

## Living in the Flathead Guide

**New website offers land stewardship guidance to new and existing residents of the Flathead Valley**

For almost 20 years the Whitefish Lake institute has worked to educate residents and municipalities about protecting the water resources in northwest Montana. Now there is an on-line guide to help residents of the Flathead Valley learn how they can care for the land, the water, and live with nature in the “Last Best Place.”

The new “Living in Flathead” guide, coordinated by the Flathead Lakers, welcomes newcomers and promotes responsible living, community connection, and sustainable practices in Flathead County. The platform is also a resource for residents, landowners, and visitors, offering insights, solutions, and resources for sustainable living and responsible land and water stewardship amidst the stunning landscapes of western Montana.

All that information and more is available using the online guide, a website developed by more than 20 local agencies and experts including the Whitefish Lake Institute.

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The Guide offers a host of topics, including:

- Living on the Land: Discover simple practices to live in balance with the spectacular Montana lands.
- Living with Fire: Learn essential tips on living with fire and safeguarding your family and property.
- Living by Water: Understand how to protect the Flathead’s beautiful lakes and rivers, vital resources for drinking water and the local economy.
- Living with Wildlife: Embrace the special treasure of living with wildlife, and discover ways to coexist and minimize conflicts.
- Living Locally: Whether a resident or visitor, delve into topics such as local food, safe and responsible recreation, stargazing, recycling and composting, and staying safe during extreme weather conditions.
- Take Action: Engage with the community through tours, workshops, or classes to take individual actions or volunteer with local groups.

Living in northwest Montana is a unique pleasure and experience. Our actions on the land have a rippling effect.

Learn simple practices you can do to live in balance with our spectacular Montana lands, lakes and rivers, wildlife, and beautiful dark skies.

Join a Tour, Attend a Workshop, Volunteer

[www.livinginflathead.org](http://www.livinginflathead.org)

PROTECTING THE LAND, WATER, AND PLACES WE LOVE TOGETHER.

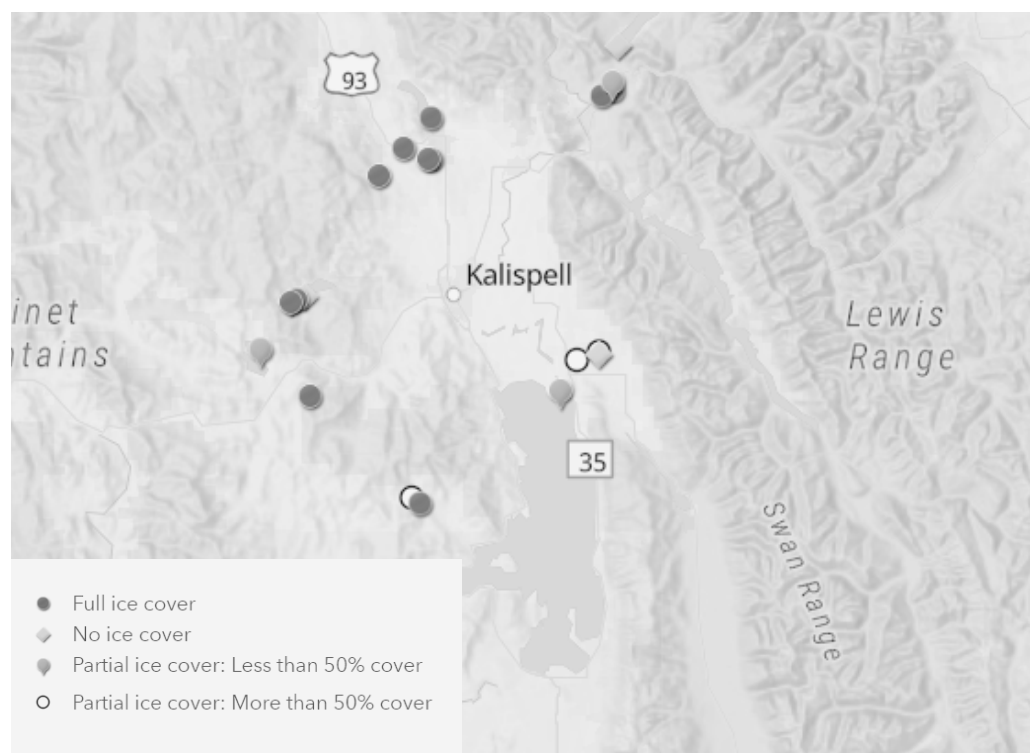
# Montana Lake Ice Observation Survey

This winter WLI is starting a new science initiative, the Montana Lake Ice observation survey. The survey is a citizen science project that uses WLI's robust volunteer network as well as participants from social media and beyond. Anyone can fill out the online survey with information about lake ice. The survey is being used to collect data on ice in dates, (the day on which ice completely covers a lake) which lakes are frozen, the thickness of lake ice, and ice out dates. The more data the better!

Each survey is connected to a GPS point so that all of this lake ice data can be combined into one interactive map. The map can be used to see which lakes are frozen and when they froze. Currently, you can see the Montana Lake Ice Observation Survey map on WLI's website under programs in the science section. Of course, when surveying frozen lakes, always take safety precautions and know your personal limits.

All of this survey information will help WLI understand Montana's changing lakes. Lake ice blocks sunlight from reaching the lake and protects the lake from wind. Creating very different ecological conditions than an exposed, open air lake. As our winters change, and lakes freeze later into the winter and for less time, it's important to be tracking these changes as their effects may be felt year-round. This trend is not exclusive to Montana, around the globe lake managers and citizens alike are noticing that lakes are freezing later into the winter, thawing earlier in the spring, and many lakes are going longer and longer without freezing at all. For WLI, it's important to collect reliable data that tells us to what degree Whitefish lake and other lakes in the area are experiencing this trend, and furthermore, establish what the effects of reduced lake ice might be on Montana's waterbodies.

If you see a lake this winter (frozen or not!), we invite you to fill out the survey, and fill it out again if conditions change on the lake. Additionally, if you know of other forms of ice on or off data, such as yearly bets, let us know! The survey can be found on the homepage of WLI's website, or linked in the WLI Instagram bio.



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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

## Ripple Effect Scholarship

WLI offers three types of scholarship opportunities to qualified students. The scholarship program can award students in three categories including 1) a \$500 scholarship for tuition to a high school student as they enter college, 2) a \$2500 stipend toward student tuition (see below) for an undergraduate student in the summer after their sophomore or junior year, and 3) WLI's support of a graduate thesis or dissertation. Appropriate courses of study for consideration in the scholarship program include: biology, ecology, environmental science/ studies, hydrology, or other fields related to water quality as approved by WLI staff. For more information, see our website [www.whitefishlake.org](http://www.whitefishlake.org) under Education Programs. The deadline for applications is April 15th for the high school scholarship and March 15th for the summer internship.

## Summer Internship Opportunity

WLI is looking for a summer intern! Please help spread the word. The WLI intern spends most days in a stream or on a lake learning about limnological field data collection and watershed processes as well as participating in educational events in the community. The intern also learns about and participates in the daily functioning of a small non-profit and has opportunities to job shadow with other partners and agencies.

WLI internship is unpaid. However, WLI supplies a \$2500 stipend to the students college or university for tuition. For more information about the internship and to read about our previous intern experiences check out [www.whitefishlake.org](http://www.whitefishlake.org) under Education Programs. Applications are due March 15th.

## Wetland Update

A reminder that the Averill's Viking Creek Wetland Preserve trail will be closed from March 15 to May 1 to protect trail conditions during the spring thaw and to avoid human-bear conflict.

You'll notice on Page 4 that it's been awhile since we last downloaded our wetland trail cameras and most of the photos are from last summer. Enjoy the great photos! It's amazing to see the rich biodiversity the wetlands provide in the wildland-urban interface.

## Save the Date-- April Science Quencher

We will be hosting another Science Quencher this Spring. Stay tuned for the event time and lineup of speakers! This event is held twice a year in the spring and fall and aimed at engaging the community in science and conservation issues throughout the valley. We hope to see you there!



## New Science Advisory Committee Member

We're excited to welcome Matt Church, Ph.D to our Science Advisory Committee (SAC)!

Matt is a professor of Aquatic Microbial Ecology at The University of Montana Flathead Lake Biological Station with interests on the role of microorganisms in catalyzing elemental cycling in aquatic systems. A major component of his research involves identifying the types of microorganisms responsible for biogeochemically important processes and studying factors controlling the metabolic activities of these microbes. Research in his group relies on a variety of approaches and tools to study the dynamics of microbial communities, including rate measurements of microbial metabolisms and genetic approaches to study the diversity and activities of microorganisms in nature. A long standing interest is examining how time-varying changes to aquatic ecosystems influences the ecology and biogeochemical functioning of resident microorganisms.

We're excited to have Matt join the SAC to further our collaboration with the talented staff at the Flathead Lake Biological Station.



*A pair of grizzly bears make their way through the wetlands under the cover of darkness.*



*A cow elk and her two calves are on alert as they travel through the wetlands.*



*A calf elk nurses in the dense cover of the wetlands. The area has proven to be important rearing habitat for elk.*



*A hummingbird seems intrigued with the trail camera. We also got a good photo of a pileated woodpecker.*



*A coyote in the wetlands on a misty morning. Other predators in the wetlands include: fox, mountain lions, black and grizzly bears.*



*WLI ED Mike Koopal also serves as chair of the Western Montana Conservation Commission. Here, he leads the group in discussion.*

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# Whitefish Lake INSTITUTE




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