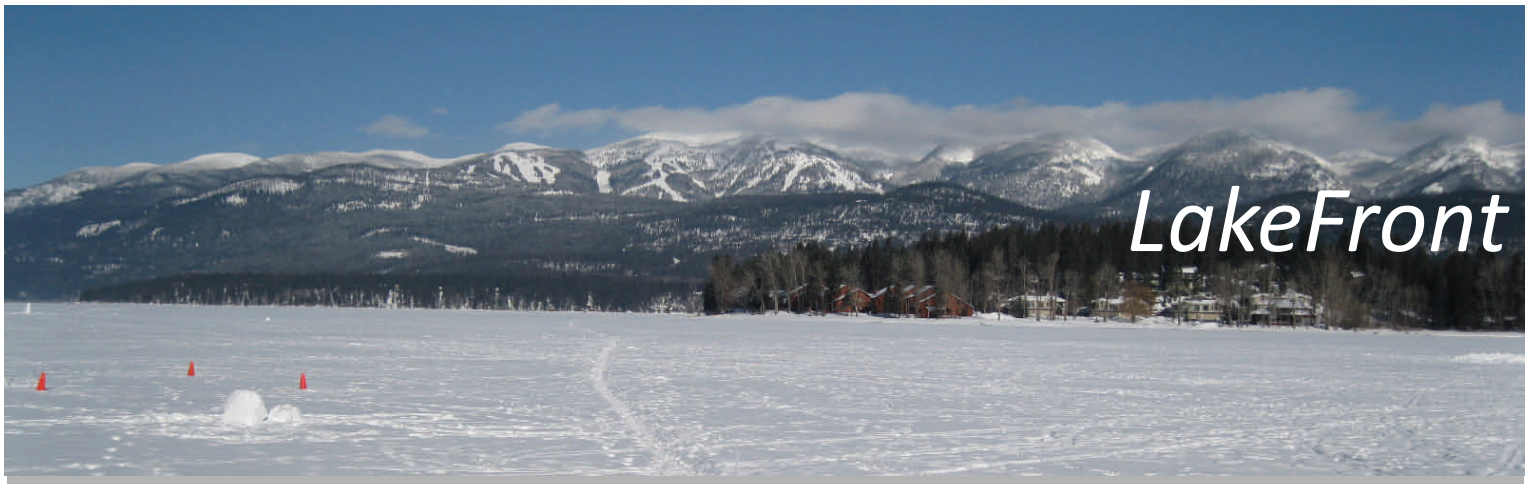

Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitefish Lake Institute *Winter 2011*

WLI Welcomes New Employees

WLI welcomes new employees Lori Curtis and Josh Gubits. They both started work in early February. Lori serves as Science and Education Director ensuring that our science and educational programs perform to their potential. Josh serves as Environmental Scientist with primary duties coordinating the Northwest Montana Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Network www.nwmtlvmn.org.

These two new positions are the result of creative partnerships and funding with other organizations including Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Flathead Basin Commission, Educational Travel Institute of America, and the Flathead National Forest Resource Advisory Committee.

Lori has a Master of Science in Environmental Studies from Green Mountain College, a Bachelor of Science in Business Management, and recently completed the Stream Ecology course at the Flathead Lake Biological Station. She conducted research in aquatic ecosystems throughout California as a student, and later

Lori Curtis is WLI's new Science & Education Director.

Josh moved to Montana from New Mexico nine years ago to finish his undergraduate degree at the University of Montana. While in school, Josh worked as a fishing guide on the Blackfoot, Clark Fork, Bitterroot and Missouri rivers. After graduation, Josh worked for the Audubon Society to develop education and outreach programs in Santa Fe.

Josh Gubits is WLI's new Environmental Scientist.

Most recently, he worked for the Watershed Education Network in (*Josh continued on pg 2*)

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Whitefish Lake INSTITUTE

Protecting and improving the Whitefish, Montana area lake resources

501 (c)(3) Non-Profit Corporation

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Whitefish, MT 59937

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Founded in 2005

The Whitefish Lake Institute is committed to acquiring scientific research and engaging the local citizenry to protect and improve the Whitefish area lake resources of today, while providing a collective vision for tomorrow.

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Josh Gubits– Environmental Scientist
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Mike Koopal, Editor

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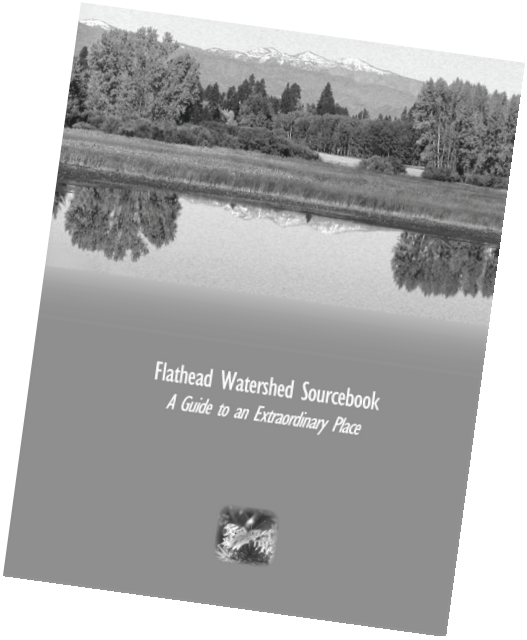
Cover Photo:
A frozen Whitefish Lake with Big Mountain in the background. Photo taken from City Beach.

(*Lori continued from page 1*)
directed terrestrial restoration efforts in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Lori's extensive career includes diverse management roles across a variety of disciplines.

In 2010 Lori wrote and published the *Flathead Watershed Sourcebook: A Guide to an Extraordinary Place*. The book and companion website www.flatheadwatershed.org discusses the many people and systems of the Flathead. Viewed from a bioregional perspective, the book illustrates the natural and cultural histories of the Flathead Watershed, while detailing biodiversity, water quality, land management, agricultural production, and economics. It identifies conservation and education resources and is being used by educators in grade schools, high schools, and colleges including the University of Montana.



Lori and her husband Walt enjoy the many outdoor activities of the area, particularly hiking, backpacking, cross-country skiing, and kayaking.

(*Josh continued from page 1*)
Missoula as the Field Programs Coordinator. Josh spent the last four years teaching more than 10,000 teachers, students and volunteers about water quality, through the collection of chemical, biological and physical data on stream sites across Western Montana.

Josh is a certified Montana Master Naturalist, and in 2009 he was the recipient of the *Montana Water Teacher of the Year* award presented by the Montana Environmental Education Association.

Josh enjoys spending his free time camping, fishing and playing in the water with his family. During the winter Josh can be found at his fly tying bench or waist deep in his favorite runs chasing steelhead.

Speaker Series

Join the Center for Inspired Wisdom and guest speaker, WLI director Mike Koopal, at the Green Tea House in Whitefish on March 22nd from 7-9pm. Mike's talk "*Looking Through the Lens of Earth's Eye*" will explore our connection to the landscape. Mike will also take time to answer any Whitefish Lake or water quality questions. For more information on the Center for Inspired Wisdom, please visit www.inspiredwisdom.org.

Zebra Mussel Scare in Flathead Lake

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) announced that four of 17 plankton samples collected this summer by the Northwest Montana Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Network contained microscopic larvae that had characteristics constant with zebra or quagga mussels.

Two independent Midwestern labs reported back that the microscopic larvae in the samples have "characteristics consistent with zebra and quagga mussels, but they were smaller than you would expect." In contrast, results from an Oregon lab found no signs of mussel contamination. Samples were also submitted to two independent labs for DNA testing, coming back negative.

In December USGS divers visually searched for mussels at multiple sites in Flathead Lake, including where the samples had been collected, and found no evidence of mussel colonization. Although the results are suspicious enough for people to be concerned, they are not enough to trigger FWP to claim that Flathead Lake is infested with zebra mussels. More in-depth sampling for zebra mussels will occur in the 2011 field season.

Through independent follow up testing, Jim Craft and Tom Bansak, researchers at the Flathead Lake Biological Station, reported that the microscopic larvae in question is actually a dinoflagellate, Peridinium species, which is good news.

First discovered in the U.S. in the Great Lakes in the 1980s, zebra mussels have since spread throughout the Midwestern and mid-Atlantic states. They were likely transported in boat livewells, where the microscopic larvae can survive for weeks. Western states sounded the alarm in 2007 when mussels were found in Nevada's Lake Mead.

Zebra mussels readily colonize artificial substrates like the inside of pipes.

The Northwest Montana Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Network is a partnership between WLI, FWP and the Flathead Basin Commission. The program trains "citizen scientists" to monitor their local lake so that trend information can be developed over time. As a component to the program, volunteers are also looking for Aquatic Invasive Species.

Montana's best defense against invasive species is for boaters and anglers to inspect, clean and dry their boats, trailers and fishing gear after each use. Citizens can report anything suspicious they find in local lakes by visiting www.nwmtlvnm.org or by contacting FWP directly at 752-5501.

Whitefish Wine Auction Scheduled for July 21st & 22nd

Montana's premier wine event is back! The Whitefish Wine Auction, a benefit to support the Whitefish Lake Institute, will be July 21st and 22nd at The Lodge at Whitefish Lake.

Last year, WLI partnered with multiple Napa Valley vineyards and local distributors to showcase a wonderful selection of wines for tasting and for auction.

Whitefish Wine Auction

Benefits from the event support the scientific and educational efforts of the Whitefish Lake Institute. In particular, WLI is applying the proceeds from this years event for Phase II construction and development of an interpretive nature trail in the Averill's Viking Creek Wetland Preserve.

Please visit *www.whitefishwineauction.org* or call 862.4327 for more information and to purchase tickets. Seating is limited so please buy your tickets early. Last year, tickets sold out prior to the event.

Job Shadow Experience

For the past two years, WLI has partnered with the Whitefish School District to offer a job shadow experience for students interested in the environmental sciences. This year, Warren Holder, a ninth grader at Whitefish High School, and aspiring wildlife biologist, tagged along with WLI director Mike Koopal.

At the office, Mike and Warren talked about wildlife issues, how a non-profit operates and what Warren needs to study in school to become a wildlife biologist. Warren also brought a list of questions for Mike to answer. Later, the two headed out to the Averill's Viking Creek Wetland Preserve, which is owned and managed by WLI, to download photos from three motion sensor trail cams.

Warren was the first to see the great wildlife photos found below.

Warren Holder, a ninth grader at Whitefish High and aspiring wildlife biologist, job shadowed with WLI director Mike Koopal early this winter.

Wetland Wildlife Photos

This coyote and mountain lion were photographed on the same day and in the same location about 12 hours apart.

To date, this is the largest buck recorded in the wetlands. He's only been seen once- during the rut!

A fox pauses long enough for the camera to take this early morning shot.

A raccoon ambles along during the pre-dawn.

Visit us at www.whitefishlake.org to see more wildlife images from 2009-2010

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