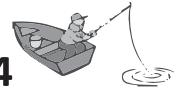


# Little Bitterroot Lake Association (LBLA)

## Newsletter No. 5 Nov 2024



*Greetings Fellow Little Bitterroot Lakers - Welcome to Fall and soon Winter at our Beautiful Lake,*

This fifth NEWSLETTER of 2024 continues with important information about our lake with the hope you will take time to read it and support our efforts (like our sign at the “Y” says) to:

**“Keep the Lake Pristine for Future Generations”.**

Because of your generous contributions both monetary and volunteer- wonderful things are happening.

Recently a second very generous contribution was made to our Fidelity LBLA Non-Profit Brokerage Account. This Non-Profit Investment Account easily processes your accumulated stock and charitable investments into LBLA. Once your funds are received the stocks and cash deposits are placed into a Fidelity money market fund which is safe and currently paying 4 to 5 %. If you would like to help fund our operations and future please consider LBLA for your charitable donations.

### **A Brief on the latest in our NEWSLETTER...**

*This NEWSLETTER is one to KEEP...Why? Because it has a library of information! You will find a FISH article (Item 1) by FWP Scientist Kenny Breidinger. It is about what is “in” our lake (FISH-WISE) very interesting...*

*Also, for the first time we have put together for you the LAKE MASTER LIST of CONNECTIONS and INFORMATION (item 2). This helps answer your QUESTIONS and builds a better UNDERSTANDING of LBL. Please take a minute and review the huge amount of information. We think you will want to keep this NEWSLETTER for future reference. Remember ALL OUR NEWSLETTERS are also on your LBLA website.*

Next, you will find the LAKE ADVISORY FLYER and our “New” AIS ALERT SIGN – Please give copies of these to your friends and guests.

Why is the lake water so low? What can we do about it? How low can it go? What is the plan? I will take a shot at answering these questions in an article titled - Why is our **Lake WATER SO LOW!**

Big Loon NEWS – We had three NEW chicks this season. That is a big deal because these waterbirds build their nests – on sensitive flat shoreline grassy areas. If you have a level shoreline with grass and wetlands PLEASE LEAVE IT NATURAL. Do NOT change the water level shoreline. This is where our LOONS nest. For those of you who have scared the shoreline please return it to its natural state.

Please read about our Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP). Take care of your septic! Do NOT contaminate our lake. And be aware we are sampling the water all around the lake – probably just off your dock/shoreline!

And finally, Communication – Thank you for calling and emailing me your concerns and issues. I love that we are an active “communicating” community.

Enjoy the read...The BOD and I really appreciate you!

*Thank You for your support - Capt. Dan - [CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net](mailto:CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net)*

Below is NEWSLETTER No. 5's INDEX

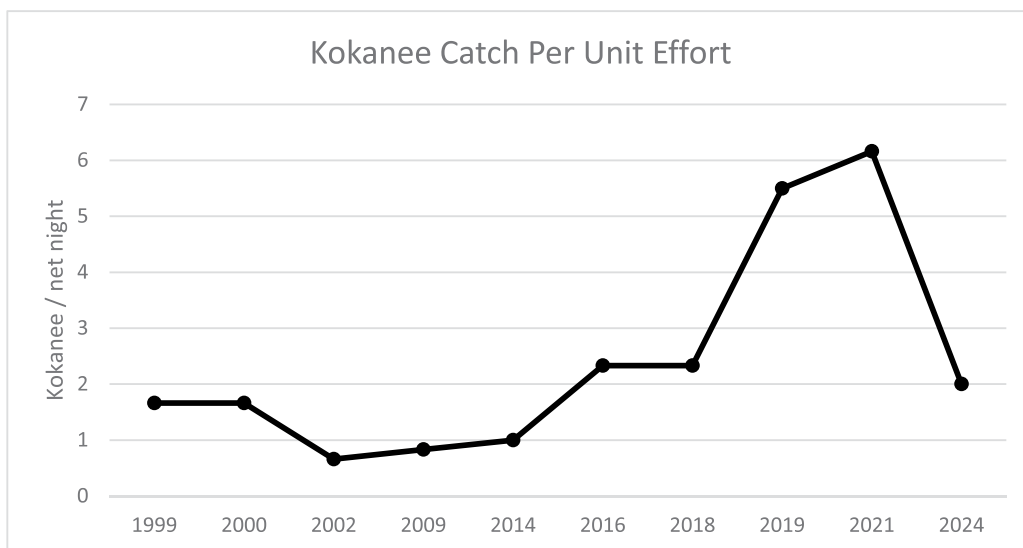
- 1) **THE FISH IN OUR LAKE** - Thank You Kenny Breidinger - FWP for your article about FISH in our lake. Very Interesting!
- 2) The Lake **"WHITE PAGES"** – who to call and where to find information. By Capt. Dan
- 3) If you are looking for a GOOD summary of information on how to take care of our lake read the next one pager – Our **LAKE ADVISORY FLYER – 2024**. Help us by spreading this key information around...
- 4) Why is our Lake **WATER SO LOW?** By Capt. Dan
- 5) **LOON NEWS** - Our two pairs of **LOONS** had three **BABIES**. AMAZING! Thank you EVERYONE for playing "Loon – Safe" around our lake...That means minimum wake near the shoreline and keeping your distance on the Loons. By the Hemmers
- 6) **SEPTIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS is a big deal**. Kate our SEAP Program manager is coming to your door to TALK SEPTIC. A septic article is in this NEWSLETTER, please read it. We have a lot of old septic tanks that could fail. Take care of yours! Don't remember the last time you pumped it? DO IT NOW. We have added water bacteria sampling all around the lake – so we are trying to keep a "bacteria watch" of the water at your shore, but it is up to YOU! By Kate our SEAP Manager

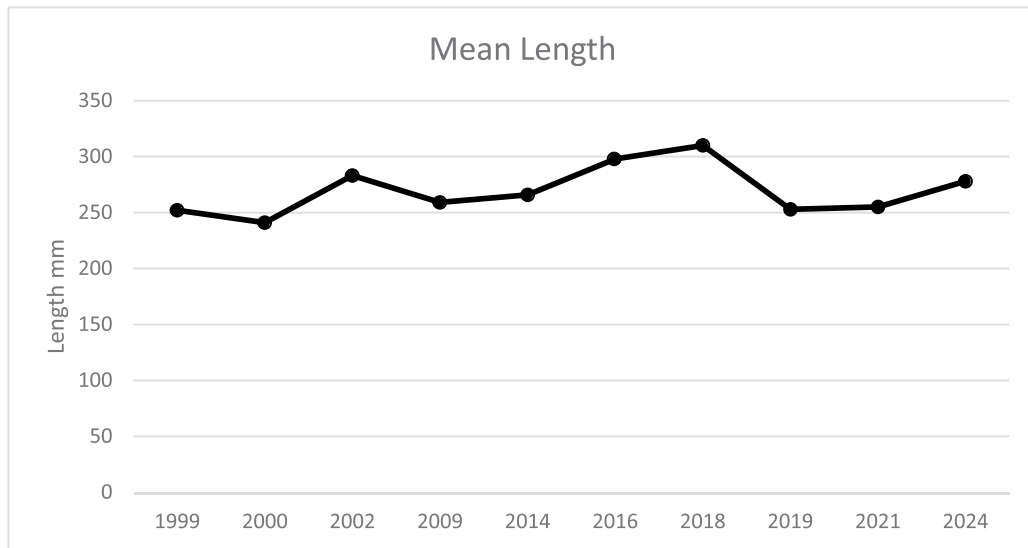
## 1) The Fish in our Lake by Kenny Breidinger FWP

### Little Bitterroot Lake Fisheries

Rainbow trout, kokanee salmon and smallmouth bass make up the Little Bitterroot Lake sport fishery. Kokanee are the primary species targeted by anglers followed by rainbow trout. The lake supports angling year-round including a popular ice fishery.

Kokanee salmon were initially stocked in Little Bitterroot in 1968. This species has become established, and the fishery is dependent on wild reproduction. Kokanees are occasionally stocked to supplement the wild population. The kokanee population is monitored by gill net surveys conducted in the spring. Sampling effort in Little Bitterroot is low, so the value in this data is looking at trends over time.





Beginning this year, FWP is collecting eggs and milt from LBL kokanee. These eggs will be hatched at our Flathead Lake Salmon hatchery and stocked in kokanee fisheries throughout Montana. Due to reduced in lake spawning, FWP may need to increase supplemental stocking or adjust regulations to protect this brood source.

Rainbow trout were initially stocked into LBL in 1927. Rainbows in LBL provide a trophy component to the fishery with fish regularly exceeding 20 pounds. Large rainbows caught in LBL are either Gerrard strain fish stocked by FWP or a mixed strain that reproduces in the lake and in Herrig Creek. These fish grow large due to a relatively long life span and a diet of kokanee. Beginning this year, FWP halted rainbow stocking into LBL due to the loss of our Gerrard strain brood stock. We are currently exploring our options to continue to supplement this fishery. One possibility is collecting eggs and milt from wild fish and raising the offspring in a hatchery.

First discovered in 2008, smallmouth bass were illegally stocked into LBL. Largemouth bass and yellow perch have also been illegally introduced. These species are rarely caught in our gill nets and are not well tracked. Smallmouth bass are regularly observed in the lake. Illegal introductions pose a serious threat to this fishery.

Five native species of fish have been documented in LBL. Longnose sucker and pygmy whitefish are encountered often and rocky mountain sculpin and redbreast shiner have each been observed once. Peamouth chubs were caught in gill nets up to 2000 but have not been encountered during spring gill net surveys since. The current state record pygmy whitefish was harvested from LBL.

## 2) Lake Information – How to Find Answers

Please take a slow focused review of the next few pages. You will find a ton of “contacts” some of which you might need to use now or in the future. Want to see an old NEWSLETTER, get a Septic Pumper, Review the Lake Shore Protection Regulations, Learn about FWP, or call Flathead Planning and Zoning with a Question?

*It’s ALL here for you...*

*\*A hint: To get an electronic copy of this NEWSLETTER go to our LBLA WEBSITE (see first item below). On our website pull up this newsletter and there you can “cut and paste” these https addresses into your browser.*

### **LBLA Website** - <https://www.littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org/index2.html>

Don’t want to type all these addresses? GO TO OUR LBLA website and cut and paste them. HOW? (1) Do a google search for Little Bitterroot Lake Association, (2) “click” on it, (3) see the tab NEWSLETTERS (4) Go there! (5) Pull up “this” NEWSLETTER and then (6) cut and paste the https addresses that you want to study.

**STUDY our previous NEWSLETTERS – Great Information -For Example:**

**See 23newsltr5 for details on the DAM !**

**See 23newsltr6 for regulations- simplified**

**Septic Pumpers** - Pedersen Co. 752-4321, A-1 Sanitation, Surefire Septic Mx. 756-1806 (There are more...)

### **Septic Reimbursement Phone and Website**

<https://lakecountyconservationdistrict.org/septic-maint-reimbursement/>

Questions? Contact the Lake County Conservation District at

<https://flatheadcd.org/septic-maintenance-reimbursement-program/> or 406-676-2811 x102

**Lake Level Reporting Site** Go to --- <https://cskt.aquaticinformatics.net/Data>

(Attention – After you go to the site - on top item on the left see title “Select Parameter” here you MUST select “Lake/res elevation” and then scroll map to locate our lake)

**FWP (Fish Wildlife and Parks)** (on Meridian) 406 752-5501 [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov)

**Head of Montana AIS Program** (Office in Helena) Tom Wolfe 406 444-1230

### **Little Bitterroot Lake “FWP” Site**

<https://myfwp.mt.gov/fishMT/waterbody/searchByID?waterBodyID=42435#:~:text=Little%20Bitterroot%20Lake%20Slide%201%20/%203%20;%20Slide%202>

### **Flathead Planning and Zoning Phone to Call with Questions**

406 751-8200, 406 751-8210 Compliance Individuals are Jared and Cody

### **Flathead “GIS” Property Lookup Information**

<https://maps.flathead.mt.gov/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=a0f8edf25599410a8e8ddc993fecbb0e>

### **Flathead Septic Lookup site**

<https://maps.flathead.mt.gov/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6bfdfe0f17614543b49b2f0b89b4c3e4>

## **Land/Lake Shore Ownership**

Section 70-16-201 states: “**Owner of land bounded by water.** Except where the grant under which the land is held indicates a different intent, the owner of the land, when it borders upon a navigable lake or stream, takes to the edge of the lake or stream at low-water mark; when it borders upon any other water, the owner takes to the middle of the lake or stream.”

**Lakeshore work without a permit,** "A person who performs work in the lake, lakebed, or lakeshore without a permit for that work shall, if required by the governing body, restore the lake, lakebed, or lakeshore to its condition before he/she disturbed it."

**Flathead Zoning Regulations** <https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/planning-zoning/lakeshore-information.pdf>  
[https://flathead.mt.gov/application/files/1216/5894/6748/LAKEANDLAKESHOREPROTECTIONREGULATION\\_002.pdf](https://flathead.mt.gov/application/files/1216/5894/6748/LAKEANDLAKESHOREPROTECTIONREGULATION_002.pdf)

## **Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**

406 755-8985      [deq.mt.gov](http://deq.mt.gov)    septic permitting      septic violations  
Septic Violation Report Form <https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/health/environmental-health/sewage-and-septic/septic-violation-report-form>

## **Flathead County Planning and Zoning Complaint Website**

<https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/planning-zoning/code-compliance>

## **Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP manages our dam)**

<https://www.bia.gov/irrigation-project/p13-flathead-indian-irrigation-project>

## **Confederated Salish and Kootenia Tribes Compact**

<https://dnrc.mt.gov/Water-Resources/Compacts/Flathead-Compact>

## **Your NEW Montana State Representative** Tom Millett 406 212-3613

[tom@millet4montana.com](mailto:tom@millet4montana.com)

## **Our Most Supportive County Commissioner** Randy Brodehl 406 758-5507

[Randy.Brodehl@flathead.mt.gov](mailto:Randy.Brodehl@flathead.mt.gov)

## **Forest Thinning Grants** Call Karli NRCS at 406 752-4242

## **Montana Aquatic Invasive Species Report**

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/638965fb9c81440bbc154c52e6da84db>

## **Montana Fish Information** <https://fwp.mt.gov/fish>

## **Montana Loon Society** <https://montanaloons.org/>

## **Capt Dan's Number and Email** 612 251-3778 [CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net](mailto:CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net)

## Important Details of the Lake Protection Zone

### LAKESHORE PROTECTION ZONE

#### **SETBACK FOR PRESERVATION**

*The land area which is within twenty (20) horizontal feet of the perimeter of the lake and adjacent wetlands when the lake is at the 5 year mean annual high-water elevation. Where a shoreline is irregular or erratic or a channel or gorge of a lake juts landward, the lakeshore protection zone shall correspondingly follow these irregularities. (Ask Planning and Zoning what the “5 year mean annual high-water elevation is...for determining the correct location for the lake protection zone - 406 751-8200, 406 751-8210 Compliance Individuals are Jared and Cody)*

#### **SETBACK FOR BUILDING**

*When a property abuts Little Bitterroot Lake or any year-round stream, a 50-foot setback, measured landward of the average high-water line shall be maintained. (Note: For the purposes of these regulations, high water of Little Bitterroot Lake for construction and building setback purposes only shall be 3906.48 using for reference a brass cap elevation 3907.50 as found on the east wing wall of the outlet gates of the Dam Structure. This cap is maintained by the Engineers of the U.S. Safety of Dams Program)*

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### **SECTION 3.37 LBL LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE 3.37.010**

#### Permitted Uses

1. Agriculture as provided for in M.C.A. 76-2-209.
2. Class A manufactured home.
3. Dwelling, single-family.
4. Home occupation.

#### **PERMITS**

These regulations are adopted under the authority of the State of Montana, 75-7-207, M.C.A., which requires local governing bodies to adopt regulations regarding the issuance or denial of permits for work in lakes within their jurisdiction, including land which is within twenty (20) horizontal feet of the perimeter of the lake. The perimeter of the lake is defined as the mean annual high-water elevation.

**MEAN ANNUAL HIGH-WATER ELEVATION:** The mean average of the highest elevation of a lake in each of at least five (5) consecutive years, excluding any high levels caused by erratic or unusual weather or hydrologic conditions. A highest elevation caused by operation of a dam or other impoundment counts towards the establishment of the mean annual high-water elevation.

## **PRESERVATION OVERVIEW**

The lakebed or lakeshore should be preserved in its natural condition to the greatest extent possible, in order to preserve its aesthetic value, protect fish and wildlife habitat and water quality. Increased sedimentation in the lake should be minimized to the greatest extent possible, as a protection for fish habitat and water quality.

### **Standards**

a. The interface of fill materials, such as rip rap, with the lake water shall be sloped at an average of one horizontal to two vertical (2:1) ratio in order to dissipate wave energy. The face of the slope shall be covered with suitable materials to discourage soil erosion and slumping of banks.

b. *The natural protective armament of the lakebed and lakeshore shall be preserved wherever possible.*

### **Trees**

c. *Natural vegetation shall be preserved wherever possible. Healthy trees three (3) inches in diameter or larger shall be preserved except where approved on a case-by-case basis.*

d. Natural vegetation shall be provided, if required, as a means of stabilizing erosive areas.

e. *The establishment of a new lawn in the lakeshore protection zone is prohibited. Such prohibited actions include grass seeding, placement of sod, the routine mowing and maintenance of native grasses as a lawn, and the application of fertilizer, pesticide, insecticide, or herbicide.*

### **Equipment**

f. Mechanized equipment may be allowed in the Lakeshore Protection Zone as part of a permitted project; however, at no time shall any vehicle slice, gouge, or rut the beach or shoreline, expose silts or fines or come in contact with the lake.

### **Wetlands**

Filling of wetlands creates adverse effects due to destruction of an aquatic environment, loss of habitat for fish and wildlife, loss of water storage capacity and loss of the natural storm runoff cleansing functions and the natural nutrient entrapment functions of wetlands.

### **Gravel**

The addition of rock to the lakebed and lakeshore protection zone is permissible activity but shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, subject to the following requirements:

(1) Application of rock is allowed where the predominant existing surface is gravel.

(2) Application of rock is **not** permitted in the following areas: wetlands and sites subject to strong wave action or currents; sites covered predominately by vegetation; or below average low water.

(3) Placement of fill directly into the waters of any lake is prohibited.

(4) All fill shall be clean, washed rock with a minimum diameter of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch and a maximum diameter to be determined at the time of on-site inspection free of silts, sands and fines. Rock type, size and color shall approximate that existing on the adjacent lakeshore.

(5) Maximum fill depth is four to six inches.

(6) The volume of fill shall not exceed one cubic yard per sixteen lineal feet of lake frontage.

(7) Application of rock shall be permitted one time only to supplement a stable gravel beach. Reapplication of gravel where it has washed away, silted in, or revegetated over time may be permitted upon reapplication and approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

(8) The Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation may also require permits for any dredging and filling. Said permit(s) shall be obtained prior to the application for a County Lakeshore Construction Permit.

(9) The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may also require permits for any dredging and filling.

(10) Where fill is proposed on the bed of any lake, Flathead County Planning & Zoning Office shall contact the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, whose concerns will be incorporated into the permit application review process.

#### **Waterlines**

Waterlines. 1) A water line shall be located no closer than ten (10) feet from either side property/riparian line. 2) All waterlines shall be covered or buried for safety and aesthetic purposes unless placement is temporary in nature (less than 30 days). That portion of the waterline which is not buried and does lie exposed on the bottom of the lakeshore shall be weighted to prohibit floatation or snagging. 3) Waterlines using submersible pumps may incorporate an electrical line but all such work and installation shall be done in accordance with the State Uniform Plumbing and Electrical Codes. The electrical line shall be installed in conduit for protection and maintenance accessibility. 4) No waterline shall lie on top of or be attached to a floating dock or raft. 5) The applicant shall demonstrate that the necessary water rights as required by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation are in place.

#### **VIOLATIONS - PENALTY**

A. A person who violates an order issued under these regulations, or who knowingly violates any provision(s) of these regulations, commits a misdemeanor, and on conviction may be sentenced to thirty (30) days in the County jail, fined five hundred dollars (\$500.00), or both.

B. In the event that any building or structure is erected, reconstructed, altered, converted, or maintained, or any building, structure, or land is used in violation of these regulations, the proper legal authorities of the Board of County Commissioners, in addition to other remedies, may institute any appropriate action or proceedings to prevent such unlawful erection, maintenance, or use, to restrain, correct, or abate such violation, to prevent the occupancy of such building, structure or land, or to prevent an illegal act, conduct, business, or use in or about such building, structure or land.



### 3) LAKE ADVISORY FLYER – 2024

The Little Bitterroot Lake Association (LBLA) BOD asks you to be a good neighbor and “actively” take care of YOUR LAKE. “READ and SHARE” The Flyer below with your friends, guests, and renters. TALK TO THEM about this important information. YOU can make a difference!

#### ***Boating regulations found in the FWP Montana Boating Laws Booklet 2021***

Did you know - all must observe a 200 ft. NO WAKE ZONE from shore? Wakes blast docks, boats, destroy loon nests and shorelines. Motorboats and PWC max noise levels are 85 decibels within 50ft. Damaging Noise offends critters and ne

ighbors. Children under 12 MUST always wear life vests. Be safe! Don't get a ticket! A person convicted of violating Montana's boating laws or regulations may be fined up to \$500. Our assigned Warden visits Little Bitterroot Lake every week or so in the season and is known to have handed out various fines including some for 200ft NO-WAKE fines for \$150.

#### ***Please Wash and Fertilize somewhere ELSE***

Use of non-biodegradable detergent is not acceptable in or near our LAKE. Do NOT wash your boat at the boat launch. DO NOT take baths in our lake. Detergents of any kind hurt our lake! DO NOT use fertilizers near the lake, especially those with Phosphorus! Phosphorus makes algae. Algae contains toxins!

#### ***PROTECT Our Loon Species***

If you harass our two Loon Pairs bad things happen: They will get spooked easily and leave LBL, with shore wakes you will damage their nests and kill their babies, with the use of pesticides and fertilized you will poison the chicks. These are very sensitive and beautiful creatures. Treat them with respect. Do NOT get closer than 200 Ft.

#### ***Septic BEWARE***

Failing SEPTIC systems can infect our lake with FECAL BACTERIA. Every year check the sludge level. PUMP as necessary. If your system is over 25 years old, it must be monitored. CHECK IT! Do NOT overtax your system, i.e., if you have 50 people using a system designed for 3 bedrooms you may be POISONING our lake. GET A PORTA POTTY! Some people drink our lake water. Many of us swim in it!

#### ***Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) A DANGEROUS THREAT TO YOUR LAKE!***

If someone brings a boat with Eurasian Zebra or Quagga Mussels from an infected lake to ours, the mussels will rapidly multiply and kill our lake's fish and marine life. How? One tiny mussel (smaller than your fingernail) removes nutrients (fish food) from over a liter of water per day. This will leave nothing for the fish to eat. Mussels multiply rapidly and have no natural predators in North America. One mussel produces a million eggs. So far there is no treatment to stop them. Adding to the challenge Eurasian Weeds grow rapidly and will take over the shoreline. *Property values will decrease 13 to 22% if our lake becomes infected!*

#### ***“ATTENTION” become an ACTIVE BOATER an ACTIVE RESIDENT***

*Times have changed DO NOT be a Passive Boater. If you see a boat from “OUT of our AREA” (check their license plate) ... TALK to them: ASK if they have been exposed to AIS - ASK if they have been inspected? If necessary, TELL them it is a \$10,000 fine for transporting AIS! If you observe AIS, you MUST tell us!!! Take a picture of their car and boat license. We will put divers in the water if necessary to eradicate the infestation...*

**You MUST CALL 1 800-847-6668 (Tip Montana)**

# **INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT**

**All Watercraft Entering Montana are REQUIRED to be INSPECTED for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). You can be charged with a felony and fined up to \$5000 if you knowingly or purposely attempt to introduce AIS into Montana waters.**

**The most boats with AIS entering Montana are FROM Minnesota, Arizona, Michigan and California.  
AIS include Quagga and Zebra Mussels / Milfoil Weeds  
Call 1 800 TIP - MONT to Report INFECTED Watercraft**

## **STOP CONTAMINATED WATERCRAFT**

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**Little Bitterroot Lake Association**

## 4) Why is our Lake Water so Low?

### We are in a drought.

As of April 21, 2024, Montana is experiencing D3 drought conditions. The northern half of the state, including northwest Montana, is particularly vulnerable to drought due to a combination of factors, including **Precipitation deficits** - Montana has experienced below average precipitation in some locations for three years in a row. **Warm winter** - Montana experienced a warmer than average winter, which contributed to a record low snowpack in some watersheds.

### We are not in control of the top 8.5 ft of water in our lake.

For the last 100+ years the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project(FIIP) has been in control of the dam and its doors. We are now at 3900.13 ft above sea level (the very bottom of the dam's 8.5 ft. is at 3898 ft). Yes, we are now at the LOWEST level in many years (maybe the lowest since the dam was installed 1916-1918). (See NEWSLETTER No. 5 2023 – On our website for an explanation of how FIIP and our Dam works)

### How do we “influence” our lake water level?

Look to others on how they have dealt with Indian agencies that control their water.

See the article below about Flathead Lake (controlled by the “Energy Keepers”) and NOTE: Flathead Lake levels appear to have improved. How? Concerned organizations and people GOT POLITICAL SUPPORT, including the following: Zinke wrote a letter, Public Interest and Media attention was developed, Various Government agency interest was secured, and more... But all that has limitations because the politicians/flathead organizations/etc. are only “influencers” not lake level controllers. Indian Organizations control the lake level. For reference here is a Flathead Lake Level Article.

<https://dailymontanain.com/2024/05/21/managers-confident-flathead-lake-will-fully-fill-but-say-late-summer-could-pose-challenges/>

## What do we do?

- a) Strengthen our position by continuing to build LBLA. We had approx. 45 members five years ago, now we have over 140. The more members we have – the more influence we have. JOIN LBLA
- b) Partner with politicians. If you were at last summer's annual meeting (Super Attendance – 100 people came!!!) you met our soon to be Montana state representative – Tom Millett. LBLA is working with him. Importantly, our US Congressional Representative's family has a place on our lake.
- c) Be an ACTIVE association. Get attention throughout the state. Many of our lake programs (SEAP, LEAP, AIS, the Clean Team, Decades long water sampling program, and more) are getting lots of interest.
- d) Stay connected with Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP). We are...and have good contacts.
- e) DEFEND the LAKE. Do NOT be shy. Be DETERMINED.

## 5) Loon Education and Awareness Program Report

According to the Montana Loon Society website, generally the loons migrate to the west coast in September and October, although occasionally some will stick around into early November. Even though we're saying goodbye to our feathered friends until next spring, we should all feel great about our efforts to support the local loon population.

As reported at the annual members meeting in August, there were at least 3 loon chicks spotted this year! That's a direct result of all of us doing our part to protect the shoreline, nesting sites, and the loons, both young and adult.

If you're interested in finding out more about the common loon, check out the Montana Loon Society website ([montanaloons.org](http://montanaloons.org)). The website has a lot of information, some fun stories, and links to other pertinent sites. As discussed on the website, each May the Montana Loon Society conducts a loon count across all the lakes on the same day, usually the Saturday closest to May 15<sup>th</sup>. If anyone is interested in doing the counting in May, please let us know at [mshemmer@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org](mailto:mshemmer@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org)

Mike and Shirley Hemmer Manage the Loon Education and Awareness Program (LEAP)

## 6) LBLA Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP)

**We have a Septic Education and Awareness (SEAP) Program! "Managed by Kate Thomas" We will go door to door and help you fully understand: your septic, your lake responsibilities and explain what we can do to help you protect our LAKE from failed septic systems!**

**This program is the "best" in the state of Montana.** We have a full database of all septic systems with their age and type of construction and a fully interactive program with all lake owners! With your help - Little Bitterroot Lake will have the best defense against lake contamination because of all our efforts and our SEAP Program.

For all of us who have septic systems on Little Bitterroot Lake, we have the responsibility to keep them running in good order. We have many options to choose from, from professional inspections (and maintenance) to annual 'do it yourself' checkups. If the homeowner finds that their system is malfunctioning it will be necessary for them to contact a licensed professional with the necessary skills and equipment to repair the system.

**Septic systems older than 15 years are at increased risk of failure and leachate!** Septic leachate occurs when treated water still contains pollutants like nutrients or pathogens. This polluted water can contaminate groundwater and compromise drinking wells, as well as contaminate surface water bodies such as Little Bitterroot Lake.

This can cause illness in humans and pets as well as harmful algal blooms in the lake that cause fish kill (see picture) and diseases in recreators.

The Little Bitterroot Lake Association is here to guide and provide you with access to financial and educational resources to properly maintain your septic system!

### Symptoms of a Failing Septic System

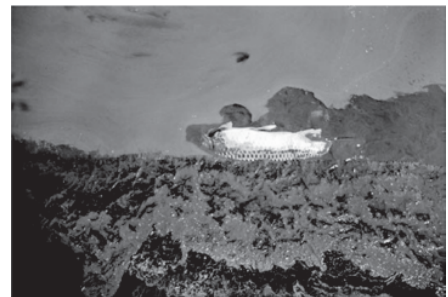
- Backups in toilets and sinks when flushing or doing laundry
- Bright green grass over drainfield
- New vegetation downstream of drainfield
- Foul odors
- Pooling of water or muddy soil around system, in the crawlspace, or basement

### Maintaining Your System

**Septic systems should be inspected at least every 3 years and pumped every 3-5 years.** Systems should

be pumped more frequently with increases in people using the system, amount of wastewater generated, and volume of solids in the system (such as a garbage disposal). Having a smaller septic tank also increases the frequency of pumping.

Drainfields should be inspected for cracked pipes and failure due to rust, frost, heavy loading, excess water from runoff or irrigation, and roots. Improperly treated wastewater can be toxic for children and pets.



Adding large solid waste items (diapers, cigarettes, grease, etc.) can clog the system. Adding large amounts of household chemicals, gasoline, pesticides, paint, and detergents can kill the microbes in the system that treat the wastewater.

Overloading the system drastically increases the chance of failure. This is caused by running multiple appliances at once and having more people using the system than what it is rated for. **A 1-3-bedroom house is intended to accommodate 1000 gallons for 4-5 residents. Housing more people or throwing a party floods the septic system and overwhelms the capacity of the tank and drainfield.** Microbes cannot break down waste products while the system is being flooded, causing sewage backups and untreated effluent into the drainfield.

**If you are throwing a large gathering or housing more than 4-5 people in your home or on your property, consider these steps to minimize septic failure:**

- Rent a portable restroom
- Inspect and pump the tank and drainfield prior to the gathering
- Do food prep and other water extensive cooking ahead of time
- Reduce extra water inputs from laundry and dishwashers a few days before the party
- Ensure external water inputs such as rain gutters and irrigation lines are directed away from the drain field

**Remember it is much more expensive to replace an entire failed system than it is to repair small issues discovered during routine inspections.** Maintenance service typically costs around \$250-\$500.

**You may be eligible for a 50% reimbursement (up to \$200) for pumping and inspection of your system through the Flathead Basin Septic Maintenance Reimbursement Program, funded through a Department of Environmental Quality federal grant.**

Septic Reimbursement Phone and website <https://lakecountyconservationdistrict.org/septic-maint-reimbursement/>  
Questions? Contact the Lake County Conservation District at [flatheadsepticprogram@macdnet.org](mailto:flatheadsepticprogram@macdnet.org) or 406-676-2811 x102

For more information on septic systems and their maintenance, please visit the websites listed or contact Kate Thomas at ([k.thomas@littlebitterlakeassoc.org](mailto:k.thomas@littlebitterlakeassoc.org)):

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

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

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



Little Bitterroot Lake Association  
PO Box 1003  
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