

LakeFront

Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitefish Lake Institute

Summer 2021

Lori Curtis Retires

On June 30th, at 66 years young, I departed the Whitefish Lake Institute office for the last time as an employee. But, a part of me will remain with WLI long into the future. As Science & Education Director since January 2010, I enjoyed an incredibly diverse job. Some days had me wading in the cool tributaries to Whitefish Lake collecting water samples; other days found me wading through the fundraising and financial management maze of a small nonprofit. I captained our research boat, managed our events, conducted research, wrote reports, helped develop our Living Wetlands Interpretive Nature Trail, educated our youth, raised funds, and paid the bills.

And because WLI was an early leader in the fight against Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), I had the opportunity to contribute to building our local AIS program, and to serve on the *(continued on Page 2...)*



WLI board president Andy Feury presents Lori Curtis with a plaque for 10 years of dedicated service to WLI at her retirement party on July 30th, hosted by Mike and Mae Koopal



What makes Whitefish Great? The Lake! The Great Fish Community Challenge kicks off Thursday, August 5th and runs through September 17th. This six week event culminates with a fun run (no color this year) and community event in Depot Park on September 11th. This dynamic fundraising campaign raises money for things that matter to Whitefish. If you are enrolled to receive WLI email correspondence, you will receive one email each week describing reasons to give to protect Whitefish Lake. WLI will be raising much needed funds to support long-term water quality monitoring and programs that keep the lake *(continued on Page 2)...*

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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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Whitefish Lake Institute

Cover Photo:
*Whitefish Lake, looking toward
Whitefish Mountain Resort*

(Lori Curtis Retires, continued from Page 1...) legislatively-created Upper Columbia Conservation Commission working alongside contributors from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and just about every resource management agency in the state. Rarely does one see such a wonderfully non-partisan effort on behalf of our ecological resources.

During my decade at WLI, I worked closely with Executive Director and Founder Mike Koopal to grow the organization and extend our reach. Mike founded WLI in 2005, creating the organization from scratch with the support of his wife Mae, a dedicated, long-time Whitefish teacher. Over the years since Mike welcomed me to WLI, our partnership in the organization grew stronger as did the friendship between our families. This is the gift I take with me as I enter this new phase of my life. After 50 years of working full time and often with more than one job, I embrace the idea of a less structured life. I will continue serving as part-time Associate Faculty teaching graduate studies online for Prescott College.

In parting, I thank the community of Whitefish for your support of WLI's mission and work, and ask everyone to consider this: WLI serves as the voice for the Whitefish Lake Watershed. Without your vision to support WLI, safe, clean water will not be possible; without your stewardship, you could be jeopardizing water quality, leaving conditions that are difficult, if impossible to restore; without your support of WLI programming, decisions might be made based on uninformed assumptions or sensationalized press, we could lose water quality habitat integrity and an important educational and recreational community amenity, and there would be dramatically fewer educational programs to develop future water quality stewards.

WLI is small in size, but huge in reach. Whitefish Lake may look fine to the untrained eye, but below its surface is a complex interplay of biological, chemical, and physical attributes that communicate the condition of the lake. WLI monitors and reports on these attributes, contributing to the overall knowledge of the resource, and providing information so we can all make informed resource management decisions.

I hope you will join me in continuing to support WLI and the tireless work of Executive Director, Mike Koopal; Science & Education Director, Cynthia Ingelfinger; and WLI's new Finance & Grants Manager, Carol Treadwell.

(Great Fish Community Challenge, continued from Page 1...) clean, clear, and free of invasive mussels. Funds raised this year will go to support the Lake Elevation Study, a real time, data collection effort that will link lake levels to stream and weather data. Other water quality programs supported from this fundraiser include the monitoring of 41 lakes in Northwest Montana, combating the spread of aquatic invasive mussels like zebra mussels to local waterbodies, the upkeep and maintenance of the living wetlands nature trail and the water cleansing wetlands, and water education for K-12 and college students. If you wish to support this important work please follow this link to donate starting August 5, 2021: <https://whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/donations/ways-to-donate/>

WLI Presents Stewardship Awards

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) AIS Team. While Montana FWP has a statewide team working on the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) issue, a select group have gone out of their way to support the Whitefish AIS program. *Tom Woolf* and *Zach Crete* lead the Montana AIS program and have supported the partnership between the state and Whitefish AIS program. *Larry Lytle* **repairs the state's decontamination stations.** Larry has kept our preventative decontamination station running. *Russ Hartzell* is the inspection station supervisor for western Montana and trains our local watercraft inspectors. *Stacy Schmidt* and *Jayden Duckworth* analyze the zebra mussel early detection samples WLI collects and are part of the Beaver Lake Dive Team that removes Eurasian Watermilfoil from Beaver Lake. *Craig McLane* heads the statewide early detection and monitoring program and is also on the Beaver Lake dive team. *Ken Staigmiller* is the fish health coordinator for FWP and on the Beaver Lake Dive Team.

Dave Landstrom and Dave Bennetts from MFWP, Region 1 (Parks Department) were honored for their partnership in fostering the establishment of an AIS watercraft inspection station at Whitefish Lake State Park and their on-going commitment to make the station successful.

Anne and John Collins. In partnership with the Montana Land Reliance, Anne and John Collins placed 672 acres of private land adjoining Whitefish Lake in a conservation easement. The voluntary easement protects natural and scenic values, and fish and wildlife habitat. Highly visible from Whitefish Lake and the surrounding area, the Collins family land provides a critical wildlife corridor between adjoining state trust land and 1.2 miles of Whitefish Lake shoreline.

Northwest Montana Lakes Network

Jim and Ann Grant and *Lynn Maas* have been a part of The Friends of Lake Mary Ronan since its inception. Jim and Ann began collecting water quality samples for the Northwest Montana Lakes Network (NMLN) in 2010. Through the Friends of Lake Mary Ronan, Lynn, Jim and Ann also expanded their sampling work through Montana Department of Environmental Quality funding for a short term, intensified lake and stream sampling plan to identify nutrient sources. They collect monthly water samples from April through October to evaluate water quality of the lake and its inlet and outlet streams to estimate the relative contribution of pollution sources in the watershed. Their dedication, teamwork, and initiative will help protect Mary Ronan for years to come.

WLI Summer Intern Reflections—Molly Schmit

From day one, I felt right at home with WLI. Cynthia, Mike, Lori and Carol were always open to answering questions and helping me learn as much as possible. Their dedication to water quality monitoring, educating the public, and conducting research projects is truly inspiring.

Being an intern with WLI has exposed me to a wide variety of projects. While in the office, I worked on informational pages for the forty-one lakes in the Northwest Montana Lakes Network program (NMLN), attended meetings, and helped with social media posts. Helping with an educational **kids' program about macroinvertebrates at the Whitefish Public Library** definitely ranks as the most adorable day of **my internship.** **Teaching the kids the "mayfly mambo" and "stonefly shuffle" was my personal favorite.** The highlight of the summer was the field experience. I helped with the baseline sampling of Whitefish Lake and the tributary streams. Mike and Cynthia always made sure I understood the ecological processes going on in these habitats.

Once the beginning of July rolled around, Cynthia and I began data collection for the NMLN. From the high mountain waters of Big Therriault Lake, to the large expanse of Flathead Lake, I garnered a great appreciation for water resources in the Flathead Valley. It was also delightful to meet **the volunteers that make this program possible.** I'm incredibly grateful for this experience, and I look forward to applying what I've learned to my future career.

Lake Appreciation Month

Lake appreciation month is celebrated across the US every **July.** **Why appreciate lakes? "You work and play on them.** You drink from them. But do you really appreciate them? Growing population, development, and invasive species stress your local lakes, ponds, and reservoirs. All life needs **water; let's not take it for granted!"** – *North American Lake Management Society.* In July, we asked town visitors and **residents why they love Whitefish Lake. Here's what you told us:**

- **I love Whitefish Lake because it's blue and beautiful!**
 - It makes Whitefish cooler than any other town. #LOL,
 - There are the prettiest sunsets over the lake,
 - I can catch trout here and eat them,
 - I love swimming with my family at night,
 - Because you can see the bottom and all the rocks,
 - **It's a place full of childhood memories and provides a place for serenity,**
 - One of the cleanest, clearest lakes in the United States!
- Thanks for sharing everybody!

Summer Photos



WLI Executive Director Mike Koopal presents a Stewardship Award to members of the FWP dive team (L-R Ken Staigmiller, Jayden Duckworth, Stacy Schmidt, and Craig McLane) before they started work in Beaver Lake removing invasive Eurasian watermilfoil.



WLI Executive Director Mike Koopal with the help of Jim Williams, Regional Supervisor of MFWP in Kalispell, presented a Stewardship Award to Dave Landstrom and Dave Bennetts for their partnership in hosting a watercraft inspection station at Whitefish Lake State Park.



At Lori Curtis' retirement party, WLI Executive Director Mike Koopal presented Anne and John Collins a Stewardship Award for their vision to place 672 acres of important Whitefish Lake shoreline and adjacent forest in a conservation easement.



WLI summer intern Molly Schmit paddles out on Big Therriault near the Canadian border to collect water quality samples for the Northwest Montana Lakes Network (NMLN). Molly is a graduated of FVCC and will be attending the University of Montana this fall.



Cynthia Ingelfinger, WLI Science and Education Director, and summer intern Molly Schmit coordinated with volunteers on 41 lakes in northwest Montana to collect valuable water quality information.



WLI summer intern Molly Schmit and Cynthia Ingelfinger, WLI Science and Education Director, engage young lake stewards in the "mayfly mambo" at the Whitefish Public Library.

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Whitefish Lake INSTITUTE




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