



LakeFront

Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitefish Lake Institute

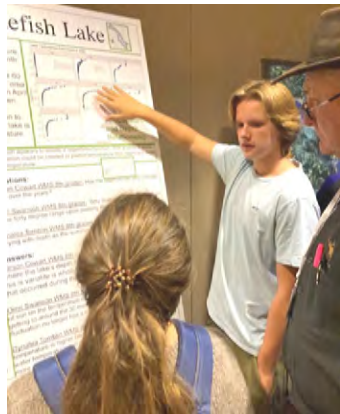
Fall 2023



The Montana Lakes Conference was held October 18-20 at The Lodge at Whitefish Lake. Attendees included a wide representation from state and federal agencies, colleges and universities, the Flathead Lake Biological Station, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, political leaders and representatives from 11 different watershed and lake associations.

The goal of the conference was to discuss emerging issues in lake and reservoir science and to provide a platform for discussion between lake scientists and the public.

The conference kicked off with a workshop on Water Conflict Management and Transformation led by Aaron Wolf, Ph.D of Oregon State University and Todd Votteler, Ph.D, Principal of Collaborative Water Resolution LLC, and WLI board member. The workshop was followed by “Community Night” (continued on Page 2...)



A Whitefish Middle School student presents his poster during “Community Night” at the Montana Lakes Conference.

The first meeting of the Western Montana Conservation Commission (WMCC) was held November 2nd & 3rd in Missoula.

Formed during the 2023 Montana Legislative Session, WMCC effectively combines and replaces the roles and jurisdiction of the Flathead Basin Commission (FBC) and the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC³).

WMCC’s mission is to protect the existing high quality of western Montana’s aquatic resources including but not limited to water quality and water supply; recreational, scenic, and aesthetic values; and fish, wildlife and other organisms, including the (continued on Page 3...)

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Founded in 2005

Mission Statement

The Whitefish Lake Institute is committed to science, education, and aquatic resource initiatives to protect and improve Whitefish Lake and Whitefish area water resources today, while providing a collective community vision for tomorrow.

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Cover Photo:
Whitefish Lake from City Beach.



(*Montana Lakes Conference, continued from Page 1...*) where students from the Whitefish Middle School presented posters on water quality issues **followed by WLI's Science Quencher where three presenters at the conference gave lightning round presentations.**

The keynote speaker was Andrew Sansom, Founder & Executive Director of the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment in Texas. Andy recounted stories from his 50-year career in water conservation. In 1969, as a college graduate, Andy joined 10,000 other young folks demonstrating on The Mall in Washington, D.C. This led to a writing job with the Department of Interior and back to Texas where he headed the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and then founded the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

During the Plenary Session, Jim Elser, Ph.D. and Dan Wickham, Ph.D., followed with equally compelling presentations. Jim talked about his specialty – **Phosphorous from it's early discovery in 1669 by alchemist Hennig Brandt,** to its escalating demand and diminishing availability on the surface of the Earth. Dan presented industry leading technology for rehabilitating septic treatment systems by the use of biologicals.

Exhibitors presented industry solutions for AIS, septic, and field data collection. Check out the conference exhibitors on-line: BioLynceus, LLC, CD3, Eliminite Inc., Field Data Technologies, Flathead Conservation District, River Design Group, SludgeHammer Group, Ltd., US Geological Survey, and Western Montana Conservation Commission.

Thank you to our conference sponsors: The Barn Group, the Western Montana Conservation Commission, MT DNRC, MT DEQ, MT FWP, Whitefish **Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Whitefish County Water & Sewer District,** City of Whitefish, Flathead Conservation District, Flathead Lake Biological Station, River Design Group, Flathead Lakers, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Logan Health, Swan Lakers, USGS, Northwestern Energy, Glacier Bank, Montana Trout Unlimited, Glacier Restaurant Group, Forestoration, Little Bitterroot Lake Association, the Montana Watershed Coordination Council, and Whitefish Marine.

Presentations can be found on our website *whitefishlake.org* by clicking on the Montana Lakes Conference banner. Thank you to everyone who attended making the 2023 Montana Lakes Conference a huge success!



WLI Executive Director Mike Koopal provided introductory remarks before a guided walk in the wetlands during "social hour" at the Montana Lakes Conference. Courtesy Whitefish Pilot

(Western Montana Conservation Commission, continued from Page 1...) prevention and management of aquatic invasive species.

WMCC serves as a convening body to facilitate coordination between resource managers across western Montana, including all land and water west of the continental divide. WMCC is administratively attached to the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation.

WLI's Executive Director, Mike Koopal, was elected chair of the new commission. Mike was appointed by Gov. Gianforte as the Natural Resource, Conservation or Recreation - Flathead River Basin representative. WMCC includes 16 voting members and 18 non-voting members representing a wide range of expertise at local, state, and federal agencies and industry.

WMCC has hit the ground running, having secured a \$7M EPA grant to reduce toxic pollution in the headwaters of the Columbia River Basin. The grant runs for six years and will help address septic and stormwater issues in western Montana.

More information on WMCC can be found at westernmtwaters.com.



WLI received a big boost during the Great Fish Community Challenge with donations and matching funds totaling \$67,795 in revenue!

In just five weeks, more than 3,100 donors contributed nearly \$5.3 million to 77 Flathead Valley charities, providing critical funding for local food banks and shelters, youth programs, land and water conservation projects, recreational trails, the arts, and much more.

In addition to these funds, participating nonprofits also received a 62% match on the first \$20,000 they raised, thanks to **Whitefish Community Foundation's Circle of Giving members** and the donors who gave to the Great Fish Match Fund. The Great Fish Match Fund grew to \$924,331, resulting in a \$12,400 grant awarded to each nonprofit that earned the maximum match. With an additional \$39,700 in incentive **grants, the grand total awarded through this year's Great Fish Community Challenge** is an astounding \$6,262,929, a 23% increase over 2022!

Field Season Wrap-up

WLI's summer's field season hit full throttle in July, with a new Program Coordinator Durae Belcer, summer intern Niko Hunter from Columbia University, and new Limnologist Cassie Roberts.

WLI staff, along with help from volunteer citizen scientists completed the annual monitoring and data collection on 41 lakes in the Northwest Montana Lake Network (NMLN). Forty-five volunteers spent over 400 hours this year either collecting data on their own or providing watercraft and extra hands to assist in our data collection. This program could not exist without our dedicated lake loving volunteers and our longstanding funding partnership with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP).

The NMLN website (nmln.info) has a description of each lake with a short report summarizing data collected over the past 15 years including temperature, dissolved oxygen, and trophic status.



WLI's Limnologist, Cassie Roberts, heads out to collect water quality information on one of the smaller lakes in the NMLN program.

WLI also partners with the City of Whitefish, the United States Forest Service, the Western Montana Conservation Commission and FWP for aquatic invasive species (AIS) early detection monitoring on all program lakes, in addition to other lakes. Citizen Scientists in the NMLN program perform visual surveys for AIS during their routine monitoring. WLI staff complete more thorough AIS surveys during the annual visits and collected 101 plankton tow samples to detect quagga or zebra mussel veligers.

The samples are preserved in the field and sent to the FWP lab for zebra and quagga mussel microscopy analysis. WLI also collected 48 eDNA samples on nine different lakes. These samples are analyzed for quagga and zebra mussels as well as curly leaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil. All samples for 2023 have come back negative – good news for the entire Columbia River Basin!

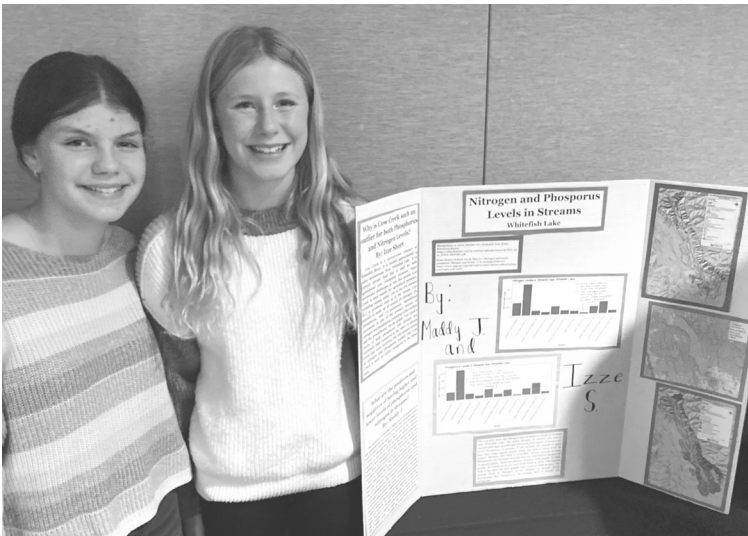
Fall Photos



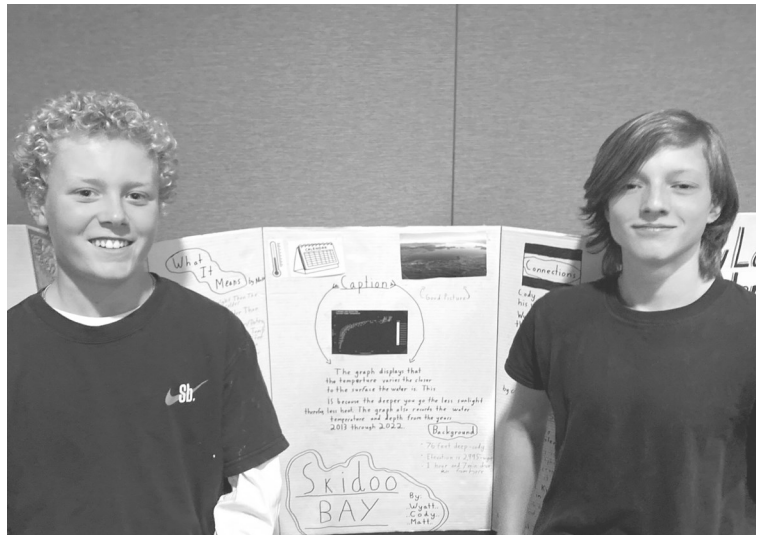
WLI's Finance & Grants Manager, Carol Treadwell with Limnologist Cassie Roberts, staffing a booth at the Great Fish Fun Run and Community Celebration.



Aaron Wolf, Ph.D of Oregon State University and Todd Votteler, Ph.D, Principal of Collaborative Water Resolution LLC, presented a pre-conference workshop on water conflict management.



Whitefish Middle School students presented posters about water quality issues to the public during the Montana Lakes Conference Community Night. Special thanks to Whitefish teachers Megan Chaisson, Mae Koopal, and Meta Barnes for facilitating this opportunity.



Ryan Richardson, WLI Science Advisory Committee co-chair, and Senior Fluvial Geomorphologist at The Barn Group presented "From airplanes to iPhones – Advances in LiDAR" at the Science Quencher.



WLI Program Coordinator Durae Belcer presented the Northwest Montana Lakes Network Stewardship Awards to Susie Bouton from Bailey Lake and Terry Divoky from Halfmoon Lake for their Long-standing dedication in collecting information for those lakes.

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