

**Action Alert – MAJOR THREAT TO PRIEST LAKE Water Quality – we need your voices NOW!**

**Do YOU want to keep Priest Lake BLUE?**

- 1. PLEASE email/phone the Bonner County Planning Department & Commission and Bonner County Board of County Commissioners (contact info below) TODAY and let them know you are vehemently OPPOSED to the new proposed Resort Recreation designations around Priest Lake.**
- 2. PLEASE ATTEND the below “Workshops” and let Bonner County know you are vehemently OPPOSED to the new proposed Resort Recreation designations around Priest Lake.**

**All 3-7pm**

**12-17-24 – Selle Valley – Northside Elementary**

**1-7-25 – Blanchard – Community Center**

**1-14-25 – Sagle – Sagle Elementary**

**1-28-25 – Clark Fork – Clark Fork Jr. HS**

**2-4-25 – Coolin**

**2-11-25 – Sandpoint**

Priest Lake and Lake POR are two of only a handful of alpine lake systems in the lower 48. Our beloved lakes are currently blue because we do not have a lot of nutrients that feed aquatic vegetation entering the systems. Increased nutrients go hand in hand with humans (development, erosion, sewage, riparian vegetation removal and more). All land uses, if not managed properly, have the great potential to negatively impact our water bodies. We do not have to look far (CdA Lake, Spirit Lake, Hayden Lake, Fernan Lake) to see what short term thinking and planning can do to our lakes.

The issue – the Bonner County Planning Commission is recommending blanket designations of “Recreation” for much of Priest Lake’s environmentally sensitive lake shorelines.

The very limited reasoning behind this decision is “consistency”. That is, many sites in the county have higher lot densities than allowed in a particular zone or land use designation and the Commission believes the county land use designations and land map should mirror what is on the ground. In many cases these once illegal nonconforming lots were granted “legal nonconforming” status by the county (regardless if they were created legally) on November 18, 2008. This is especially true on our lake and river shorelines where early settlements and communities began establishing.

The current Planning Commission’s thinking is, lets match land use types with what is on the ground. That is, land use designations and therefore the land use map needs to reflect the

current reality regarding uses and parcel sizes. NOTE THIS IS ONLY BEING PROPOSED FOR PRIEST LAKE!

The BIG problem with this thinking is that there has been no consideration given to the negative environmental impacts of the greater development densities associated with changing many areas around Priest Lake from a "Rural 5" designation (meaning one single family dwelling unit per 5-acre lot) to "Recreation" which allows for FOUR single family unit dwellings per acre. This a twenty-fold increase in density. The nearshore areas along our many waterways are environmentally sensitive areas. The more development and land use that occurs upland of the shorelines, the more impervious surfaces, runoff and herbicide uses near the waterways, increased erosion, sewage, loss of shoreline vegetation and habitat the worse Priest Lake water quality will become.

Further, during the 10-1-2024 Planning Commission meeting where the Commission largely decided this issue there was zero discussion or consideration not only of the environmental impacts to water quality, wildlife habitat and fisheries but also services if this recommendation is adopted.

That is, how will the county deal with all of this potential future population density that this recommendation opens the door for. Do all of these lake sites that are being recommended for redesignation as "Recreation" land use have adequate fire and emergency services, water, sewer, roads? This recommendation, if adopted will greatly increase the financial burden of Bonner County who already struggles to provide basic services to our rural, low income communities.

According to the 2005 (current) Land Use Component of the Bonner Comprehensive Plan, chapter 6; "Generally, most of the areas designated for the most intense, high density uses did not have urban-like water or sewer services and in many cases lacked good transportation networks. Examples are the remote Lakeview town site, on the eastern side of Lake Pend Oreille, which is nearly inaccessible in winter over the 26-mile Forest Service road system, and the upper stretches of the Priest Lake and Upper Priest Lake, which are served by limited state or federal roads" (pg. 18/23).

Good planning doesn't just take into account "consistency". As stated by the chair of the Bonner County Planning Commission, "the mark of a good land use map is consistency".

I think we can all agree that the mark of a good land use map is long term protection of human and environmental health, safety and welfare which can only occur with thoughtful, proactive planning that considers the environmental impacts associated with land use designations. Bonner County is 9.1% surface water, more than any other Idaho county. The Bonner County Planning Commission and BOCC must consider and plan to protect our water bodies for the long term.

In addition to the vast increase in development density, this redesignation to Resort Recreation opens the door to all of the uses included by right and CUP within this new designation.

Recreation areas allow for more commercial uses than a Residential zone.

**According to Bonner County Land Use Code 12-328: RECREATION DISTRICT:**

The recreation district is intended to provide for a range of housing types and uses that are accessory and complementary to recreational and residential uses. These purposes are accomplished by:

1. Allowing for a range of housing types provided adequate services are available.
2. Providing for commercial and private resorts which contain provisions for a range of recreational activities.

**Uses allowed by right in the Resort Recreation designation include;**

- Accessory buildings
- Dwelling Unit-Recreational vehicles
- Vacation rentals
- Park

**Uses allowed by Conditional Use Permit (CUP) in the Resort Recreation designation include;**

- Cottage housing
- Duplex
- Multi-family dwellings
- Townhouses
- Animal establishments
- Art, performing arts and recording studios
- Bed & breakfast establishments
- Airports
- Churches, grange halls, public or private community facilities
- Communication towers
- Docks
- Marinas
- Community upland accommodations
- Heliport
- Hospitals & clinics
- Public utility facility
- Schools public and private

If you think a CUP is good protection, be aware that Bonner County approves the VAST MAJORITY of all CUP's applied for by individuals and developers. DO YOU WANT TO TAKE THAT RISK!?

If you want to keep Priest Lake BLUE please advocate for LESS DENSITY and LAND USES on our lakes and rivers. PLEASE contact the Bonner County Planning Commission and let them know YOU DO NOT SUPPORT the designation of any more "Recreation" areas without consideration of impacts to water quality, wildlife habitat, fisheries and available services such as sewer/septic and water, fire, emergency and access/roads.

October 1<sup>st</sup> Planning Commission Meeting recording -

[https://www.youtube.com/live/v1q2v9RSIQI?si=Ar8k3oe\\_XtOGdsnx](https://www.youtube.com/live/v1q2v9RSIQI?si=Ar8k3oe_XtOGdsnx)

## Bonner County Planning Department

[planning@bonnercountyid.gov](mailto:planning@bonnercountyid.gov)

### Current Appointed Bonner County Planning Commission

- Allan Songstad - Chair
  - Term Expires: 9.30.2025
  - Email: [allan.songstad@bonnercountyid.gov](mailto:allan.songstad@bonnercountyid.gov)
- Peter Taylor - Commissioner
  - Term Expires: 9.30.2026
  - Email: [peter.taylor@bonnercountyid.gov](mailto:peter.taylor@bonnercountyid.gov)
- Dave Frankenbach - Commissioner
  - Term Expires: 9.30.2025
  - Email: [dave.frankenbach@bonnercountyid.gov](mailto:dave.frankenbach@bonnercountyid.gov)
- Matt Linscott
  - Term Expires: 9.30.2025
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- Don Davis - Commissioner
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- Eric Hidden - Commissioner
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- Erik Leavitt - Commissioner
  - Term Expires: 9.30.2026
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**Bonner County Commissioners**

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