



LakeFront

Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitefish Lake Institute

Summer 2014

Fifth Annual Whitefish Wine Auction

The 2014 Whitefish Wine Auction was a spectacular sell out event! Hosted at The Lodge at Whitefish Lake for the fifth year, the two day event marries the natural beauty of Whitefish Lake with The Lodge's elegant amenities, all in the name of water quality.

Thursday's wine tasting was sponsored by Montana Distributors Fun Beverage, George's Distributing, and Intermountain Distributing; as well as Doubleback, providing glorious wines poured by Drew and Maura Bledsoe, Doug Wagner sharing numerous Glacier Sun wines and aperitifs, Genesis Kitchens with a oil and vinegar tasting experience, and our extraordinary wine sponsor pouring from the seemingly endless Foley Family Wines portfolio.

Musical talent *Fresh Off the Vine* entertained guests as did sommelier Dan Vogel with his presentation "A Guided Geo-Bio Wine Tour Through the Eyes of the Great Missoula Flood." Over 50 domestic and international wines were sampled by more than 250 attendees throughout the evening.

On Friday evening 270 attendees enjoyed the perfect combination of delicious food paired with sumptuous wines thanks to the generous sponsorship of WLI past president Greg Lane, Bill Foley from Foley Family Wines, and the Averill Family from The Lodge at Whitefish Lake. The event would not succeed without their collective munificence. Almost 100 organizations donated to the auction to fill the Raffle, Silent Auction and Live Auction tables. And 25 volunteers donated their time and efforts to help make the event run smoothly.



270 attendees begin to gather during the social hour leading up to the Friday evening Whitefish Wine Auction dinner and live auction.

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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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- Chris Ruffatto Associate Environmental Scientist

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Cover Photo:
Paddleboarders on Whitefish Lake.
 Courtesy: Paddlefish Sports

WLI Stewardship Awards

Each year, the *Whitefish Lake Institute Stewardship Awards* recognize individuals or groups that took extraordinary measures to protect water quality in the Whitefish area. The 2013 stewardship award was given to the group WLI identified as the “Whitefish Legacy Partnership.” For the past 10 years, these partners worked tirelessly to create a community driven and donor supported legacy for the Whitefish area. Through their open dialogue and consensus building process, they forged a lasting and innovative solution to protect open space, recreational pursuits, working forests, watershed protection over a broad landscape.

The City of Whitefish—in partnership with Whitefish Legacy Partners—proposed to the State Land Board to purchase permanent recreation and conservation easements on over 1,500 acres of school trust lands surrounding Whitefish Lake. The Land Board also approved a separate land banking transaction totaling 580 acres, which was proposed by Mike Goguen. The approval of both of these transactions contributes more than \$10 million in revenue to state school trust beneficiaries – the schools and universities of Montana, without a single dollar of taxpayer money. These partners created a new conservation and recreation-based revenue stream that supports healthy forests and timber production while providing public managed recreation, uncluttered views, wildlife habitat and high quality watershed value. This conservation project created mutually beneficial outcomes for the Whitefish community and our natural resources.

Executive Director Mike Koopal presented the awards to individuals that made up the partnership, including: Lin Akey: the first WLP Chair; John Anderson: WLP Board Vice-Chair, Whitefish City Counselor; Diane Conradi: WLP Co-Founder; Steve Frye, Area Manager for DNRC’s Northwest Land Office in Kalispell; Mike Goguen: Community philanthropist and investor; Fred Jones: former WLP Board Chair; Brian Manning, Stillwater Unit Manager for Montana DNRC; John Muhlfeld: City of Whitefish Mayor; Heidi Van Everen: WLP Executive Director.



(L-R) Lori Curtis presents the Stewardship Award to John Anderson and Jordan White.



(L-R) Lori Curtis presents the Stewardship Award to Fred Jones, John Muhlfeld, and Diane Conradi.

This year, WLI also presented a *Lifetime Achievement Stewardship Award* to Dr. Lex Blood for his extraordinary dedication to fostering collaborative partnerships in the Flathead Watershed and Crown of the Continent Ecosystem.

Lex Blood is a trained geologist, long-time Flathead educator, and an extraordinarily active participant in conservation efforts throughout the Flathead Watershed. Lex retired from a distinguished teaching career as a Geology/Geography/Earth Science instructor at Flathead valley Community College, and an adjunct professor of Natural Resources at the University of Montana. He was co-founder, president emeritus, executive director, and instructor for the Glacier Institute in Kalispell, MT and is the founder of the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium (COCEEC). He serves as executive director for The Sustainability Fund. He continues to contribute to and lecture for a variety of organizations, consortiums, and institutes, and is involved in numerous conservation and education efforts.

Presenting the award, Lori Curtis called out Lex's amazing accomplishments in "bringing together groups of people that each became a whole much greater than its parts," as well as his shining example of "how much can be achieved by one dedicated individual." Curtis attributes much of her late-in-life career change success to Lex's mentoring and friendship. "I am one of many men and women who have benefited professionally and personally because our paths crossed with Lex Blood's." Lex received a standing ovation from the 270 event attendees.



Lex Blood received a standing ovation after receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award presented to him by Science and Education Director Lori Curtis and Executive Director Mike Koopal. Associate Environmental Scientist Chris Ruffatto jumped up to give a Lex a well-deserved congratulations.

Reflections from 2014 Summer Intern Dietrich Perchy

Working with WLI for the past four months has opened my eyes and mind a great deal. I have learned the importance of practicing proper data collection techniques, seen how having dedicated teammates can make for a safe and efficient working environment, and lastly how having a strong leader can create a positive work environment.

I remember coming into my first day at WLI, I was worried that I would have to answer a lot of questions about lakes and tributaries, such as knowing the invertebrates and vertebrates of each lake. Coming into the office on that sunny Monday in May turned out to be one of the most fun and interesting days I have ever seen. We started the day with our Monday Morning Meeting; our creative Finance and Administrative Manager, Jen Croskrey, brought in some of her office wide known muffins. Lori Curtis, our wonderful Science and Education Director, began talks of the annual Wine Auction, which I did not realize was such a large event to plan. At the time I thought it was just a little party with some stuff to auction off, how hard could it be? Then Josh Gubits, our Environmental Scientist, described what kind of data collection I would be doing with him out in the field, locations we would visit and how I could prepare. *(continued on page 4...)*



2014 Summer Intern Dietrich Perchy from Montana State University was recognized at the Whitefish Wine Auction for his hard work during the summer.

Gone Fishin'

WLI hosted the monthly Whitefish Chamber of Commerce “Gone Fishin” on July 17th at the *Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail*. WLI’s entire staff was on hand to greet guests and share with them some of WLI’s current activities. Executive Director, Mike Koopal addressed the crowd regarding the organizations efforts to protect and improve water quality in the Whitefish area, then turned things over to Chamber President, Kevin Gartland. With WLI’s annual fundraiser—the Whitefish Wine Auction—approaching shortly after the Gone Fishin’ event, WLI had some Wine Auction tickets as well as a t-shirt and cap for business card raffle winners. Tammie Moore of the Flathead Beacon took home the contents of the business card dollar bowl.

Guests enjoyed delicious treats from Simple Chef Catering and wines from the Foley Family Wine portfolio poured by WLI Environmental Scientist, Josh “Bug Man” Gubits. Finance and Administrator, Jen Croskrey and Science & Education Director Lori Curtis spoke with guests about the unique wetland habitat and pointed out points of interest to see on the interpretive trail. WLI staff enjoyed the opportunity to host chamber members at the trailhead and looks forward to seeing you on the trail and the lake!

Reflections from the Summer Intern (con’t from page 3)...

At this point I was beginning to wonder what I had gotten myself into and if I would be able to remember everything. Then Mike Koopal, the Executive Director, began his talk, and suddenly everything seemed to sound like it was going to work out. He planned out the next week, went over expectations for everyone and their duties for the week, and basically watered-down the list of items I had just heard into a simple little stream of tasks and jobs to accomplish. Throughout the rest of the day the staff showed a great deal of patience and kindness by showing me around the office and garage and teaching me more about WLI.

As the week progressed, I went out into the field to learn about proper data collection methods with Josh and Mike. We traversed all around the Flathead Valley collecting from and analyzing the beautiful bodies of water in the valley. Learning about the special characteristics of each area we sampled and tested was truly fascinating.

As the WLI Annual Wine Auction approached, I was in the office with Lori and Jen, who are some of the hardest and most dedicated workers I have ever had the pleasure to work with. I supported them while they planned one of the best wine auctions in WLI history. I felt truly honored and fortunate to have been part of such an amazing event.

Having the opportunity this summer to work with world class scientists will be a memory that I hold for the rest of my life. I would like to thank Mike, Lori, Josh, and Jen for taking me under their wings and teaching me the ropes at WLI. I learned so much and am so grateful for the adventures that we shared together.

Beaver Lake EWM Update

The City of Whitefish has funded an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program as recommended by WLI for the past two years. One component of the program is to survey and dredge any Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) plants found in Beaver Lake. EWM was first discovered in Beaver Lake in 2011.

Snorkel surveying and diver dredging took place in Beaver Lake at the end of July to remove EWM. The entire lakeshore was surveyed and only a handful of EWM plants were observed on the shoreline west of the boat ramp. Approximately ten plants were removed with a weight of less than one pound. In 2012 and 2013; 23 and 5 pounds of plants were removed respectively. No re-growth was seen at the area next to the boat ramp or in any other previous patches. Also, there was no re-growth in the patch of Fragrant Waterlily removed in 2013.

If left untreated, EWM forms dense mats of vegetation on the surface of the water that can interfere with recreational activities such as fishing, swimming, and boating. The resulting effect can be a decrease in lakefront property values. EWM reproduces successfully and very rapidly, making it a threat to any water body it invades.

Due to the close proximity of Beaver Lake to Whitefish Lake, WLI deploys a turbidity curtain at the outlet of Beaver Lake where Beaver Creek starts to prevent fragments from moving downstream.

WLI also partnered with the Flathead Basin Commission consultant to conduct a 100 point AIS presence/absence survey on Whitefish Lake. No EWM or other invasive plant species were found. EWM efforts will continue in the future.

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