

LakeFront

Quarterly newsletter to Whitefish Lake Institute members

Summer 2006

City of Whitefish Supports the Institute

At the June 26th City of Whitefish budget meeting, the Whitefish City Council unanimously offered their support to the Institute.

Support will come in the form of \$10,000 reviewed annually to provide a foundation to the Whitefish Lake monitoring effort as guided by the Whitefish Lake Water Quality Monitoring Program. The Program was developed by the Institute this past fall and winter.

Recognizing the impacts of growth and development to water quality, the City Council expressed the need to monitor the lake's water quality on a long-term basis.

The Council also approved approximately \$30,000 for the Institute to purchase monitoring and sampling equipment for the Program.

The \$30,000 funding is tied to fines levied against the City by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) over a series of sewage spills into Whitefish Lake and the Whitefish River dating back to 2004.

The City drafted a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) that would route most of the fine money to purchasing research equipment for the Institute. The SEP was recently approved by DEQ

The City's decision to back the Institute along with support from the DEQ will jumpstart the Program and provide long-term stability in our effort to understand and protect Whitefish Lake water quality.

Institute to Coordinate the Whitefish Water Quality Umbrella Committee

At the June 26th City of Whitefish budget meeting, the Whitefish City Council unanimously supported the creation of a Whitefish Water Quality Umbrella Committee.

The idea to form the committee was proposed by Councilor John Muhlfeld at a Council Visioning Session earlier this year and the concept (*continued on page 2*)

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"A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature."

- Henry David Thoreau



Whitefish Lake
INSTITUTE

*Protecting and improving the
Whitefish, Montana area
lake resources*

Whitefish Lake Institute
 635 Denver Street
 Whitefish, MT 59937

Voice: (406) 862-4327
 Fax: (406) 862-4341
info@whitefishlake.org
www.whitefishlake.org

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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LakeFront is published quarterly by the Whitefish Lake Institute. The opinions expressed in *LakeFront* are those of the authors. We welcome comments and submissions.

Mike Koopal, Editor

Printed on re-cycled paper.

Logo design by Carbery Creative.

Cover photo courtesy of:
 GravityShots.com
 (Fishing boat on Whitefish Lake)

Guest Column– *A Band of Merry Bears*

-Joe Malletta, Chairman of the Friends of the Wisconsin Avenue Wetlands

The proposed Boardwalk Project on nearly 40 acres of land located east and west of Wisconsin Avenue in Whitefish woke up a pack of sleeping bears. Word passed from one den to another that someone was really serious about putting a 167 unit condominium project on land previously thought of as a swamp/wetland/animal habitat. Well, that really brought the pack out of hibernation with a start!

Are the developers nuts? Don't they realize how important this wetland is to the health of Whitefish Lake? What will all of the critters do who use this area for habitat and as a corridor to the fields to the east and the lake on the west? How dare they put another cluster of cookie cutter dwellings on such sensitive land!

The bears organized. They met in a cave below the Mountain West Bank. A bear known to Whitefish was enlisted to be chairperson. Donations were collected; legal advice was sought; bright young bears were enlisted to provide scientific information about wetlands, hydrology, and other technical matters. Big bears, middle sized bears, and little bears were sent door to door in the neighborhoods surrounding the proposed development to awaken other bears and to ask them to join our merry clan. As a result, when the city's Planning Board met to hear from the developers and the public, all the merry bears showed up... without a smile on their faces. After hearing several hours of "cooked" information from the developers' experts, the now not so merry bears had the opportunity to show the many flaws in the expert testimony. As the meeting wound on past midnight, the developers could easily discern that the locals were in a "bearish" mood and that they were willing to fight expert to expert, lawyer to lawyer, and hand to hand if necessary to stop this project.

Another meeting was held before the Planning Board where the developers scaled back the project and presented a plan for fewer condominiums and a "high quality" wetlands to replace nature's works. But the not so merry bears were ready and presented hard data of the impact of this project on the present wetlands, Monks Bay, and Whitefish Lake as well as a portion of the city's water supply. Shortly after this meeting the developers withdrew their project and the bears were merry once again.

Don't you love a story with a happy ending? But the story isn't finished just because this development was dissuaded; the merry bears continue to meet and to investigate ways which the wetlands and the lake side parcels might be purchased with an eye towards including this area along with other drainages that affect Monks Bay and Whitefish Lake in some type of nature conservancy for a truly happy ending.

If you're feeling "bearish", please join the merry bears by calling Joe Malletta at 862-6343 or contacting him at mallettas@centurytel.net.

(umbrella committee, continued from page 1)

made the list of prioritized goals passed in Resolution 06-27.

The Council requested that the Institute provide professional coordination for the committee and approved \$5,000 split evenly between the Public Works Department Stormwater and Wastewater Funds for the service.

The organizing document for the committee is currently being drafted and will need final passage by the City Council prior to implementation. The intent of the committee is to yield a broader vision and synthesis of water quality information within the Whitefish Planning Jurisdictional area by forming a steering type committee of existing local water quality related groups.

The committee will provide their recommendations directly to the City Council on a quarterly basis.

Executive Director's Essay

Membership Tops 100– What Does it Mean?

I'm proud to announce that in the first year and a half of the Institute, our membership has grown to include over 100 members. In fact, as this newsletter went to print, the official count was at 118.

The Institute was founded on the principal of facilitating an active dialogue between Whitefish citizenry, stakeholder groups and government agencies to protect and improve Whitefish Lake water quality.

Our approach to accomplish this objective is to openly communicate our intentions and to provide un-biased scientific research. With this recipe, we feel that we can provide the community and management agencies the tools to make informed resource decisions in the future.

This concept is in stark contrast to one individual that thought he or she had us pegged. Within the first week of announcing to the public that the Institute had formed, there was a website blog calling us "Sierra Club– type eco-wingnut liberals."

Now, I don't know about you, but I'm sure I've been called a lot of things, but a wingnut? That's a term I reserve to call myself at the time when I was taking a leap of faith by starting the Institute, but not as some environmental extremist. As far as being a liberal, I do wear sandals to work in the summer.

When it comes to the Institute's board of directors, committee members and supporting members, I know for a fact that we are well represented by republicans and democrats alike, and people of all ages, professions and interests. To my knowledge, none of our members have chained themselves to any shoreline tree or have taken up a hunger strike head-quartered on a boat dock in protest to a lake related issue.

Institute awarded DEQ mini-grant

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) recently awarded the Institute a \$1,377 mini-grant. The grant is for education and outreach in addressing water quality and non-point source pollution. The Institute's grant application was titled "Bringing Whitefish Lake to the Classroom."

The Institute will use the funds to purchase a compound microscope, a dissecting microscope, and a video feed. The equipment will be used during visits to local area classrooms to display the microscopic life (zooplankton, phytoplankton) of the lake on a TV screen. It will be an eye opener for students to see the amazing shapes and variety of aquatic life.

Discussion will revolve around the lake's food web and the dynamics of microscopic life. The extent and type of non-point source pollution to the lake, and its effects to microscopic life will also be discussed.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the Institute visited over 10 classrooms. This mini-grant is a great opportunity to increase the effectiveness of our message and to reach even more students this coming school year in Whitefish, Kalispell and at the Hope Ranch. –MK

Fortunately, time, hard work and the coalesced support from our increasing membership, the City of Whitefish, Montana FWP, Montana DEQ, and Plum Creek Timber Company have moved us in a positive direction. That support along with the encouragement from Dr. Jack Stanford and Jim Craft from the Flathead Lake Biological Station provides me with the confidence to say that, in fact, we are not wingnuts.

The Institute can now move forward with confidence in fulfilling our mission. It is our goal to hire a part-time research scientist in 2007 and transition this position to full-time to help me tackle the workload on the lake while we continue to meet the needs of our members and the public.

This year we are continuing the Volatile Organic Compound Study and our education and outreach efforts. Later in 2006 or early 2007 we will begin a septic leachate study of the Whitefish Lake shoreline to address concerns that septic effluent is negatively affecting water quality while being a possible health risk.

In 2007, we will start the Whitefish Lake Water Quality Monitoring Program. As a side-bar to the Program, the Institute will be cooperating with Montana DEQ and PBS&J Consulting to collect data to support a computer model of non-point source pollution loading to the lake. This work is a component of the broader Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development for Whitefish Lake.

I ask for your continued support as we transition from our formative stage to implementing a full blown scientific program. It's exciting to see some of our initial goals come to fruition. If that collectively makes us wingnuts, at least I know I'm in good company. –Mike Koopal

Institute to launch email update service

In an effort to increase the timeliness of lake information to our members, the Institute is now offering an email update service starting in October.

The updates will consist of the latest activities and proposals of the Institute and other agencies and any pertinent lake news. The service will also include the Institute's latest monthly education column in the [Whitefish Pilot](#) and how you can become involved in issues.

If you would like to receive the email update service please respond to info@whitefishlake.org and provide your name and email address. –MK

Please help us keep our membership database current. If you have a change of address, or if you would like to see your name displayed differently on page 5, contact us at info@whitefishlake.org

Volunteer Spotlight

It wouldn't be possible to manage the Institute's affairs with only one staff member. Fortunately, beyond the board of directors and committee members, there are individuals who work behind the scenes, volunteering their time to make the Institute a success. Special thanks to the following:



Norm Bouffard
Norm is the Information Technology Manager for Montana Coffee Traders. Norm has graciously set-up and updated the Institute's web page in addition to offering general computer support. Norm accepts only a few beers as payment.

Cora Christensen
Born in eastern Montana, Cora moved to Whitefish in 1985. She operates a bookkeeping and tax preparation service—Cora Christensen, EA, LLC (863-2668). Cora crunches the numbers for the Institute and prepares the financial reports, even if it cuts into her golf time.



Peter Petri
Peter is the President of Mobile LoGIStics Mapping, specializing in geographic information systems (GIS) and cartography. You may have seen his maps, including Glacier Country, displayed around town. Check out his work at www.mlmgis.com. Peter sets up GIS base layer images for us.

Cami Sawtelle

Cami is an Environmental Scientist for Watershed Consulting. Cami helps the Institute by editing and producing map images from the base layers provided by Peter. Cami also provides field assistance when needed. Cami has a Masters degree in Resource Conservation from the University of Montana.



Christine Hensleigh

A former editor of the Whitefish Pilot, Christine is now a free-lance writer with works appearing in Flathead Living and Montana Magazine. I often get emails from Christine that were sent at 4am. I wonder if being a new mom has anything to do with it? Christine has provided invaluable help and advice to the Institute with grant writing.

Kari Zirkle

Due to our expanding membership, Kari has recently volunteered to manage our membership services, process map sales and assist with some general office duties. Kari is enjoying Whitefish after having done the big city thing in New York, Los Angeles and Phoenix.



Would you like to display courtesy copies of LakeFront at your business location? Contact Mike at 862-4327.

Sign Me Up! Please enroll my membership in the Whitefish Lake Institute.

- My check is enclosed
- Visa Mastercard

Account #: _____

Expires: _____ Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please check your **Annual Membership** category:

- Research Guarantor \$1,000+
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 Scott and Cindy Schmid- Portland, OR

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- Stillwater Lakes*
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Helena, MT

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Prices:

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	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Laminated</u>
Whitefish Lake	_____	_____
Stillwater Lakes	_____	_____
Tally Lake	_____	_____
<i>Total</i>	_____ x\$14	+ _____ x\$15 = _____
		Shipping <u>\$3</u>
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My check is enclosed Visa Mastercard
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Visit us at www.whitefishlake.org

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