

ELNA DARROW RECEIVES FAS RECOGNITION

We are extremely fortunate to have here in the Flathead a number of dedicated people who have made extraordinary contributions to the conservation of the natural values of our valley.

All of us who live in the Flathead are the beneficiaries of the hard work and commitment of such people. Equally important are the benefits of these conservation achievements to our birds and wildlife, and to bird and wildlife habitat.

At our December 2001 meeting, Flathead Audubon started a new tradition. Several times each year we will formally recognize one of these individuals for their outstanding conservation achievements, and thank them for the contributions they have made.

Our first Recognition of Outstanding Conservation Achievements was presented at the meeting to Elna Darrow for her contributions to the protection and improvement of one of the most important resources we have in the valley – the quality of our water.

The presentation was made by Brent Mitchell, Chair of Flathead Audubon's Conservation Committee. Below is the text of that presentation.

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Welcome Elna Darrow!

Flathead Audubon is privileged tonight to recognize your leadership, expertise and your emphasis on clean water in the Flathead Valley.

While we value your significant contributions to the Bigfork community for which you received the "Big Hat" award in 2000 from the Bigfork Development Company, tonight we pay special tribute to your efforts since your graduation from North Dakota State University, where you obtained your B.A in 1964 and your M.A. in 1956 with honors in economics. You then worked for the State of Montana and the private sector in the field of resource economics. From 1988 for ten years you served on the Board of Directors of the Flathead Lakers.

These experiences led to your appointment to the Flathead Basin Commission in 1989 by Governor Stan Stevens. You were appointed to two additional terms by Governor Mark Racicot. You served one term as vice chair, and two terms as chair. During this period your leadership was decisive in:

- Strengthening the FBC's monitoring programs, including establishing three citizen volunteer water quality monitor programs.
- Working to achieve stronger and more effective ties to and coordination with British Columbia, regarding issues in the shared North Fork of the Flathead River international watershed.
- Launching the FBC's Voluntary Nutrient Reduction Strategy (VNRS), the Commission's on-the-ground effort to achieve better water quality in Flathead Lake and other Flathead Basin water bodies. VNRS under your leadership to date has created two local citizen watershed groups, Ashley Creek and Stoner Creek, and has carried out a number of "demonstration" projects on Flathead Lake and Local streams to show the effectiveness of low cost pollution control techniques local landowners can use.
- Championing the FBC's role as the local watershed group responsible for carrying out a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan for Flathead Lake. FBC acceptance of the latest draft TMDL plan was close to a reality at the end of your tenure on the Commission.

You have tirelessly advocated progressive approaches to land use planning in the basin, recognizing the close link between better land use practices and the protection and enhancement of water quality. You have also advocated a more comprehensive approach to water quality monitoring in the basin with your representation of the FBC on several of the Commissions technical committees, including TMDL and Monitoring. You worked to strengthen the FBC's public education capabilities and helped create the FBC's "Stewardship Award" program to recognize local residents who have made significant contributions to the protection of water quality in the basin.

Without your leadership the Flathead Basin Commission would not be the respected organization it is today. The issue of water quality would not be addressed so forcefully and effectively. We are grateful for your key leadership.

Please accept this Flathead Audubon cup as a token of our esteem May your cup always be filled with clean water.

By Ferne Cohen and Linda Winnie