

Foundation grant helps start AIS prevention program

By HEIDI DESCH
Whitefish Pilot

The Whitefish Community Foundation last week awarded a major grant to the Whitefish Lake Institute to help implement a comprehensive zebra and quagga mussel prevention program.

Representatives of both groups met at Whitefish City Beach Thursday afternoon for the presentation of the Major Community Project Grant of \$38,500. WLI's plan includes inspection stations for both City Beach and Whitefish Lake State Park, a decontamination unit, and continued education for the public on the dangers and prevention of invasive species infestations.

"Through this Major Grant, the Whitefish Community Foundation has demonstrated how nimble they are in addressing an emergent community issue," said Mike Koopal, executive director of the Whitefish Lake Institute. "We now have the funds necessary

to purchase a watercraft decontamination unit that will be used to clean watercraft that pose a high risk of transferring aquatic invasive species to Whitefish Lake."

The decontaminator will pressure wash a watercraft and/or obtain water temperatures in interior compartments like ballast tanks to kill the microscopic life stage of zebra mussels, according to Koopal. The decontamination unit will be located at Whitefish Marine and Powersports on Highway 93.

Due to the urgent and critical nature of this project, this is the largest Major Grant awarded from the foundation, according to Whitefish Community Foundation President, Linda Engh-Grady.

"The invasive species prevention program is critical for Whitefish's water system," she said. "The Community Foundation board of directors recognized the urgency in assisting



The Whitefish Community Foundation board members present a grant check to representatives of the Whitefish Lake Institute Thursday afternoon at City Beach. (Heidi Desch/Whitefish Pilot)

Whitefish Lake Institute to put this program into action."

The award is one of 13 Major Grants over \$20,000 presented by the Whitefish Community Foundation, bringing the total awarded to over

\$368,600 since the Major Community Project Grant Program began in 2010.

The Whitefish Lake Institute, founded in 2005, is a nonprofit that conducts scientific research, provides educational and outreach programming,

and conducts a community stewardship program for the Whitefish Lake Watershed.

For more information about the Whitefish Community Foundation visit their website at www.whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

or call 406-863-1781. The Whitefish Community Foundation is dedicated to fostering philanthropy, building endowments, and helping donors and nonprofits benefit our community.