



Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitefish Lake Institute

Spring 2014

WLI Welcomes New Board Members

The Whitefish Lake Institute is excited to welcome two new board members— Hank Ricklefs and Pam Barberis.

Hank Ricklefs is a retired Vice President for Plum Creek (Northern Region). He received his BA from Dartmouth College in 1971 and MBA from Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth in 1972. He has a 35 year work history in the wood products and forestry industry. Hank has experience in the management of large-scale business operations:

financial and budgetary expertise; experience with the Whitefish Trails system and its impacts on local recreational opportunities and ecosystems; familiarity with collaborative efforts between business and non-profit entities.

Hank has lived in Whitefish since 1996 and served on several boards. He was a member of the North Valley Hospital Board from 2002-2013, Chair for final two years; instigator of FVCC Business & Industry Council in 1999; member of Whitefish Legacy Partners Board since 2011; board member of Houston Point Homeowners Association for 12 years. Hank has been married to Susan for 35 years. They have two grown (continued on page 2)



Hank Ricklefs

5th Annual Whitefish Wine Auction

Spring is in the air...which means we're busy putting together a wonderful program for our 5th Annual Whitefish Wine Auction. We are procuring some of the most exciting wines, interesting Live and Silent Auction items, and a terrific selection of Raffle goods and services. This two day event brings together great wines, excellent food, beautiful art, and intriguing adventures—all in support of keeping Whitefish Lake blue!

Join us Thursday afternoon, July 31st from 4:00 to 7:00 pm on the shores of Whitefish Lake for a delectable wine tasting experience brought to us by our Montana Wine Distributors Fun Beverage, Inc; George's Distributing; and Intermountain Beverage as well as visiting wineries. (continued on page 3)

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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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LakeFront is published quarterly by the
 Whitefish Lake Institute

Cover Photo:

Paddleboarders on Whitefish Lake.
Courtesy: Paddlefish Sports

(*New Board Members continued from page 1*)... children and four grandchildren, all residing in Montana. His hobbies include skiing, golf, fly fishing and travel.

Hank believes the foremost issue facing WLI is addressing the Lake's surrounding property for septic and leachate improvements; securing adequate funding and budgeting to provide continual, solid science in the management of lake issues while avoiding political entanglements; integrating WLI activities with other ecosystem enhancements or public improvements surrounding the greater lake area.

Pam Barberis is the new Whitefish City Council representative to the WLI board of directors. Pam grew up in Vermont and Maine and received a BA from Skidmore College in 1990. After graduation she developed a love of the West while working seasonal jobs in Alaska and traveling the world. She met her husband Joe in Denali National Park, Alaska and they moved to Montana together in 1991. They first lived in Missoula, then Kila and finally building a home near City Beach in Whitefish in 2004. They have one son, Evan, who is now 10 years old.

Pam has an interest in local food systems for increased health, food safety, and food security, and enjoyed five years working in the kitchen at the downtown Whitefish Montana Coffee Traders, where the use of local foods was encouraged. She has been involved with the Whitefish Community Garden and FarmHands and enjoys working in her own garden.



Pam Barberis

Pam was sworn in to Whitefish City Council in January of 2014 and requested to serve on WLI's board because she believes that the health of Whitefish Lake is essential for the health of our Community. She enjoys swimming, canoeing and boating on the lake with family and friends.

Pam thinks that the biggest issues facing WLI over the next five years will be to secure solid funding to maintain WLI's mission, increase public awareness, and possibly redefining the goal to protect all local waters, not just Whitefish Lake.

The board of directors and staff of the Whitefish Lake Institute extend a sincere thanks to outgoing board members Charlie Abell, Dan Weinberg, and City of Whitefish board liaison Frank Sweeney for their tremendous support. Having served three full terms, Charlie and Dan have been with WLI since its 2005 inception. They helped guide the organization through its initiation and early development years (read "no money"!), and remained involved long enough to see WLI grow into a reputable organization. In addition to his legal and business acumen, Frank brought his expertise as a city councilor and knowledge of current city issues to WLI.

(5th Annual Whitefish Wine Auction continued from page 1)...Local musical group *Fresh Off the Vine* will weave their delightful tunes through the evening air while guests enjoy wine, appetizers, and a chance to learn something new about wine growing, winemaking, and wine tasting with *Wine Guy* Dan Vogel. And, you'll take home a courtesy commemorative tasting glass.

Friday evening, August 1st promises to be a night to remember. We're excited to announce the return of the generous, entertaining, and hilarious Missoula Mayor John Engen as our MC and auctioneer. Friday's four-course, wine-paired, family-style dinner is just part of the terrific evening we have in store for you. You'll have opportunities to bid on an amazing assortment of Silent and Live Auction and raffle items while seeing old friends and meeting new ones. Wines will be provided by a number of Foley Family Wine's finest vineyards, courtesy of Bill Foley and WLI's friend and past board president, Greg Lane.

Get out your blue shirts and dresses to help us celebrate the *Keep it Blue* theme! Join us either night... or better yet...both nights! Tickets are available at www.whitefishwineauction.org, the Whitefish Lake Institute office, and the concierge at The Lodge at Whitefish Lake. Call 406.862.4327 for more information.

Gone Fishin'

The Whitefish Lake Institute is excited to be hosting the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce GONE FISHIN' at our *Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail* from 5:00 to 7:00 PM on Thursday, July 17th. The Whitefish Chamber GONE FISHIN' events provide great opportunities for community members to gather after hours to socialize, discuss business, share ideas, and get to know new members of the community.

Join us at the trailhead for appetizers provided by Simple Chef Catering, and take a springtime walk along the *Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail* in the Averill's Viking Creek Wetland Preserve owned and managed by WLI. The trailhead is located on Viking Creek Drive, on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue just south of The Lodge at Whitefish Lake. We look forward to seeing some new faces at the trailhead this July.

Wetland Updates

Bird Guide...We are excited to announce the availability of our *Bird Guide for the Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail*. Our friends at the Flathead Audubon visited the wetland last year to help identify birds by sight, song, or sound. The guide includes photos of the first 36 birds identified, along with a list of other species likely to be found in the wetland. Each guide has a wetland birding checklist to keep track of birds noticed by visitors. Guides are available at the trailheads.

Get Outside and Help Maintain the Trail...If you love the outdoors and like to contribute to community trails, we hope you'll consider joining us from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturday, June 7th for our **Wetlands Work Day**. We'll be trimming vegetation, weeding, and cleaning up debris along The *Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail*. Lunch provided. Info/RSVP 406.862.4327 or info@whitefishlake.org.

Welcome 2014 Summer Intern

I am currently a junior enrolled at Montana State University, Bozeman. For the past three years I have been studying biology, chemistry, and physics on my way to acquiring two degrees; one in Biology and the other in Secondary Teaching Education Broadfield Science.

While attending Montana State University I have been involved in the Residence Life Program, working as a resident advisor on campus. My job included planning educational events, acting as a peer counselor, and being an ambassador between the Residence Life Program and the students. This valuable experience allowed me to create an academically driven environment for the residents in my hall to help them succeed as students.

In addition to interning with the Whitefish Lake Institute in the summer of 2014, I will be continuing to work at my favorite local eatery; *Haskill Station*. When I am not busy with work I will most likely be running on one of the many beautiful trails in the Flathead Valley or visiting with friends and loved ones around the state. I am very excited for the upcoming summer!



Dietrich Perchy

In Memoriam— Margaret Murdock

The following in-memoriam begins with excerpts from an article by Mike Koopal reprinted from the Fall 2006 issue of LakeFront-

On a rainy afternoon in November, I sat down for tea and cookies with Margaret Murdock and her daughter Sharlot Battin. I wanted to find out what inspired them to place just under 200 acres of their land, roughly situated between Wisconsin and Texas Avenues, into a conservation easement.

Conservation easements are restrictions landowners voluntarily place on their property that legally bind the actions of present and future owners. In other words, the easement reflects the value of the development rights the landowner is giving up, for which they receive tax incentives. But that wasn't the driving force behind Margaret and Sharlot's decision.

As Margaret put it, "We don't see this land as a commodity. We see it as something to be respected." As I found out, the two women have come from a matriarchal lineage of hard working, visionary women. Margaret's mother, Bertha Reich, homesteaded in what amounted to nothing more than a tent that shielded her and her brother from the cold, windy eastern Montana winters near Winifred. (Margaret and Sharlot also placed that 200 acre property into an easement).

After marrying, Bertha and her husband, Hugo, bought the Whitefish property from George and Minnie Baker in 1930. Margaret likes the idea that, "Starting with Minnie, a man has never held the deed to this property." The men did, however, work the land. Hugo raised oats, timothy and clover for livestock (something the Baker brothers had started in order to feed the horses for their logging operations).

During hikes in the easement throughout the years, they have seen mountain lions, grizzlies, black bears, moose, deer, turkeys, owls, eagles, hawks, not to mention sensitive species like the LeConte's Sparrow and Small Yellow Ladies Slipper. Would they place the property into a conservation easement if they had to do it all over again? "Oh yeah."

In 2009, after many unfavorable development proposals for the area, and after two years of negotiations- WLI, the Friends of Wisconsin Avenue Wetlands and the Averill Family brokered a solution for the 40 acres to the south and west of Margaret and Sharlot's property. As part of the agreement, just under 30 acres were donated to WLI by the Averill Family for water quality, wildlife benefit, and development of a public interpretive nature trail. Together with Margaret and Sharlot's property, there is now a large contiguous area for wildlife movement and water quality buffering.

In 2010, WLI recognized the amazing community stewardship of Margaret and Sharlot by presenting them with the *Lifetime Achievement Stewardship Award*.

In 2013, after four years of planning, fundraising, and construction, Mike Koopal and Lori Curtis of WLI had the privilege of guiding Margaret and Sharlot on the newly opened *Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail*. Margaret was impressed with the trail and excited about the educational opportunities. After all, Margaret retired in 1985 after 36 years of teaching in Columbia Falls.

Building upon Margaret's notion of "We don't see this land as a commodity. We see it as something to be respected," WLI has lead many educational tours of the wetlands intended to increase the public's appreciation of this special place. Included are Road Scholars, all of the Whitefish 2nd graders, and other small groups. Later in May, all of the Whitefish 5th graders will cycle through educational stations along the trail. Margaret also gave us permission to access her land to conduct water quality testing with the Whitefish High School Project FREEFLOW students.

Margaret was clear in her final days that she didn't want a funeral, rather there will be a celebration of her life sometime in June. She was laid to rest on a bed of pine and cedar boughs in a simple wooden coffin constructed of birch trees from her property.



WLI Executive Director Mike Koopal with Margaret Murdock and her daughter Sharlot Battin during a 2013 stroll through the wetlands.

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