



LakeFront

Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitefish Lake Institute

Spring 2022

Storm Drain Art and Education Project

To raise awareness about the connection between storm drains, stormwater runoff, and pollution in our waterways, WLI partnered with the Whitefish High School advanced art and AP environmental science classes, Stumptown Art Studio, the City of Whitefish, and the Flathead Basin

Commission on an educational storm drain art project that promotes clean water in downtown Whitefish. Advanced Art students have created graphic designs for storm drains that



A Whitefish High School student works on her storm drain art project.

illustrate the importance of keeping our waters clean. There is also a general stencil with the message "Water Only, Drains to River" to raise awareness of the issue and to remind residents and visitors that our neighborhoods are connected to our streams. If people understand that most storm water flows untreated to our lakes and streams, they will be more conscious of potential pollutants that can enter those waterways.

These images were painted on drains around downtown Whitefish in late May. We hope the combination of art and storm drains will help the public make the connection that what we do on the land affects our local waterways. No matter what draws us to the lake and river, we each have a role to play in keeping our waters clean.

No Wake Buoy

One of the more common calls from the public that WLI staff receive is concern over boat generated waves crashing along the Whitefish Lake shoreline leading to increased erosion. This summer, WLI will install no wake buoys, delineating the 200 foot no-wake zone, at strategic locations around Whitefish Lake. This project is supported by a Whitefish Community Foundation Great Fish Community Challenge grant.



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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:

Skunk Cabbage emerge from the Averill's
Viking Creek Wetland Preserve

Science Quencher Wrap Up

WLI recommenced the in-person Science Quencher on Friday, April 15th at the Lodge at Whitefish Lake. Attendees enjoyed complimentary appetizers, **beer, and wine as well as “lightning round” talks from four local science experts.** Jamie Belt, a biologist with the Glacier National Park, spoke about citizen science projects in the park related to big horned sheep, mountain goats, loons, and migrating hawks. Jillian McKenna, a wilderness GIS contractor for Glacier National Park, shared her work mapping threats to wilderness character in the park. Leo Rosenthal, a fisheries biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, discussed cutthroat trout population trends in the three forks of the Flathead River. Doug Chadwick, a wildlife biologist and well-known author, discussed biological connectivity of large landscapes and the role of biodiversity in our everyday lives. Doug sold and signed copies of his books. It was a fun gathering of smart, interesting people with a desire to learn something new. The energy and expertise of our speakers absolutely made the event a success! A hearty thanks to all of you. Keep an eye out for announcements about future Science Quenchers in your local papers and through our opt-in email list at whitefishlake.org/news/newsletter.

NMLN Volunteer Award

Sarah Dakin began collecting water quality samples on Echo Lake for the Northwest Montana Lakes Network (NMLN) in 2018. She and her husband Bill live full time on Echo Lake after retiring from their careers in Columbia Falls, MT. Sarah was instrumental in the creation of the Friends of Echo Lake and is involved in the aquatic invasive species (AIS) volunteer program at public boat ramp where she helps educate about the risk of AIS and steps to take to avoid AIS introductions. The group has also organized clean ups of the boat launch area and is creating a database of interested lake users. In 2020, Sarah began sampling for aquatic invasive mussels using a plankton tow net as part of the **Upper Columbia Lakes Network (ucln.net)**. Sarah's other volunteer work included a six-year stint on the board of Gateway to Glacier Trails. Her dedication, initiative and resourcefulness are appreciated by many and will help protect Echo Lake for years to come.



Sarah Dakin (L) accepts the NMLN Volunteer Award from WLI Science & Education Director Cynthia Ingelfinger (R).

Welcome 2022 Summer Intern Sam Menicke

I am a Biology major with a GIS/Cartography minor at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. My interests have always involved understanding the many interactions within the natural world, and my areas of study have allowed me to view this topic from a scientific and spatial lens. Additionally, the broad range of classes I have taken within these academic areas have bolstered my scientific toolkit. I am on **the Varsity Men's Soccer team at Mac, which keeps me quite busy outside of class, as well as athletic advisory committees.** Within the athletics department and the soccer team, I also volunteer for organizations like the Sanneh Foundation and others within the greater Twin Cities area.

In my free time, I love recreating outside, particularly within the watersheds that WLI studies and works to protect. I am a Whitefish native and have always admired the science and community outreach work that WLI conducts. Seeing the impacts of past work on my own hometown inspired me to join clubs like FREEFLOW at Whitefish High School and to pursue a natural science major. I am extremely excited to work with WLI this summer not only for the valuable field **experience but also to understand how "small town science" stays afloat.** I am curious to learn more about what working for a nonprofit is like and how business and science intersect within a smaller setting. I think Whitefish is very fortunate to have an organization like WLI, as not all towns have perpetual monitoring and publishing of the health of their natural environment. I feel very fortunate, as well, to be able **to be a part of their team and mission. I can't wait to get started this summer!**



Sam Menicke will spend the summer learning more about lake and stream ecosystems, water quality issues, and the operations of a small non-profit organization.

Ripple Effect Scholarship Recipients

Each year, WLI offers a \$500 scholarship for tuition to one or two high school students as they enter college. Applicants for the scholarship must express their intent to major in a field related to water quality such as biology, ecology, environmental science, hydrology, limnology, or other approved by WLI. This year, WLI is proud to award scholarships to Niko Hunter and Gabe Menicke and wish them both the best of luck on their educational journeys.

Niko will attend Columbia University and plans to major in Environmental Science. Niko maintained a 4.0 GPA while being active in a broad list of school clubs and activities including FREEFLOW (field science club), DECA (business club), student council, varsity soccer, band, and National Honors Society. He also founded a new Diversity and Inclusion Committee at Whitefish Schools which works to increase the diversity of perspectives offered in social studies classes and integrates a social and emotional learning framework district wide.



Niko Hunter (L) and Gabe Menicke (R) were awarded WLI's Ripple Effect Scholarship by Cynthia Ingelfinger at the Whitefish High School Awards Ceremony.

Gabe will attend Western Washington University and plans to major in Environmental Science/biology. Gabe maintained a strong 3.9 GPA and was active in many clubs and activities including FREEFLOW, DECA, varsity track, varsity soccer, varsity wind ensemble, and student council. Gabe also volunteered with the City of Whitefish caring for city trees, stocked food at the North Valley Foodbank and spends time coaching youth soccer.

Whitefish Lake Facts:
surface area: 3,341 acres; maximum depth: 232 feet;
shoreline length 15.85 miles

Spring Photos



Wildlife biologist and author, Doug Chadwick presented on large landscape connectivity and biodiversity at the Science Quencher.



Ryan Richardson and Dakota Whitman enjoy a complimentary drink at the April Science Quencher.



Whitefish High School Advanced Art students involved in the storm drain art project paused for a group photo in front of the WLI office.



Casey Lewis from the City of Kalispell and WLI Executive Director Mike Koopal represented the Flathead Basin Commission on a panel at the Montana Stormwater Conference.



Thanks to a grant from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Recreation Trails Program, the trails and forest in Averill's Viking Creek Wetland Preserve are receiving a face lift. Last fall, crews from Forestoration repaired and resurfaced the trail with crushed stone. To improve safety, Forestoration sawyers cut standing hazard trees from the trail corridor. This spring crews will conduct management of noxious weeds.



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Active Members who have donated for 10+ years since 2005.
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The Lodge At Whitefish Lake-Averill Family

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