

## 2024 Little Bitterroot Lake Association (LBLA)

### MEMBERSHIP AND CONTRIBUTION Newsletter No. 1



**PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT and READ THIS NEWSLETTER!**

**JOIN/RENEW your Membership**

**Make your 2024 Tax Deductible CONTRIBUTION TODAY!**

*A Message from Your LBLA Board President*

Greetings Lake Friends,

*Founded in 1988, Little Bitterroot Lake Association purpose is to ensure we protect and preserve the water quality and recreational value of our lake. The association is a non-profit and consists of a Board of Directors, but most importantly it is made up of members of our lake community just like YOU.*

Our job, like the big sign at the “Y” says, is to “Keep Little Bitterroot Lake Pristine for Future Generations”. With your generous contributions, our active Board of Directors (BOD) and Great Volunteers - a lot is happening. There is great NEWS! But there are MANY Challenges!

Last year NEWSLETTER No. 5 (How the DAM works and who manages our lake water level) and NEWSLETTER No. 6 (Lake Regulations – The Flathead County Lake and Lakeshore Protection Regulations) hit home when Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) brought a 5-person crew with a dirty backhoe to dig out the area in front of the DAM. I got a call from some concerned lake residents (good job keeping LBLA informed!) about their presence. I drove to the work site, confronted the crew, asked if they had a permit, told them to STOP, called their office (BIA – FIIP) and informed Flathead County Planning and Zoning. Not only did the FIIP dig out the area in front of the DAM but they fully opened the DAM doors (See last year’s NEWSLETTER No. 5) and flooded fields south of the DAM that resulted in a large salmon KILL as the fish dove out via the DAM’s water rush thinking it was a spawning event – only to be stuck outside the DAM when FIIP was directed to close the DAM doors as the water was destroying acreage south.

Your LBLA went after the BIA and FIIP. We filed complaints with the Flathead Conservation Commission (they work streams/rivers/land), and Flathead Planning and Zoning (they work permits/lakes/lakeshore). The FIIP had NOT filed for a permit. We filed against their action.

Eventually, they tried to say their action was necessary EMERGENCY maintenance and asked our 3 Flathead Commissioners for after the fact authority. Your LBLA repeatedly worked with the Commissioners and explained to them that FIIP was trying to “scapegoat” them.

The Commissioners sided with LBLA and voted 3 to 0 against FIIP’s allegation that their action was emergency maintenance. Now the lawyers for the FIIP and the lawyers for Flathead Planning and Zoning are working out a FINE settlement and procedures for any future maintenance event. LBLA acted, got results. We will keep you posted on the outcome.

The story above is just one example of many ongoing concerns at our lake. Please contact me, a board member, or attend our Annual Meeting on Wednesday August 7, 2024, for more details.

Be sure to take time to read this and future NEWSLETTERS. You will find interesting and valuable (money saving) information, such as: How you (and your neighbors around the Lake Watershed) can get grant money to thin your forest and eradicate weeds (Page 4), how you can be reimbursed up to \$200 when you pump your septic (Page 5), and what specifically you can do to stop aquatic invasive species from infecting our lake and decreasing property values.

I get many calls each month about the goings-on at LBL. Most members are concerned about the safety and health of our lake. We need your donations, volunteerism, and watchful eyes and ears on the lake. Your participation is making a difference. Together we are defending our lake. Taking care of our lake is a complex and serious endeavor.

In this NEWSLETTER is a list of Serious Threats to our Lake, your current LBLA Responses, NEW Programs we hope to launch, and current ACTIVE Initiatives.

We are all very busy and what we do boils down to what our priorities are...As you know there are some priorities that you MUST make time for – your Little Bitterroot Lake is one of them.

Let’s all take care of our lake, not just use it! We MUST be GUARDIANS of our lake and thus protect the Investment we have all made... Please – Join and Contribute to LBLA.

Respectfully,

Capt Dan - President LBLA

[CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net](mailto:CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net)

***DON’T WAIT MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW – ANNUAL MTG Aug 7, 2024 – AT FIREHALL***

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***If you are not a member, PLEASE JOIN NOW***

***If you are a member, PLEASE MAKE YOUR 2024 CONTRIBUTION TODAY!***

## **“NEW” LBLA 2024 Membership and Contribution Campaign**

**We are commencing a “NEW” membership drive!**

Our goal is to add 25 “NEW” members to our Association.

Ask your neighbor to join if they haven’t yet...

**SUPER NEWS!!!**

**Last year we had a NEW RECORD of 130 members**

(up from just over 40 members 5 years ago)

We have strength in numbers – **PLEASE JOIN TODAY!**



**WE WANT YOU!**

**Our Contribution Campaign needs everyone’s support.  
Will you all help us launch these new programs?**



We need to expand our effort to save our lake and keep it pristine.

We have key \*NEW\*investments for 2024. Your support is needed to fund them:

- 1) Prizes/Grants/Scholarships for a NEW Youth LAKE Education and Awareness Partnership with Hooked on Fishing Clay Anderson FWP
- 2) An expanded weekly lake cleanup program
- 3) New Signs educating us about Noise/Wake/Pollution/Loons
- 4) Active participation on a Flathead Planning and Zoning Committee to update the Lake and Lakeshore Protection Regulations
- 5) Working with the State of Montana to introduce our successful “Active Boater” Program to protect or lakes from Aquatic Invasive Species from Out of State
- 6) Expanded lake sampling for Septic Leachate
- 7) Added BOD members to help with the workload – Welcome Susan Purvis and Steve Moore!

## **Some of our serious Threats and Challenges:**

- Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) Lake mismanagement and multiple lake challenges
- Invasive Species attack from other states
- Septic System Age, Viability and Volume (overuse)
- Increasing public use and abuse
- Lake Level Challenges
- Transient Camping
- Noxious Weeds
- Algae
- Shoreline Erosion
- Forest fires as a result of poor forest management
- Excessive weed infestation
- Lot over use
- Zoning violations
- Loon habitat challenges
- Fireworks and avoiding lake pollution
- Decrease in Home values should pollution or AIS affect our Lake (SEE Article Below)

## How LBLA is battling our Challenges:

- Added NEW BOD members to help with the LBLA workload
- By educating our membership and all in the LBL Watershed to available GRANTS for forest thinning and weed eradication through the 6,140-acre Natural Resources Conservation Service LBL Forest Health Implementation Plan (TIP) (call Karli Becher 406 309 3320 to apply for Forest Thinning Grants and Weed Control Grants). We will detail this program in future Newsletters. WEBSITE - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives/montana/little-bitterroot-lake-forest>
- Added Loon Habitat signs and a Loon Education and Awareness Program (LEAP)
- Expanded Lake Water Sampling to determine the health of our lake
- \*NEW\* Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP)
- Summer Boat Launch Volunteers Program
- Stop Aquatic Invasive Species Initiative at LBL and the Montana state level
- \*New\* Algae/Bacteria Septic Source Sampling
- Grade School Grant and Support Initiative
- 200 FT No Wake Initiative
- \*NEW\* Youth Hooked on Fishing Program
- Noise Problems Addressed with Signs and Newsletter
- Weed Control Education and Management Newsletter
- Monitoring VRBO/Airbnb Conditional Use Permits
- \*NEW\* Expanded Clean Up Heroes – Picking up Trash and Investigating Contamination
- Lake Etiquette and Safety Initiatives
- Lake Education and Awareness – Road Signs, Newsletters and Community Events
- Bass Research
- Maintaining Key Contacts/Relationships with ALL the Organizations that Affect our Lake
- Actively fielding your many calls and working diligently on your concerns

## Lake Water Quality, Septic Pumping Grant Money and AIS

### *Lake Water Quality*

***Of particular concern in the Flathead River Basin (Little Bitterroot Lake) is septic leachate from poorly maintained and failing onsite septic systems. This nonpoint source of excess nutrients is a major threat to water quality and a public health issue.***

According to the Flathead County Health Department, *pre-1990 septic systems generally last 15 to 20 years, and post-1990 systems can last up to 30 years depending on soil quality and site suitability (Flathead County Health Department, 2012).* Approximately 2,900 septic systems (1 in 4) in Lake County and over 15,780 septic systems **(2 in 5) in Flathead County are over 50 years old.** Aging infrastructure coupled with increased demand for onsite wastewater treatment highlights the importance of quantifying the potential costs of failing to address future degradation from excess nutrients.

**SAVE \$ -See this septic maintenance assistance opportunity to help you mitigate the cost of pumping!**

Funded through a Department of Environmental Quality federal grant, the Flathead Basin Septic Maintenance Reimbursement Program is offering to reimburse 50% (up to \$200) of the cost of pumping for eligible residents of Flathead County! For more information and to find if your system is eligible, please visit: <https://lakecountyconservationdistrict.org/septic-maint-reimbursement/>.

**Aquatic Invasive Species**

**In addition to nutrient pollution, Western Mountain lakes are increasingly subject to invasive plant and animal infestations. Invasive species often have no natural competitors and/or predators in these new environments, allowing them to outcompete native species.**

Once established invasive species can fundamentally change the natural processes of the ecosystem. The net result is a *loss in water quality* and in the diversity of native plants and animals as invasive species rapidly multiply and take over ecosystems.

Many U.S. waterbodies have been dramatically altered due to aquatic invasive species, particularly dreissenid mussels. These **tiny mussels have huge appetites** for microscopic plants and animals, they reproduce rapidly, and can severely alter their adopted environment **by reducing the food supply for native species and by enhancing conditions for the rapid growth of blue-green algae** and aquatic vegetation. This results in decreasing water quality and substantial ecological and economic damage.

- The 2023 Watercraft Inspection End of Year Report
  - 130,603 watercraft were inspected in Montana during the 2023 season.
  - 53 mussel fouled vessels were intercepted. 661 were intercepted with aquatic weeds.
  - 41,000 high risk boats were inspected.

Although not currently present in Montana, the potential economic damages to the state should dreissenid mussels be introduced and become established ranged from \$96 to \$234 million annually in mitigation costs and lost revenue and an **additional \$288 to \$497 million in property value loss.**



## **Your Membership and Contribution in LBLA directly help PROTECT your Property Investment. We must all “ACTIVELY” serve to protect our Lake and Investment**

### ***A Message from your LBLA Board of Directors***

#### **Donate and Participate**

It is “Active” member support that makes everything possible. Thank you for your continued donations and for keeping your eyes and ears open to issues concerning Little Bitterroot Lake. Please continue to report any issues you discover (*CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net* or 612 251-3778).

For those that have not yet joined the association please take the time to think about what your support would provide everyone, including yourself, who enjoys our beautiful lake now and in the future. Every tax-free donation helps. If you are not a member it is time to join! Your membership makes a statement about our community. It says, “WE CARE.”

Participation by current members is outstanding. You care about our lake enough to call us when ANY issues of concern arise. Members last year called (and we worked) many issues: lake levels, septic, trash, noise, and much more...Today we have record setting membership numbers – over 130 lake shore households so far - more than three times what it was 5 years ago! Strength in numbers gets good things done and keeps bad things from happening. Please join if you are not a member.

#### **LBLA does many things for our lake.**

We give our lake an in-depth “physical exam” every year. Lake water testing (begun almost 30 years ago) shows we have a measured visibility of over 50 ft, using the Secchi Disk. - the clearest in the area. However, our nutrients are increasing (algae growth) and our septic systems are getting very old in some places (possible lake pollution). Your BOD recently added Aquatic Invasive Species testing, E Coli testing and has contracted for a septic system analysis. Your contributions have also enabled us to have the ability to hire an LSU Natural Resource/Environmental/Management Graduate and Marion resident (Kate Thomas) to oversee our Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP). She will assist homeowners of older septic systems to ensure they operate safely.

The Association manages many programs. Many have been built within the last four years. To name a few: The Lake Education and Awareness Program (LEAP), the Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP), the Weed Education and Awareness Program (WEAP), Loon Education and Awareness Program (LEAP) and more...You get approach – We are into Education and Awareness!

Via our Lake Education and Awareness Program (LEAP), we talk to boaters at the boat launches on the weekends during the summer. We kindly ask for help to keep an eye out for our lake. We ask local boaters and recreators to be “ACTIVE” boaters and recreators. People really appreciate our friendly approach and request for their help in saving the lake from (out of state) AIS infection.

#### **We NEED You!**

Please volunteer to “work” the boat launches this summer. Primarily weekends from 1030am to 230pm (flexible hours OK!). Working at the North and South launches is FUN. We train you how to “kindly” ask people to be “ACTIVE” boaters and watch out for boats from outside of our area. How to talk to the boaters,

and make sure that they have safe boats (no aquatic invasive species imported from out of state), if you notice a probable infected boat call 1-800 TIP-MONT and report it!

Wouldn't it be a crime to hurt our lake? It is. Have you heard of the program "Crimestoppers"? Guess what, there is a program to stop abuse of our lake...Just call 1 800 TIP-MONT to report what you see.

This Newsletter asks for your new, or continued support, and reporting. Thank you so much for calling in or emailing concerns. It is all our duty and responsibility as good stewards of this amazing lake.

Thank you for your support! We welcome your ideas!

All the best,

Your LBLA Board of Directors

### INTERESTING TAX FACT

Contribution to the Economy: In Montana, local government and school district tax collections arise almost entirely from property taxes (96%). Bitterroot Lake residents are the primary source of property tax collection for Marion.

## Concerns, Comments and Suggestions

Your BOD is all voluntary. We attempt to represent you in the best way that we can.  
We had some excellent and important problem reporting by concerned citizens last year.

ACTION WAS TAKEN.

We are always open to your concerns, comments, and suggestions - Please provide them to us:

Dan Handlin	President/Treasurer	<a href="mailto:dhandlin@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org">dhandlin@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org</a>
Rob Torgerson	Vice President	<a href="mailto:rtorgerson@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org">rtorgerson@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org</a>
Steve Moore	Member at Large	<a href="mailto:smoore@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org">smoore@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org</a>
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LBLA P.O 1003 Marion, Mt 59925 / [CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net](mailto:CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net) <http://www.littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org>



## What are the top 10 things you can do to ensure our lake remains healthy and pristine?

- 1) Support the Little Bitterroot Lake Association.
- 2) Do your part to keep a look out for problems and report them to the association board.
- 3) Don't use Fertilizers or Pesticides near the lake.
- 4) Have your septic system health checked. *Pump it!*
- 5) Pickup garbage before it gets into our lake
- 6) Work as a volunteer at the boat launch.
- 7) Check for AIS on any boat BEFORE it enters the lake
- 8) Ask your neighbor to join LBLA—Be a Board Member, it's your turn to serve.
- 9) Checkout our website --- [www.littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org](http://www.littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org)
- 10) Be a good neighbor

ALL HANDS-ON DECK



CONTRIBUTION FORM

## BECOME AN LBLA MEMBER TODAY

Tax Deductible Minimum Contribution Request is \$50

**PLEASE DETACH AND MAIL BACK TO: LBLA PO BOX 1003 MARION, MT. 59925**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ CONTRIBUTION AMOUNT \_\_\_\_\_

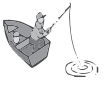
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COMMENTS and IDEAS \_\_\_\_\_

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS – ANNUAL MTG Aug 7, 2024 – AT FIREHALL**



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Marion, MT 59925

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<<Address>>  
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