

# 2024 Little Bitterroot Lake Association (LBLA)



## NEWSLETTER No. 2 - May 2024

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

**NOTICE: ANNUAL MEETING AUGUST 7TH @ THE FIREHALL - 6PM**

*Thank you for your response to NEWSLETTER No. 1. Your contributions are allowing us to invest in many important initiatives including:*

- \*Three times a year water sampling (this helps keep a look out for failed septic systems, Aquatic Invasive Species, Water Chemistry Issues, and much more),*
- \*A Robust Communications Program (funding NEWSLETTERS like this and more),*
- \*Our Lake Clean-up Program,*
- \*Our Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP),*
- \*The Lake Education and Awareness Program (LEAP),*
- \*A LOON Protection Program and Much More...*

## **“Big” NEWS Items Covered in this NEWSLETTER:**

- 1) An Important Conversation between Capt Dan Handlin President of LBLA and Skye Cooley, a key Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP)/Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Representative/Manager.**
- 2) What is Going on with our Lake Water Level?**
- 3) A “NEW” way to financially support your Lake Association.**
- 4) The Aquatic Invasive Species INVASION of Montana’s Lakes – Early Report.**
- 5) FREE Grant Money to help YOU pay to pump your SEPTIC – Great Deal**
- 6) FREE Grant Money to help you “Thin” your FOREST – Great Deal**

**1**

**A conversation between Capt Dan Handlin President of LBLA and Skye Cooley, a key Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP)/Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Representative/Manager.**

He and I have built a good relationship. Last October as I drove to the “Backhoe” incident, the first person I called was this gentleman to find out what was going on... Curiously, he was at our dam a couple of weeks ago on April 18th when I called him for this conversation:

- Why are the dam doors open?**

*Ans. We are “Flushing the Canal” not draining the lake and the flow rate is very low.*

- **We only have 1.65 ft of water left according to your graph and website lake level reporting system, what is the plan?**

*Ans. All the lakes are at their winter low, most of the water is yet to be released. Within a couple of weeks, we hope to see LBL begin to rise. Water levels are definitely low.*

- **We had an event last year with your guys and a backhoe. We have lobbied the Commissioners and Planning and Zoning about what happened. We have Lake Shore Protection Regulations that were violated.**

*Ans. "Dan, we (FIIP/BIA) have had a lot of meetings and many many discussions about what happened. **IT WAS A MISTAKE. It will NEVER happen again.** There will never be another backhoe in your lake."*

- **I would like to communicate with the guy in charge of the maintenance teams.**

*Ans. "Dan, when I get off the phone I will send you his information."*

- **Have you seen the erosion and failing of the West Wall of the Dam – We are worried about its structural integrity?**

*Ans. Yes, BIA has a management program for Dam Maintenance. We have a backlog of projects to do, LBL Dam is on the list.*

**2**

## **What is Going on with our Lake Level? What is the latest with the Dam and Flathead Indian Irrigation Project?**

It has been reported to me that the FIIP were recently at the dam and opened the gates. I went on to the CSKT reservoir water elevation reporting site and got the following information: Data - CSKT Water Data (aquaticinformatics.net) Little Bitterroot Lake Reservoir Water Elevation 3899.65 ft. Last Updated 2024-04-18 12:37 (UTC-06:00). 3899.65 ft. is the elevation of the water according to the automated CSKT system. If that is an accurate number our lake is extremely low. If you look at the Reservoir capacity graph below (provided by CSKT to me) you will find that the LOWEST the dam can go (according to the Graph) is 3898 ft. According to their measurements and data...3899.65 ft. minus 3898 ft. = 1.65 ft. is LEFT IN THE DAM CAPACITY. That means they have the dam doors open and are running the water out of the lake and have only 1.65 ft to go...until the dam bottoms out.

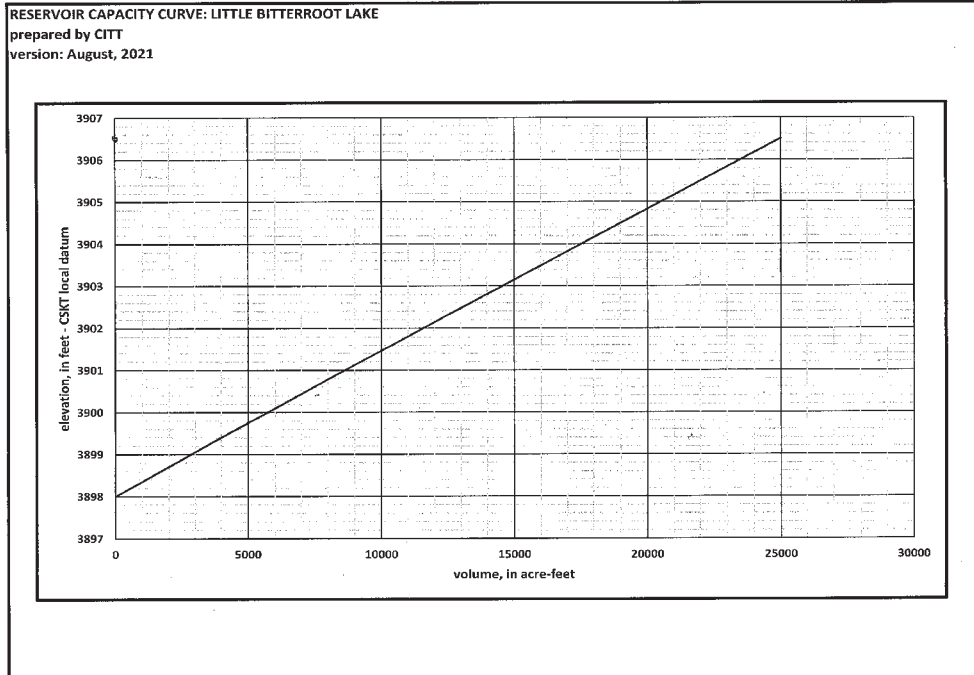
Several reservoirs on and associated with the Flathead Reservation have "minimum pool levels" set forth by the Compact, including Hubbard Reservoir. LBL feeds Hubbard and Hubbard is managed by FIIP. The Compact outlines a minimum reservoir level for Hubbard Reservoir (and other reservoirs). A minimum pool level was not established for LBL through the Compact.

In 2022, CSKT installed a monitoring system on LBL. Anyone can view the lakes level at any time via a web Portal <https://cskt.aquaticinformatics.net/Data>. Just change the parameter field from "discharge" to "Lake/res elevation."

Max and Min DRAWS- The LBL dam bottom level is 3898' elevation (above sea level). That is the lowest draw point vs. the highest dam level possible at 3906.5' (That is a range of approx. 8.5' – and totals 25,000 acre-ft of water). This means that if the lake level drops below 3898' elevation, then it is not due to losing water via the dam. Other factors, such as yearly precipitation and weather, can impact lake levels.

Want to make a change – Contact State Rep. Paul Fielder [paul.fielder@legmt.gov](mailto:paul.fielder@legmt.gov) 406 210-5943 or Sen. Dist 7 Bob Brown [bob.brown@legmt.gov](mailto:bob.brown@legmt.gov) 406 242-0141.

## See Reservoir Capacity Curve: Little Bitterroot Lake



Little Bitterroot Lake page 2 of 2

Are you CONCERNED about septic, well, and/or sanitation VIOLATION?

Please contact [Flathead City-County Environmental Health Department](http://Flathead City-County Environmental Health Department) at (406) 751-8130 or email them at [ehhealth@flathead.mt.gov](mailto:ehhealth@flathead.mt.gov) to file a violation complaint.

**3**

### A “NEW” way to financially support your Lake Association.

LBLA BOD has added a new way to invest in your LBLA – At Fidelity Investments - We now have the LBLA Non-Profit Brokerage Investment Account. This is a Brokerage account that allows you to make STOCK Shares Donations directly to LBLA. After NEWSLETTER No. 1 an LBLA member called me and said, “Dan, we appreciate what the LBLA is doing and want to show our support by donating some of our “appreciated” STOCK to LBLA”. This was a very significant and much appreciated amount of STOCK. I built our Non-Profit brokerage account to accept their very generous gift and now (for no cost) we have the means to accept your STOCK donations too! It is an amazing thing these fine people did for our LBLA. You know who you are, and we THANK YOU! Not only will this tax deductible gift help us but it now establishes a NEW easy way for you to invest in LBLA. Just email [CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net](mailto:CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net) if you have stock to donate.

**4**

### The Aquatic Invasive Species INVASION of Montana’s Lakes – Early Report.

Over 1,800 watercraft have been inspected so far this season with 7 mussel fouled vessels intercepted to date. More information on mussel fouled vessels this season in the table below:

Fouled Vessel Number	Date	Station	Boat Description	Origin Location	Origin State	Destination	State
1	3/10/2024	Anaconda	Pontoon	Crystal Lake, MN	ND	Ephrata	WA
2	3/16/2024	Anaconda	Outboard	Unknown	MI	Colville	WA
3	3/20/2024	Dillon	Outboard	Lake Mead	AZ	Bozeman	MT
4	3/28/2024	Anaconda	Ski Boat	Cass Lake	MI	Kelowna	BC
5	4/2/2024	Dillon	Outboard	Lake Havasu	AZ	Missoula	MT
6	4/7/2004	Anaconda	Outboard	Unknown	TX	Seattle	WA
7	4/11/2024	Dillon	I/O	Lake Havasu	AZ	Lethbridge	AB

**Invasive mussels found on boat after driver fails to stop at Anaconda inspection station**



Photo by: MTN News

**HELENA — Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) reports a warden found mussels on a ski boat after the driver pulling the boat failed to stop at the Anaconda inspection station last week.**

**FWP said in a media release that after the warden noticed some mussels on the boat, the driver returned to the inspection station where several more mussels were found. The boat was fully decontaminated and locked to the trailer.**

**A total of five mussel-contaminated boats have been intercepted so far this season in Montana**

HELENA — FWP reminds the public that by law, anyone transporting either motorized or non-motorized watercraft must stop at all open inspection stations they encounter to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in Montana.

The release stated:

Watercraft includes paddle boards, kayaks, canoes, rafts and pack rafts. Nonresidents and residents returning home must have their watercraft inspected before launching in Montana. Watercraft must also be drained of all water before transporting.

According to FWP the boat, en route to British Columbia from Michigan, is the fourth mussel-fouled watercraft intercepted in Montana this season.

A fifth boat contaminated with mussels was detected at the inspection station near Dillon on Monday. “Although it might be tempting to drive past an inspection station, boaters need to be aware that it’s up to them to prevent AIS from coming into our state,” Tom Woolf, FWP’s AIS bureau chief stated in the release. "An inspection typically takes less than 10 minutes."

“It’s everyone’s responsibility to help stop the spread of AIS to Montana waters,” Woolf added. AIS can have devastating impacts on Montana waterways, according to the FWP release, and include non-native plants, animals, or pathogens that can cause harm to Montana's environment and economy.

You can learn more at FWP's Aquatic Invasive Species website or by calling the FWP Aquatic Invasive Species Bureau at 406-444-2440.

# BIG NEWS!!!

Your *Little Bitterroot Lake Association* just discovered **TWO BIG OPPORTUNITIES** for LAKE Residents.

5

**“NEW FUNDING”** for a Clean Water Act Reimbursement Grant for pumping YOUR Septic System. This is a great deal. Funds are Limited. **YOU MUST APPLY NOW**. See details below.

6

The Kalispell Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has targeted our area and is offering YOU financial **INCENTIVES** to work with them to Properly Thin your Forest and manage WEED Control. **ATTENTION:** They will give you money to help manage your forest and mitigate fire danger.

5

## Reimbursement for “Shoreline” Septic Maintenance

Your LBLA Association, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) and the Flathead Basin Commission is pleased to announce new funding for the **Septic Maintenance Reimbursement Program to assist landowners in Flathead County with the costs of septic system pumping and inspection**. This program is funded by a federal grant through the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program under the Clean Water Act. As the population of the area grows, so does the number of septic systems.

Pollution from septic systems is becoming more of a threat to clean water. This program was developed with the goal of reducing nonpoint source pollution to our waters coming from potentially malfunctioning septic systems. Reducing the risk of septic associated pollution is especially important in our lake. **Our lake has MANY old septic systems.**

**This program offers 50% Reimbursement (up to \$200) for pumping and inspection of YOUR system.**

Pumping your tank will help ensure the longevity of your system, saving you even more money in the long run! Regular septic maintenance helps ensure the cleanliness of our beautiful lake!

## How the septic maintenance reimbursement works:

- You are eligible if your system needs pumping (hasn't been pumped in 3+ years) and is located 500 feet or less from any surface water (lake or stream).
- Choose a pumping company, get a quote, and submit your application.
- Once approved, schedule a pumping and inspection.
- Have the pumper fill out our reporting form and return it.
- Then receive the reimbursement.

**GO TO THIS Flathead Conservation District WEB ADDRESS to APPLY!!!**  
**<https://lakecountyconservationdistrict.org/septic-maint-reimbursement/>**

**CALL Carolyn McDonald at 406 676-2811 x 102**  
**EMAIL [flatheadsepticprogram@macdnet.org](mailto:flatheadsepticprogram@macdnet.org)**

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**THANK YOU!!!**

**Septic System Companies Who *Contributed* to this NEWSLETTER:**  
**Mel's Pumping 752-5318      Pedersen Co. Pumping 752-4321**  
**A-1 Sanitation 755-3938      Mountain State Construction 212-4787**  
**Surefire Septic Mx. 756-1806**

.....  
**STOP ALGAE GROWTH**  
**PUMP YOUR SEPTIC – KEEP OUR LAKE BEAUTIFUL**

SEPTIC MAINTENANCE IS THE  
KEY TO KEEPING LOCAL  
WATERS CLEAN!



### **Your septic system is linked to water quality**

After solids separate from wastewater in your septic tank, the remaining water is released into the ground by the drain field. This water can still be carrying pollutants like nutrients and pathogens that will make their way into streams and groundwater. This water is known as **septic leachate**



### **Why it's important**

Excess nutrients can cause harmful algal blooms that reduce oxygen in surface waters, facilitate growth of nuisance aquatic plants, harm wildlife, and make recreation difficult. Disease causing pathogens such as E. coli can make their way into drinking water and harm community health



### **For Proper Care and to protect water...**

- Don't flush pharmaceuticals, sanitary products or chemicals
- Limit use of garbage disposal, which increases grease and solids in the tank
- If your tank has an effluent filter, clean it every 6 months
- Pump your tank every 3-5 years
- Replace your tank every 15-30 years, before it fails



### **In the Flathead Basin...**

- **Over half** the homes on Flathead Lake are on private septic
- **4** streams listed as impaired or of concern for nutrient levels by Montana DEQ
- **50%** of the nitrogen load in Spring Creek, Kalispell is from septic systems
- **10% septic systems failing** near Whitefish Lake

**6****Reimbursement NRCS Forest INCENTIVE Program**

**The Kalispell Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is continuing to offer a financial incentive program for forest landowners “on and around” the Little Bitterroot Lake watershed.**

Your forest could greatly benefit from their science-based approach to thinning which promotes forest health, reduces wildfire hazard, enhances the natural beauty of the forest environment, preserves wildlife habitat, and addresses noxious weeds. This current program specifically targets the LBL area and will only continue for a limited time – **once it is gone, it is gone, and they will be targeting other areas.**

If you have already received funding and are seeking a bid on work, **Worman Forest Management LLC** has contributed to this newsletter and invites you to contact them for a free consultation and project bid.

**Call Luke Fehlig (Forester) 406-594-7648 or email [luke@wormanforestry.com](mailto:luke@wormanforestry.com)**

If you have not yet applied for the program, *there is still time!*  
Contact the Kalispell NRCS at 406-752-4242 and ask for Karli

**HELP WANTED - NEW LBLA BOARD MEMBERS!**

It is a great job! You can make a difference. Please consider joining our BOD. We are a dedicated group and enjoy serving our lake! Join our team. We meet for only one hour on the first Wednesday of every month. The amount of work depends on your interest and availability. Please at least listen in on our next meeting to see how it works. We would love to have you join us!

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

**HELP WANTED**

Join the Little Bitterroot Lake Association “Clean Team”

LBLA wants to hire individuals who can work 20 to 40 hours this summer. The job is to clean up our lake! We will focus on areas that the public uses. The hours are flexible but primarily on the weekends. Pay ranges from \$10 to \$15 per hour. Transportation is your responsibility.

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

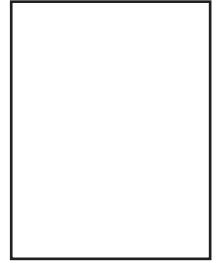
**VOLUNTEERS WANTED**

Request volunteers this summer on Saturday and/or Sunday for 4 hour shifts (approximately 10am to 2 pm) to staff the boat launches and introduce the LBLA to boaters/recreators PLUS explain our “Active Boater” program that asks all to watchout for Aquatic Invasive Species (Mussels/Weeds) on boats from out of state. Very flexible with your schedule and you will be trained and COMFORTABLE. All who have done it LOVE it!.

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



Little Bitterroot Lake Association  
 PO Box 1003  
 Marion, MT 59925



**Water Level NEWS**  
**Flathead Indian Irrigation Project**  
**Conversation with Capt. Dan**  
**Help Wanted Ad –**  
**Young and Old Welcome**  
**Volunteer Request –**  
**You will LOVE it!**

**Name**  
**Address**  
**City, State, Zip**

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

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ CELL \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**Tax Deductible Minimum Contribution Request is \$50**  
**BECOME AN LBLA MEMBER TODAY**

**ALL HANDS-ON DECK**  **CONTRIBUTION FORM**