



LakeFront

Quarterly Newsletter of the Whitefish Lake Institute

Summer 2009

WLI Takes Title to the Wetlands!

Water quality, wildlife habitat and open space for the community of Whitefish just became a reality on 30 acres near Whitefish Lake.

The area, comprised largely of wetland habitat, acts as a kidney filtering out pollutants and excessive nutrients before entering Whitefish Lake.

Previous development proposals for the area were considered too big, too dense and too intrusive. Public opposition to these development proposals lead to the formation of a citizens group called the "Friends of Wisconsin Avenue Wetlands."

It took over two years of negotiations between the Averill family, the Friends of Wisconsin Avenue Wetlands and the (continued on page 3)



(L-R) WLI President Greg Lane and Dan Averill at the groundbreaking ceremony for the expansion of The Lodge at Whitefish Lake.



Dan Averill hands over the title to the wetlands to WLI director Mike Koopal. They are flanked by Amy Chadwick of Watershed Consulting and Jim Colla of the Friends of Wisconsin Avenue Wetlands.

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Protecting and improving the
Whitefish, Montana area
lake resources

Whitefish Lake Institute

635 Denver Street
Whitefish, MT 59937

Voice: (406) 862-4327
info@whitefishlake.org
www.whitefishlake.org

Founded in 2005

The Whitefish Lake Institute is committed to acquiring scientific research and engaging the local citizenry to protect and improve the Whitefish area lake resources of today, while providing a collective vision for tomorrow.

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Mike Koopal, Editor

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Aerial view of Whitefish Lake looking north from the Lion Mountain area.

Courtesy: gravityshots.com

New WLI Board Members

Susan Fletcher received her B.S. in geology at Indiana University. While at Indiana University, she spent two summers doing fieldwork in southern Montana. This experience was the start of a life long love for the west. Upon graduation she headed west...and north to Calgary, Alberta finding a successful career as a petroleum geologist. She and her husband, Greg, have two children. Susan and Greg built a home on the Whitefish Lake seventeen years ago and she resides here as much of the year as she can.

For the past fourteen years, Susan has been teaching yoga while volunteering for numerous non-profits both in Calgary and here in Whitefish. Before becoming a board member, Susan was an active member of the Citizens Advisory Committee.



Greg Gunderson is the founder/president of For-estoration, Inc., a forest management company focusing on opportunities for ecological restoration. Greg and his partners also own the Center for Native Plants, a nursery that specializes in the propagation of flora native to northwest Montana. He was raised in Kalispell, but now resides in Whitefish with his wife and three children. Greg has been active in the community as a member

of the state lands advisory group that recently worked with the DNRC to craft a long-term management plan for the 13,000 acres of school trust lands that surround Whitefish. Greg also helped spear-head the community group that is designing a recreational trail system for the Whitefish area state lands. Greg has an avid desire to protect the long-term water quality of Whitefish Lake, while simultaneously improving community access and recreational opportunities.

Sharon Morrison, who moved to Whitefish four decades ago, is a partner in the law firm of Morrison and Frampton. But she says she is better known as the mother of former State Auditor and attorney John Morrison and Alpine Theatre Project Artistic Director Betsi Morrison. Her late husband, Frank, who served on the Board of Directors of the Whitefish Lake Institute, was Justice on the Montana Supreme Court.

Sharon received her undergraduate degree in journalism and speech therapy from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and earned her law degree at the University of Montana. She also serves on the volunteer Whitefish Lakeshore Protection Committee and is a member of the Board of Directors of Alpine Theatre Project.



(Wetlands continued from page 1) Whitefish Lake Institute to broker a deal that benefited all - most importantly protecting the wetlands.

Key negotiators in the process included Dan Averill, Joe Malletta and Jim Colla of The Friends of Wisconsin Avenue Wetlands, Amy Chadwick of Watershed Consulting, and Mike Koopal of WLI.

In addition to the wetland donation by the Averill family, the deal included the development of additional guest space for The Lodge subject to wetland mitigation requirements outlined by the group and endorsed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The deal also included \$110,000 to fund wetland restoration, monitoring, weed control, interpretive trail development and fencing.

The Whitefish Lake Institute will protect this 30 acre public resource in perpetuity, managing it for wildlife and water quality. In the future, a portion of the wetlands will be open to the public via an interpretive nature trail. In addition, the area will be utilized as an outdoor classroom by school groups and other community organizations. The wetlands are bordered on the north and to the east by a



Aerial view of the wetlands showing the proximity to Whitefish Lake and the bordering Murdock Nature Conservancy Easement maintained by Margaret Murdock and her daughter, Sharlot Battin.

Nature Conservancy easement on property owned by Margaret Murdock and her daughter Sharlot Battin. Together, the two properties form a large contiguous block of land approximately 250 acres in size that provides excellent habitat for both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species in the urban interface.

Wetland Wildlife

In early June, WLI installed two trail cameras with motion sensor devices in the wetlands. It didn't take long for the cameras to give us all a glimpse of our neighbors in the protected area. White-tail deer, mule deer, moose, a mountain lion, turkey, an unknown species of owl, and an unknown raptor species have thus far been documented in the area. Elk tracks have also been observed in the wetlands and both black and grizzly bears have been known to frequent the area. A nesting pair of red-tailed hawks were observed in early summer. These photos are telling us what we already suspected— this area is rich in biodiversity and was worthy of protection. Time will tell who else shows up on the cameras! We'll keep you informed about the wildlife in the urban interface by posting the pictures on our website- www.whitefishlake.org.



A fawn makes it way up the bank after crossing a stream in the wetlands.

This photo shows the back end of a mountain lion working its way through the wetlands.

Summer Photos

The Whitefish Lake Institute participated in the Whitefish Parks and Recreation Department Summer Recreation Program. The WLI study plans focused on introducing the kids to basic watershed concepts and to foster their appreciation of the natural world - all while having fun and enjoying the summer at City Beach.



WLI scientist, Chris Ruffatto, uses a model of Whitefish Lake to explain the concept of a watershed and to introduce the kids to the glacial past.



Mae Koopal helps budding artists complete their fish prints. The kids painted lake trout with fabric paint and then pressed white linen over the fish to produce the print. Later, WLI director Mike Koopal dissected the fish for the older kids. The fish were courtesy of MT. FWP.



The kids plowed large chunks of ice over the gravels at City Beach to mimic the action of glaciers.



Completed fish prints on display!

Save the Date – Fall Presentation to the Public October 6th

Want to learn more about Whitefish Lake? Join us on Tuesday, October 6th from 7 to 9pm at The Lodge at Whitefish Lake. Representatives from the Whitefish Lake Institute, The University of Montana Flathead Lake Biological Station, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the US Environmental Protection Agency will present updated Whitefish Lake information.

Some of the topics to be addressed include water quality trends, a look at potential threats to water quality, and the latest update on the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development in the area.

At the end of the presentations, the presenters will join as a panel to answer any questions from the public.

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Whitefish Lake Institute · 635 Denver Street · Whitefish, MT 59937

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