

OPINION & NEWS

Presentation on March 13 looks at impact of fading glaciers

By HEIDI DESCH
Whitefish Pilot

The Whitefish Lake Institute is hosting a free community presentation entitled "A glimpse of fading glaciers: Impacts on life in mountain regions" on Wednesday, March 13 at 7 p.m. at the Whitefish Performing Arts Center.

The talk will be jointly presented by Erich Peitzsch, physical scientist from the USGS Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center and Jim Elser, Director of the Flathead Lake Biological Station. The event is free and is part of the larger Montana Lakes Conference being held here on March 13-15.

Peitzsch will provide an overview of ongoing changes in alpine glaciers and snow cover both globally and locally as well as of the associated land-

scape changes that are unfolding. Elser will then describe some impacts of these changes on mountain streams and lakes, including novel studies of "newborn" lakes in Glacier National Park.

Alpine glaciers, such as the glaciers in Glacier National Park, play integral roles in mountain regions releasing cold water in later summer when streams might otherwise have low or no flows.

Continuing the flow and cooling of streams has several functions for aquatic insects and native fish species, such as cutthroat trout. Glacier water can also provide drinking water in some areas, and also sustains farms and fuels recreation through boating and fishing.

The experts will look at how

as alpine glaciers continue to retreat in coming decades, there will be a reduction in water input at the same time that demand is rising. In addition, they will speak about how shrinking glaciers are creating novel aquatic environments in the alpine zone in the form of new streams and lakes.

Elser is Bierman Professor of Ecology of the University of Montana and since March 2016 has been Director of UM's Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay. He also holds a part-time research faculty position in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University. Trained as a limnologist, Elser is best known for his work in developing and testing the theory of ecological stoichiometry, the study of the balance of energy and multiple

chemical elements in ecological systems. Currently, Elser's research focuses most intensively on Flathead Lake as well as mountain lakes of western Montana and western China.

Elser holds a doctorate from the University of California (Davis), a masters degree from the University of Tennessee, and a bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame.

Peitzsch is a Physical Scientist at the U.S. Geological Survey Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center. He has worked for the USGS since 2007 studying avalanches, snow, and glaciers, and as the Director of the Flathead Avalanche Center in north-west Montana. He earned his masters in Earth Sciences from Montana State University in 2009, and is currently also

working on his doctorate at MSU. His current research focuses on avalanche frequency and magnitude and how they relate to various weather and climate processes. He is also using remote and close-range sensing to examine snow depth changes in avalanche path starting zones and relating such changes to weather patterns.

A welcome reception will take place at 6 p.m. followed by the presentation from 7-8 p.m.

The advanced marketing class at Whitefish High School helped create a poster for the event, and the Whitefish Middle School foods class is helping prepare snacks for the event.

For more information, visit www.whitefishlake.org or call 406-862-4327.