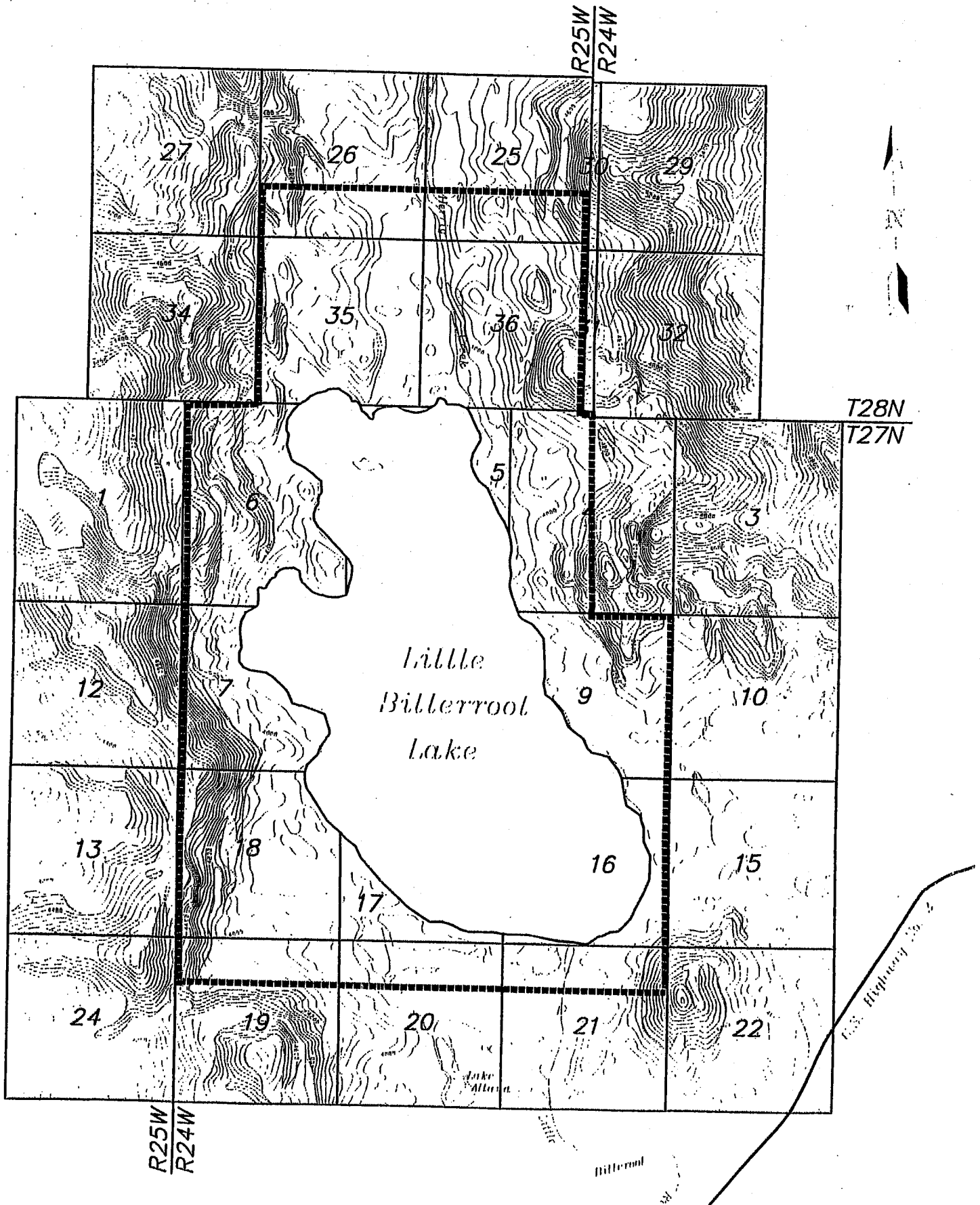
Resolution No. 1141A  
Adopted February 27, 1996

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

Resolution No. 955Q  
Adopted February 27, 1996



# LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN & ZONING DISTRICT



**LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN AND ZONING DISTRICT  
LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**AREA DESCRIPTION**

The area generally lies within 1/4 to 1-1/4 miles of Little Bitterroot Lake which is situated approximately 22 miles west of Kalispell, Montana. It is more specifically described as the W2 of Section 4 and Sections, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, and the N2N2 of Sections 19, 20 and 21, Township 24 North, Range 27 West and Sections 35, 36 and the S2S2 of Sections 25 and 26 in Township 25 North, Range 28 West, P.M.M., Flathead County, Montana.

**PERIMETER DESCRIPTION**

Beginning at the SW corner of Section 18, Township 27N, Range 24W, P.M.M. Flathead County Montana; thence

Northerly along the west section lines of Section 18, 7 and 6 to a point being the NW corner of said Section 6, Township 27N, Range 24W; thence

Easterly along the north section line of said Section 6 to the point of intersection with the SW corner of Section 35, Township 28N, Range 24W; thence

Northerly along the west section lines of said Sections 35 and 26 to a point being the S16 corner of Section 26 Township 28N, Range 24W; thence

Easterly along the S16 section lines of Sections 26 and 25, Township 28N, Range 24W to the east section line of said Section 25 also being the west section line of Section 30, Township 28N, Range 24W; thence

Southerly along the west section lines of said Sections 30 and 31 to the SW corner of said Section 31 also being the point of intersection with Section 4, Township 27N, Range 24W; thence

Easterly along the north section line of said Section 4 to the center section line of said Section 4; thence

Southerly along the center section line of said Section 4 to the point of intersection with north section line of Section 9, Township 27N, Range 24W; thence

Easterly along the north section line of said Section 9 to the NE corner of said Section; thence

Southerly along the east section lines of Sections 9, 16 and 21 to a point being the N16 corner of Section 21, Township 27N, Range 24W; thence

Westerly along the N16 Section line of Sections 21, 20 and 19 to the point of intersection with the west section line of Section 19, Township 27N, Range 24W; thence

Northerly along said west section line of Section 19 to the SW corner of Section 18, Township 27N, Range 24W, P.M.M., Flathead County, Montana and the true point of beginning.

# LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE

## NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Resolution No. 1048C

January 24, 1996

The Little Bitterroot Lake Neighborhood is situated in a bowl with Bitterroot Lake as the centerpiece. The Neighborhood encompasses Little Bitterroot Lake and all lands generally within 1/4 to 1-1/4 miles of the Lake. The neighborhood lies approximately 22 highway miles west of Kalispell via US Highway 2 and less than one mile northwest of Marion. Marion does provide limited services including a post office, general store and grade school. The Little Bitterroot Lake Association, whose membership constitutes the majority of property owners within the Neighborhood, provides identity, cohesiveness and a platform for organization for this neighborhood.

**NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY:** The Little Bitterroot Lake Association was informally founded in approximately 1935, when lakeshore property owners banded together to address the issue of water levels in the lake. The property owners, both recreational and agricultural, have worked in concert since that time on issues related to the lake but primarily targeted towards preserving the lake's unique character and pristine water quality. The Association incorporated with the Montana Secretary of State in 1988 for the purposes of representing the membership, preserving the character of the area and the pristine water of the lake.

**WHY A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN:** The Little Bitterroot Lake Association membership, in its 1990 annual meeting, directed their Board to create a zoning district encompassing the lakeshore boundaries with the intention of preserving the lake's unique character. The Association began discussions for that purpose in early 1990 with local large property owners and the Flathead County Planning Staff. In the spring of 1994, Plum Creek was invited to work with the Association to develop an acceptable neighborhood plan and zoning regulations. These efforts continue to this day.

The Little Bitterroot Lake Neighborhood lies within the jurisdiction of the Flathead County Master Plan yet the County Master Plan does not give specific guidance or direction for the Little Bitterroot Lake area. Generally, there are no land development codes in effect in this area. In fact, there are no county zoning districts within 10 miles. The only regulations that now exist in relation to development are county and state sanitation regulations, state electrical permits and the County Lakeshore Protection Program. There is a strong desire to protect the amenities and character of this neighborhood through zoning yet there is no plan to give specific guidance as to how such regulations should be crafted and what they should address. This Neighborhood Plan is intended to bridge the gap and offer specific direction and guidance for this area.

**THE LAKE:** Little Bitterroot Lake is a natural water body covering approximately 2,925 acres. The maximum depth of the lake is 280 feet. Only Herring Creek (north end) flows perennially into Little Bitterroot Lake. There are approximately seven other streams that flow into Little Bitterroot Lake but they are all seasonal and intermittent in nature. Little Bitterroot Lake is managed as an irrigation reservoir by the Flathead Irrigation District headquartered in Pablo. In 1909 the Federal Government filed water rights on Little Bitterroot Lake for irrigation. In 1913, the Flathead Irrigation Project was created and in 1918 a small earthen dam was constructed at the outlet of the Lake. This was later replaced by the present concrete structure. Little Bitterroot Lake has a natural average vertical fluctuation of 1.2 feet. However, the Lake is managed for downstream irrigators. Operation of the dam and draw down policies are handled outside of the purview of the property owners of the area. This leads to erratic and usually downward fluctuating water levels during the year.

The water has exceptional clarity and quality and is generally classified as oligotrophic (pristine). It is suitable for domestic consumption without treatment in most situations. A series of water quality and clarity tests were conducted in 1995 by Plum Creek Timber to establish a base line of information for the lake. Prior to this time only intermittent testing had occurred. There is a real need to establish and maintain a long term water quality testing program to ensure that the water quality maintains its pristine level.

**GENERAL LAND USE CHARACTER:** The neighborhood is somewhat homogeneous in that the majority of the area is in timber production, with much smaller areas devoted to grazing, and finally a very limited area along the lakeshore is devoted to residential lakeshore development. Below is a very general summary of land ownership patterns. Please note that Little Bitterroot Lake at 2,925 acres is not included.

**LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD  
GENERALIZED OWNERSHIP**

MT DNRC	640 ac.	13%
Forest Service Lands	40 ac.	1%
Plum Creek	3,000 ac.	62%
Other private lands (40 acre + tracts)	760 ac.	15%
Other private lands (less than 40 ac. tracts)	<u>440 ac.</u>	<u>9%</u>
Total	4,880 ac.	100%

Plum Creek, the largest property owner within the confines of the neighborhood has title to approximately 3,000 acres (62% of land area of the Neighborhood Plan) and owns approximately five and three-quarters (5-3/4) miles of shoreline. This is slightly over one-half (1/2) of the lake's roughly 11 miles of shoreline. These lands are undeveloped and have historically been open to the general public for free recreational use. Historically, these lands have been managed for timber and grazing resources. Plum Creek believes that these lands are likely best suited in the future for recreational and residential use due to their locale on the lake. Plum Creek has no immediate plans to develop this property and is supportive of land use planning that is based upon sound environmental and economic principles and that treats all landowners fairly.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation owns approximately 640 acres of land at the north end of the Lake. This site encompasses the Lion's Camp facilities with the remainder managed as Trust Lands. The state has approximately 1/4 mile of lake frontage. The Lions Camp has been operated by the four Flathead Lions Clubs for the past 50 years through a cooperative lease agreement with the State. A Youth Camp is open from late June to September and generally operates 68 days at full occupancy. The Camp can sleep 134 people at one time. Facilities include a kitchen, dining hall, conference area, 13 cabins, and a comfort station with showers and toilets. A separate recreation camp offers 25 overnight camping spaces.

There are six (6) large private property owners in the neighborhood, other than Plum Creek, who own 40 or more acres of land. This land consists predominately as agriculture grazing areas, timber lands, recreational lands or estate residential uses. This ownership accounts for approximately 15% of the District and encompasses 1/4 mile of lake frontage.

The remainder of the proposed district contains 440 acres, privately owned in small tracts located predominately in the southeast, northwest and west sides of the lake. These ownerships account for about four and three-quarter (4-3/4) miles of lake frontage (43% of total frontage). The County records show about 228 lakefront and 60 view lots in this area. Tracts on the lake vary from 50 to 100 feet in width with some being larger. These smaller tracts contain approximately 123 residences which are almost entirely single-family cabins/houses occupied seasonally. There are a few exceptions including the Lake Park Grocery at the south end on the lake in Section 16, a contractors building on the southeast corner off the lake and a cabin or cabins advertized for weekly rent at the north end of the lake.

**NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION:** Growth continues to occur in this neighborhood. Below is a table based on the issuance of new septic systems for 1986 - 1994. During this eight year period (1990 data was not available) 34 new residences were constructed. This data shows a marked increase in number of new residences constructed in the past nine years.