Flathead Area study starts in July

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The scenic Flathead Valley will be the laboratory for a course to be given July 16 through Aug. 17 by the Flathead Teachers Research Corporation and Montana State University, according to Dr. Harold Tascher, professor of social welfare at MSU and course coordinator.

The five-week Flathead Area Development Study is the outcome of a grass roots movement originating with the Flathead Teachers Research Corporation, Tascher noted. The corporation was formed by a group of teachers bent on carrying out ideas encountered in an MSU extension course, "Field Practice: Community Services Laboratory," which focuses on self-help projects dealing with community needs and resources.

Robert Olson of the Flathead County High School faculty, chairman of the corporation, sparked the development of the summer course designed by teachers for teachers, Tascher said. Ray Siderius, teacher at Pleasant Valley School, was elected manager of the project, he added.

The University offers eight quarter hours of graduate or undergraduate credit for the course. It is open to anyone in the field of education who has completed two years at an accredited college or University. At least 30 applicants will be accepted, the coordinator said.

A main purpose of the course is to help teachers learn how to use community data in teaching their classes, Tascher said. In a switch on usual pedagogic procedure, they will first learn about the area by observation and interviews and will then look for the meaning of what they have seen and heard. Their objective will be to reach an understanding of the forces that operate in area development.

Participants will get a close-up view of the human and natural resources of the area, including its agriculture, mining, recreation, Indian population, forest products, wilderness areas and manufacturing. They will talk to personnel of state and federal agencies, farm organizations, and business and labor groups.

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The first three weeks they will tour the area from their headquarters at Big Mountain, Whitefish. The fourth week will be spent in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. The final week will be devoted to an evaluation of the experiences of the previous month.

Dr. Tascher said application forms are available from Robert Olson, Flathead Teachers Research Corporation, Somers. June 1 is the deadline for applications, he added.