

LakeFront

Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitefish Lake Institute

Summer 2018



Voices of Our Lake Now Available



WLI is proud and appreciative to once again be participating in the Great Fish Community Challenge fundraiser sponsored by the Whitefish Community Foundation. Your past support of WLI through the Challenge helped fund research to assist our lake and watershed research, education programs for our youth, community stewardship efforts for our citizens, and efforts to protect Whitefish waterbodies from aquatic invasive species.

Voices of Our Lake is the result of two efforts—research by WLI scientists, and thoughtful reflections by citizens who live, work, and recreate on and around Whitefish Lake. Together we have given a voice to Whitefish Lake. Pick up your complimentary copy of *Voices of Our Lake* at the WLI office or contact us (*continued on Page 3...*)



(L-R) WCF board member Betsy Bayne, Mike Koopal, and Lori Curtis at the 2017 Great Fish Awards.

Inside this issue of *LakeFront*—

- Great Fish Community Challenge..... 1
- Voices of Our Lake* Now Available..... 2
- Lake Volunteer Program Update..... 2
- Summer Intern Reflects on Experience..... 3
- Rangewide Bull Trout eDNA Project..... 3
- Summer Photos..... 4
- WLI Supporters..... 5
- Become a WLI Member..... 6

We hope you'll continue to help us protect and improve Whitefish area water resources by participating in the Great Fish Community Challenge **between July 26th and September 14th**. To donate, please go to: www.greatfishchallenge.org. Also, bring the family and join us on September 8th at Depot Park for the Community Celebration and Great Fish 5K Color Run!

Back issues available at www.whitefishlake.org



A 501 (c)(3) Nonprofit Corporation



Whitefish Lake Institute

550 East 1st 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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Whitefish Lake Institute

Cover Photo:

*Whitefish Lake looking southwest near Eagle Point.
Courtesy of gravityshots.com*

Lake Volunteer Program Update

This summer, Cynthia Ingelfinger has been fortunate to work with many terrific volunteers on 41 lakes all over northwest Montana as part of the Northwest Montana Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Network, a partnership between Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, WLI, and citizen scientists.

Thanks to nearly 40 dedicated volunteers, we are able to maintain regularly monitored sites at almost all program lakes. Volunteers keep tabs on their lake's health by measuring water clarity with a Secchi disk and water temperature, as well as recording other lake characteristics. Since Cynthia is only able to visit each lake once per summer to collect water quality data, the volunteers are our eyes and ears, recording the lakes' health year after year. They are also a critical component for the early detection of aquatic invasive species, algal blooms, and other lake stressors. Volunteers often become a voice for their lake and help educate their neighbors about lake issues.

These volunteers are not only committed and knowledgeable about their lakes, but they are also incredibly fun to work with! With this being Cynthia's first field season with the NWMTLMN program, she is especially grateful to all of the volunteers who introduced her to their lakes, took her out in their boats, and shared laughs as she learned the ropes. Volunteers make this program possible through their dedication and commitment year after year, and Cynthia is already looking forward to her 2019 lake visits!

To see the program results visit www.nwmtlmn.org. If you would like to volunteer to monitor a lake, contact Cynthia at the WLI office 862-4327.



Cynthia Ingelfinger, WLI Science & Education Coordinator, prepares to collect water quality measurements at Big Therriault Lake. All boats and sample gear used in the program receive a thorough decontamination after each lake visit to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Past Issues of LakeFront are available on our website www.whitefishlake.org

Summer Intern Reflects on Experience -by Zach Cook

To see the ability of a small group of people to change the world for the better, one doesn't need to look any further than the Whitefish Lake Institute. This past summer, I have had the pleasure of getting to know and work alongside the amazing people that make up WLI. I cannot say enough about Mike, Lori, and Cynthia. Their passion, enthusiasm, knowledge, work ethic, and good heartedness is something to be envied and is the epitome of what it means to pursue a passion and be an impactful non-profit. I could not ask for anything more appropriate to model my life after and to strive for than the example that these three have set as scientists, educators, community members, volunteers, and so much more.

During my time as an intern at WLI, I have gained experience in aquatic ecology, limnological field data collection, aquatic invasive species management, watershed processes, broader bioregional theory, and have learned about the inner workings of a small nonprofit among countless other things. I have been able to traverse up into the mountains and bushwack to hidden streams to collect bull trout eDNA samples, and I have been able to be a part of establishing a social media presence to expand the organizations reach. I've sat through commission and conservation district meetings, and have nearly submerged myself in the lake as I wore my waders for the first time. My time at WLI has exposed me to the colossal amount of work that is put in to keeping the watershed healthy and to so many other different projects going on in the state of Montana and the Whitefish community, and has allowed me to see a side of science and nature that I've never seen before.

Most importantly, my time at the Whitefish Lake Institute has been a lesson in humility, perseverance, and having faith in your community to support you and to accomplish your shared goals of creating a better world in which to live. No amount of words, let alone a few paragraphs, can express how thankful I am to the Whitefish Lake Institute and the community which supports them for the amazing opportunity I had to be apart of this this summer. This internship experience has truly changed my life. Thank you!

Like us on Facebook! See new posts and information about the Whitefish Lake Institute, thanks to summer intern Zach Cook.



Rangewide Bull Trout eDNA Project

Environmental DNA (eDNA) refers to fragments of genetic material from plants or animals that naturally occur in the environment. In the case of fish, DNA is contained in cells that are continually shed into the water, thus becoming "eDNA." Each species DNA is unique and can be detected in very small quantities.

Though once abundant, bull trout have declined in many locations and are at risk from a changing climate, non-native species competition, and habitat degradation. The United States Forest Service Rangewide Bull Trout eDNA Study is determining the distribution of bull trout throughout the Pacific Northwest. WLI is one of many participating organizations contributing to this effort.



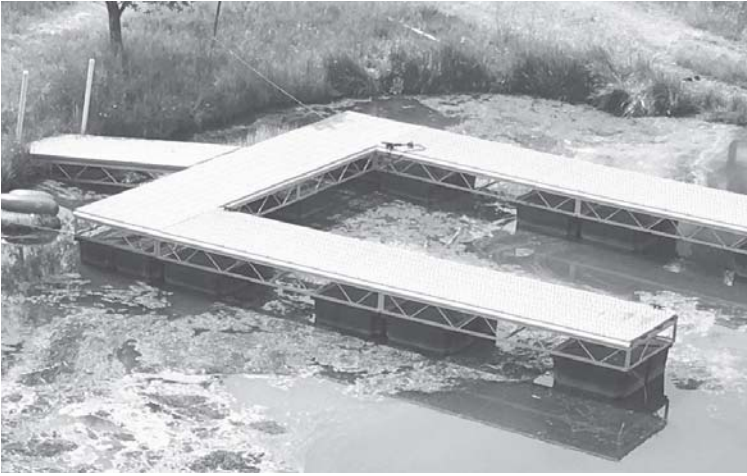
Intern Zach Cook prepares a bull trout eDNA sample to send to the United States Forest Service laboratory.

WLI is particularly interested in documenting any unknown bull trout populations in the Swift Creek drainage, especially in smaller tributaries.

Bull trout redd (nest) counts conducted by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in the Swift Creek drainage show a very low number of bull trout moving from Whitefish Lake upstream to spawn. The importance of protecting bull trout habitat is validated by genetic research that has shown that little gene flow has occurred among populations even over short geographic distances and that geographically close populations have been highly isolated reproductively.

(Voices of Our Lake continued from Page 1...) to have a copy shipped to you. WLI members will soon have a copy sent to them. Thanks to our sponsors: Cadeau Foundation, Whitefish Community Foundation, WLI Members, and to all of the Voices of Our Lake vignette contributors!

Summer Photos



Example of blue-green algal bloom in Hauser Reservoir, Montana. Photo courtesy Melissa Schaar, DEQ. Help us keep an eye out for Harmful Algal Bloom (HABs) in local lakes. HABs can be reported at hab.mt.gov, and WLI has test kits to quickly determine if the HAB has cyanotoxins. Cyanotoxins can be produced by blue-green algae and can be harmful to human and animal health.



Rick Nelson, and his wife Marilyn, are lake volunteers on Flathead Lake. Rick is motoring out to the Mack Alley sampling location. Program Coordinator Cynthia Ingelfinger depends on the generosity of many volunteers to get her to all of the sampling locations.



Summer intern Zach Cook prepares to deploy a data sonde to collect various water quality parameters.



Holland Lake volunteer Bill Beers (Left), and Rob Rich from Swan Valley Connections head out on Holland Lake.



It's not all work for summer interns. Zach Cook gets his first try at paddling a kayak on Bailey Lake thanks to volunteer Susie Bouton.



WLI is partnering with the Flathead Conservation District, Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, and Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks on the Cow Creek restoration project scheduled to begin this fall. WLI will keep you posted on this project in future issues of LakeFront.

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550 East 1st Street #103
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Whitefish Lake Institute ♦ 550 East 1st Street #103 ♦ Whitefish, MT 59937

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