

## WLI Welcomes Mike Shaw and Carol Atkinson to the Board of Directors

WLI is pleased to announce that Mike Shaw and Carol Atkinson have joined our Board of Directors, bringing new energy and ideas to the organization.

Mike Shaw brings to the WLI board a blend of wildland management, philanthropy, community involvement, an understanding of water quality protection issues, and a passion for Whitefish.



Mike Shaw

His B.S. in Forest Management and additional graduate studies on Resource Economics and Management at Utah State University led to 15 years in wildland management, largely employed with the USDA Forest Service with roles in planning, forestry, economic analysis, fire and wilderness management. A true Whitefish community member, he also has 20 years of experience in the snow sports industry as an instructor, coach, patroller and manager.

Mike believes that because of the increasing demand for the resources associated with Whitefish Lake and surrounding biosphere, it is critical that fundamental scientific research combine with thoughtful interpretation and education be continued. These outcomes require consistent support in the social/political arena along with the appropriate financing to get the job done. Mike lives with his wife Marie Russell-Shaw and their daughter Ella. Owners of property on the lake, the Shaws are avid water sports enthusiasts (*continued on page 2*)...

## Water Quality Community Forum

We invite you to join us for *What Does it Mean?* An important Water Quality Community Forum to discuss the results of WLI's *Whitefish Area Water Resource Report: A Status of the Whitefish Lake Watershed & Surrounding Area*. The forum is being held the evening of Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the O'Shaughnessy Center.

At 6pm, there will be a social hour with refreshments and dessert. Whitefish High School GIS and FREEFLOW students will participate in a poster session where they will be on hand to discuss environmental and water related projects they have worked on, many in partnership with WLI.

Mark your calendars for this very important opportunity to learn about and discuss water quality research findings on Whitefish Lake and local streams. Bring your questions! The report is also available at the WLI website [www.whitefishlake.org](http://www.whitefishlake.org).

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**Whitefish Lake Institute**  
550 East 1<sup>st</sup> Street #103  
Whitefish, MT 59937

Voice: 406.862.4327  
Fax: 406.862.0686  
info@whitefishlake.org  
www.whitefishlake.org

**Founded in 2005**

*The Whitefish Lake Institute is committed to science, education, and community stewardship to protect and improve Whitefish Lake and Whitefish area water resources today, while providing a collective vision for tomorrow.*

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Lori Curtis: Science & Education Director  
Josh Gubits: Environmental Scientist

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Whitefish Lake Institute

Cover Photo:  
Whitefish Lake at Night

Courtesy: Jon Erdmann  
Montana Sports Photography

*(WLI Welcomes New Board Members from page 1)...*

Born in Catasauqua, Pennsylvania, Carol Atkinson graduated from Penn State University with a BA in Liberal Arts and from the University of Maryland with a Masters in Educational Technology. She spent close to twenty years at the National Security Agency as an Education and Training Officer and Cryptanalyst. Her second career took her all over the world as a writer and copy editor for Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report. She and her husband Richard moved to Whitefish in 1986.



*Carol Atkinson*

With over twenty years of fundraising and philanthropic endeavors in this community, Carol's fundraising efforts have included both ice rinks, the WAVE and the Whitefish Middle School Auditorium Project. Previous Board appointments have included the Flathead Festival, Glacier Symphony and Chorale, Glacier National Park Fund and Flathead Beacon Advisory Board, and the Whitefish Community Foundation where she served as president and chaired the Grants Committee for five years. She is the

founder of the Whitefish Arts Council and volunteers for the Whitefish Theatre Company and Tamarack Grief Resource Center Summer Camps. In addition, Carol has served as a fundraising consultant for Glacier Symphony and Chorale, Tamarack Grief Resource Center, Shepherd's Hand Clinic, Alpine Theatre Project, Whitefish High School Campus Redevelopment Project and the Anaconda Community Foundation. Carol lives with her husband Richard—her partner in helping to build and sustain the community of Whitefish.

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## **Call for Stewardship Award Nominations**

We invite you to help us identify award worthy water quality stewards and educators through nominations. The Whitefish Lake Institute *Stewardship Award* is designed to recognize individuals and groups that have taken extraordinary measures to protect the water resources of the Whitefish area for the benefit of all. Eligible nominees include those who have implemented on-the-ground projects that improve water quality or educational efforts that help foster continued stewardship of aquatic resources. Stewardship Award nomination forms can be downloaded from our website at [www.whitefishlake.org](http://www.whitefishlake.org). Click "Programs" and then "Community Stewardship" to find the form.

The *Chris Ruffatto Excellence in Education Award* is presented to traditional or non-traditional educators who have committed themselves to engaging the next generation of environmental stewards. Excellence in Education Award nomination forms can be downloaded from our website at [www.whitefishlake.org](http://www.whitefishlake.org). Click "Programs" and then "Education & Outreach" and you will find the form at the bottom of the page.

## Planning for the Future

Now that WLI has published the *Whitefish Area Water Resource Report: A Status of the Whitefish Lake Watershed & Surrounding Area*, the organization is preparing to address our three key areas of concentration—Scientific Research, Education & Outreach, and Community Stewardship for the next ten years!

In the Scientific Research area, we will be conducting two new surveys this year, one to identify *mysis* shrimp densities in the lake, the other to investigate periphyton communities along its shoreline. Both studies will allow WLI to better understand the lake's water quality, food web, and tolerance to change. You can read more about both studies on our website [www.whitefishlake.org](http://www.whitefishlake.org) under *Scientific Research/Special Projects*.

In the Education & Outreach area, we'll be hosting a number of classrooms—Kindergarten through High School—from Whitefish, Columbia Falls, and Kalispell at our Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail, providing learning opportunities to the Flathead Conservation District 's Montana Watershed Corps member, and offering Teaching In Service training and student job shadowing.

In the Community Stewardship area, we will continue working with the City of Whitefish, Whitefish County Water District, and other project partners to address the Septic Leachate issue on Whitefish Lake through facilitating neighborhood level Preliminary Engineering Reports and projects. And touching all three of our programmatic areas, we will be working to set in motion a number of projects identified in the *Watershed Restoration Plan Task Table* from our recent report.

Internally, some of our systems have been in place since our inception and were in need of upgrading. One important change is that we are implementing a new database management tool to help track our members and communicate with them. We are excited to upgrade our capabilities in this area. **We hope that you will help us by providing your email address for more efficient communications, reviewing how your name is displayed as a supporter in this newsletter, and updating your other contact information as needed.**

After six consecutive years, we are taking a break from hosting the Whitefish Wine Auction this year to spend time developing other fundraising capabilities and further cultivating relationships with community members. We're also improving our bookkeeping and financial reporting capabilities with a little help from our friend Trish at

Eagle Eye Bookkeeping. During the course of this year, you'll learn of more changes underway to increase our efficiency and ability to serve our members, the broader Whitefish community and the aquatic resources we all share.



Lori Curtis and Trish from Eagle Eye Bookkeeping work on efficiencies to our accounting system.

## Lake Volunteer Program Summary

Another fantastic season has gone in the books for the Northwest Montana Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Network. This program couldn't exist without the 60+ volunteers that work hard to collect data on the 41 lakes in the program. 2015 saw very high water temperatures, and because of low tributary input, many lake elevations were below average. Hydrolab profiles, chemistry samples and plankton tows were collected at the monitoring sites. We are still awaiting results for microscopy analysis for veligers (microscopic zebra mussel larvae) and eDNA analysis results for Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels. As we continue to monitor for aquatic invasive species (AIS), our efforts now include plant surveys on select program lakes each year.

The program's 2015 summary report will be available on WLI's website in April 2016. The 2015 report will showcase results from historic Hydrolab parameters including pH, total dissolved solids (TDS), specific conductivity, luminescent chlorophyll and oxidation reduction potential (ORP). Stay tuned for upcoming trainings, and thanks to all you volunteers for all that you do to help monitor water quality in western Montana!



Volunteer Emily Miller records plant species composition on Tally Lake.



## 2016 Education Programs

May will be a busy environmental education month for WLI staff at our *Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail*. We are looking forward to welcoming back Whitefish second and fifth grade classes, and hosting second graders from Ruder Elementary in Columbia Falls and Edgerton Kindergarten classes from Kalispell. We are thrilled to have a volunteer from Montana Wild Wings Recover Center (MWWRC) returning this year to share their Education Ambassador birds with fifth grade students. While the goal of MWWRC is to rehabilitate birds and return them to the wild, those that cannot be returned have a home and a purpose at MWWRC. Fifth graders will also be part of a fish dissection and each will receive the WLI produced *Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail Discovery Guide* that includes exercises for them to complete. Kindergarten and second grade classes enjoy an introduction to nature with activities such as a bug and critter talks. Most importantly, the students will be out in nature! WLI is also excited to welcome the Flathead Conservation District's Big Sky Watershed Corps (AmeriCorps) member Sarah Bowman, who will join us for some field research projects this summer, and WLI staff will continue our partnership with Whitefish High School GIS, advanced chemistry and Project FREEFLOW students.



Second graders search for aquatic insects at the Creston Park Trailhead to the Averill's Viking Creek Wetland Preserve.



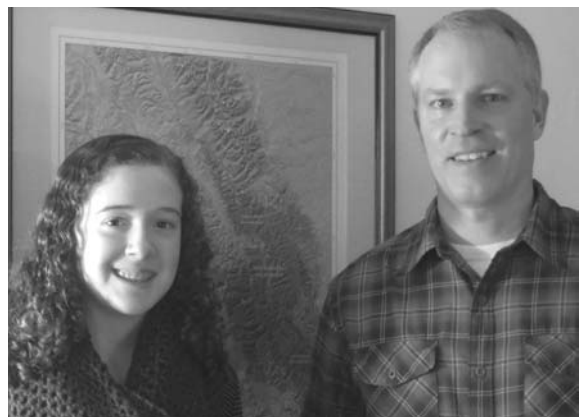
Founder and ED of Montana Wild Wings Recovery Center, Beth Watne with an Education Ambassador bird in the wetlands restoration area.



Fifth graders engage in "field journaling."

*"Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save... the environment, we must also save an endangered indicator species: the child in nature."*

— Richard Louv,  
*Last Child in the Woods:  
Saving Our Children from  
Nature-Deficit Disorder*



Whitefish High School Senior Barrett Gray is assisting WLI Executive Director Mike Koopal in drafting the Riverside Stormwater Pond Management Plan. Barrett will attend Princeton University this fall to study environmental engineering.

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550 East 1st Street #103  
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