



Welcome New Board Members

New additions to the board of directors bring institutional knowledge to the organization

Lori Curtis-

Lori Curtis served as Science & Education Director for the Whitefish Lake Institute from 2011 to 2021 when she retired (sort of). She continues teaching graduate studies part-time online for the Master's in Environmental Studies and Sustainability program at Prescott College. Lori spent the first three decades of her career climbing the corporate ladder holding founder and leadership positions in publicly owned corporations, venture backed start-ups, and government funded companies. She eventually left the corporate world and founded Jump Start Communications, a Silicon Valley boutique marketing communications and business development firm that, for another decade, helped start-up companies form their businesses, develop their brands, and brought new companies and products to market. Her clients included venture-backed start-ups as well as established corporations in diverse disciplines such as photovoltaic technology, semiconductor equipment, information security, software development, hardware manufacturing, and networking companies. She relocated from the Silicon Valley to Colorado in 1999 to enjoy life in the high mountains while continuing to work, and in 2006, settled in Montana where she eventually served as Executive Director for the Montana Nursery & Landscape Association.



Lori Curtis

Lori graduated from Green Mountain College with a Master of Science in Environmental Studies (Conservation Biology concentration). While working on her thesis, "The Flathead Watershed Sourcebook: A Guide to an Extraordinary Place," she was invited to join the Flathead Community of Research Educators (CORE) and to serve as a supervisor for the Flathead (continued on Page 2...)

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We moved!

Visit us at our new 335 Spokane Avenue, Suite B (upstairs) location

The new WLI office is located directly east of First Interstate Bank. Public access to the building is available off of Spokane Avenue, or from the alley behind the building where you will find the best parking. From the parking lot, you can take the deck up to the second level entrance.

The new office provides a larger space for staff and allows us to store our scientific sampling gear on-site. Previously, our gear was kept in a storage unit.

Ultimately, the new space is better for staff, increases operational efficiency, and provides a cost savings for the organization.

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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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Carol Treadwell, Ph.D: Finance & Grants Manager

LAKEFRONT is published quarterly by the
Whitefish Lake Institute

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Whitefish Lake Institute

Welcome New Board Members *(continued from Page 1)...*

Conservation District Board where she served for seven years, two years as Vice-Chair. through this work, she met Mike Koopal who served on CORE and was a contributor to her book. Upon graduation in 2010, Mike offered Lori the position of Science & Education Director for WLI. During her ten years at WLI—and thanks to Mike—she was honored to receive the 2011 Outstanding Writer Award from the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, and the 2010 Partner of the Year award from the Northwest Regional Resource Conservation & Development for her book. She was also appointed by Montana Governor Steve Bullock to serve a three-year term as the Chair of the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC3) a group working to protect regional Montana waters from AIS.

Lori feels that WLI provides critically important baseline scientific data of Whitefish Lake and its surrounding waterways, important educational opportunities for children and adults, and serves to engage the community in badly needed stewardship efforts. She previously served as a board director for the International Diving Society, for the Grand County Builders Association, and Sinapu (now part of WildEarth Guardians). Lori enjoys time outdoors hiking, backpacking, fishing, kayaking, and Nordic skiing with her husband, Walt.

Ryan Richardson-

Ryan Richardson is a Professional Geologist and serves as the River Restoration Group Manager at NV5, where he leads a team focused on river and wetland restoration with projects across the country. With over a decade of experience, Ryan brings technical expertise in fluvial geomorphology, hydrology, and watershed-scale restoration to the Whitefish Lake Institute's Board of Directors.

Ryan has been an integral part of WLI's science leadership for over six years, serving as Chair of the Science Advisory Committee. In this role, he helped guide the WLI's scientific priorities and advance its mission through data-driven research and planning. His contributions include mapping septic system risk across the Flathead Basin, supporting critical hydrology data collection for Whitefish Lake, and modeling lake elevation dynamics to better inform watershed management.

Ryan holds a Master's degree in Fluvial Geomorphology from the University of Wyoming and a Bachelor's degree in Geology from Furman University. He is passionate about applying rigorous science to protect freshwater systems and is honored to continue supporting WLI's efforts to safeguard Whitefish Lake through research, education, and community collaboration.



Ryan Richardson

Welcome Summer Intern- Joe Phillip

I'm thrilled to be the 2025 intern for the Whitefish Lake Institute this summer! I'm currently a senior at the University of Montana, studying biology with a concentration in ecology and organismal biology, and minoring in wildlife biology.

Having grown up in Butte and now living in Missoula, I've spent much of my life exploring and enjoying Montana's incredible watersheds. From learning to ski at Discovery, fly fishing in the Big Hole Valley, and rafting the North Fork of the Flathead, my experiences have fueled a deep passion for protecting and ensuring access to our natural environment.



Summer Intern Joe Phillip

I'm incredibly excited to join WLI this summer—not only for the invaluable field experience and data collection opportunities, but also to gain insight into how a nonprofit organization operates. I'm especially grateful for the chance to see firsthand the meaningful work WLI does within the community and throughout the Whitefish Watershed.

Ripple Effect Scholarship Recipients

This year, WLI expanded out the Ripple Effect Scholarship opportunity to graduating high school seniors to include the Columbia Falls School District. We received a record number of applicants this year and awarded four scholarships-- two in Whitefish and two in Columbia Falls.

In Whitefish, the scholarship recipients were Otto Klein and Reid Alexander. Otto plans to attend George Fox University to study Biology with an emphasis in Ecology. Reid will attend Western Washington University to study Energy Science and Technology.

In Columbia Falls, the scholarship recipients were Ryder Burling and Chloe Savoy. Ryder will attend The University of Montana to study Environmental Science and Sustainability. Choe will continue her studies at the Colorado School of Mines with plans to become an environmental engineer.

April Science Quencher Recap

Avalanche Hindcasting, The Buzz on Bumblebees, Pika Pellet Patrol Project, and Safeguarding the Flathead River

Blase Reardon and Christine Donnelly presented work the Flathead Avalanche Center has been doing to improve their Avalanche forecasting. The center has been using hindcasting, forecasting after the day has passed, to double check their forecasts. This helps them identify areas of bias or inaccuracy. So far, all but one hindcast has been within one danger level of the forecasts. In the future Flathead Avalanche Center hopes to expand hindcasting to more dates to provide even more data to help improve avalanche safety.

The role of bumblebees as pollinators, is important to the economy and food stability in the United States. Tabitha Graves, a research ecologist for USGS explained her research into integral ecological linkages that bumblebees provide in northern Montana. Graves uses Environmental DNA (eDNA), which include genetic tracers left behind as the bumbles buzz through a meadow to identify species and where the bees have been. The goal of her study is to assess the ecological resilience of restored grasslands and understand how pollinators may respond to climate change.

Jami Belt, biologist and program manager for Glacier's Citizen Science Program uses DNA in her research to understand pikas. She organizes and trains citizen science volunteers to hunt for pika pellets. These pellets yield information on the genetic linkages, or family trees, shared between pikas. This information gives scientists an important road map to the critical corridors in Glacier National Park that connect pika populations. Biologists use this information to minimize habitat disturbance and promote pika survival.

Founded in 2019, the Flathead Rivers Alliance hit the ground running to address the impacts of burgeoning river use in the Flathead River system. This includes educating boaters on and off the water about recreating responsibly, leave no trace river usage, providing reusable clean up bags, loaner life jacket and partnering with agencies to track large hazards. FRA also organizes an annual Flathead valley wide river and lake clean up in August. WLI contributed to the clean-up bag project and has a stack ready to go with you on your summer water adventures. Come by our offices at 335 Spokane Avenue to claim your reusable, drainable clean up bag.

Join us in October at The Lodge at Whitefish Lake for the next Science Quencher. Each Science Quencher offers a complimentary beverage and appetizers for our guests. Stay tuned for event details.



Kalispell and Whitefish 5th grade students had the chance to sort macroinvertebrates during the annual Viking Creek wetlands education days.



Students get “caught” in the FWP fish nets and learn about techniques FWP uses to answer questions about native fish species.



Montana Wild Wings Recovery Center captured the attention of 5th grade students by providing interesting facts about raptor species.



WLI partners with Claire Kniveton’s WHS art class to paint storm drains around town each spring. This year, the art students painted 8 murals.



A painted storm drain reminds us of what goes down the storm drain ends up untreated in the rivers and lakes in our community.



WLI honored four scholarship recipients from WHS and CFHS. Each student received \$500 toward college tuition.

Whitefish Lake Institute Supporters

Active Members who have donated for 10+ years since 2005.
Active Members who have donated for 5-9 years since 2005.

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335 Spokane Avenue, Suite B
Whitefish, MT 59937

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