

# LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 4 - July 27, 2024

**Annual meeting – All Welcome - First-Time “Great”**

**Wednesday AUGUST 7<sup>TH</sup> 6pm  
Marion Fire Dept. Community Room (180 Gopher Ln.)**

**\*\*\*Free Catered Dinner\*\*\***



## **I. CALL TO ORDER:**

Welcome: The Association's Purpose is to help educate and demonstrate the importance of good stewardship for Little Bitterroot Lake and the Lake's Watershed. We are an ACTIVE organization and solicit help from the entire community to protect our pristine Little Bitterroot Lake.

## **II. ADDRESS VERIFICATION / CONTRIBUTION**

Verify your address to receive our NEWSLETTERS / Contribution Opportunity

## **III. INTRODUCTIONS:**

BOD, Managers of LEAP/SEAP, John B., The CLEAN TEAM, Special Assists and Guests

## **IV. KEYNOTE SPEAKER:**

Mike Koopal – Mr. Montana Lakes Founder Leader of Whitefish Lake Institute and our “Lake Mentor”! <https://whitefishlake.org>

Welcome - All community members are welcome to join and participate in the LBLA. We are a 40 year old non-profit built to “**Protect our Lake for Future Generations.**” The by-laws state lakeshore residents have voting rights at this meeting.

***\*\*Please Bring This AGENDA To OUR MEETING\****

## **V. REPORTS: OUR “ACTIVE” LBLA – THE YEAR IN REVIEW**

**BOD CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE**-To realize the FULL potential of YOUR contributions! Each BOD member has their specific focus/expertise/responsibilities.

We built a NEW Contribution System – Many tax deductible investment options are now available for your appreciated investments with our LBLA Non-Profit Brokerage Account (at Fidelity)

**LOON Education and Awareness Program** (Our canary in a coal mine) – Mike and Shirley Hemmer

**COMMUNICATION:** Sent out 4 NEWSLETTERS so far in 2024 (6 in 2023)

**Flathead Indian Irrigation Project Report – LBLA in ACTION!**

**Dam Status and Water Level – See Article in this NEWSLETTER**

**Boat Launch Rehab Program – June meeting with Director Chris Maestas Flathead County Parks and Recreation, Rod Taylor (Rod assembled the meeting – Thanks Rod), John Cummings. We surveyed South and North for possible solutions. Will brief the plan at the Annual Meeting.**

**Lakeshore wetlands destruction**

**Lakeshore clear cutting of trees**

**Lakeshore construction**

**Phosphorous Program – Do not Fertilize our lake. Phosphorous + Nitrogen = Algae (Decreases Oxygen that Fish need to Survive!)**

**AMAZING SUPPORT BY YOU!** Your generosity was Outstanding to Newsletter No.1. We appreciate your super response and comments. What do your contributions enable us to do? A LOT. A few examples: New Water sampling, BIG SEAP focus/Jadin /Lake on Patrol/Signage/Bigger Sampling + E Coli /School support/Flathead Indian Irrigation Program - Our LBLA RESPONSE and much more...

**SEAP - OUR DUES AT WORK - Kate Thomas – the manager of our Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP)**

**Your CLEAN TEAM – A brief for you on our inspection and clean-up program going full speed. Involving the NEXT and FUTURE Generations! See The CLEAN TEAM Facebook Lake Hero Post**

**<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3308036096150777/?ref=share&mibextid=qtnXGe>**

# 2023 – 2024 LBLA in ACTION

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Carol at Lions Camp with their NEW sign



Wetlands (LOON Nesting) Destruction



Construction in Lakeshore Protection Zone



**CLEAN TEAM**  
Ash Lee Wagar, Kaden Bristow,  
Lucas Nisson, Owen Snarr



**Boat Launch Rehab - Director of Parks and Recreation Chris Maestas**



**Flathead Indian Irrigation Project**



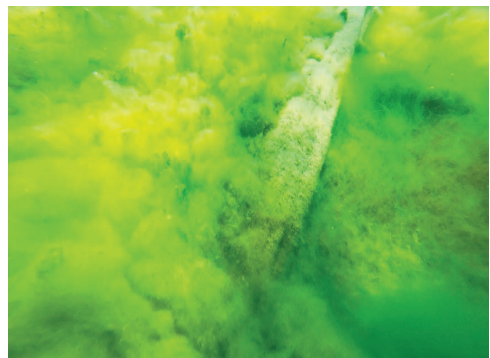
**High Water Mark inside Dam  
3906.5 ft. Above Sea Level**



**Dam West Wall – Poor Condition**



**Flathead Indian Irrigation Project  
"Illegal" Backhoe/Work**



**Algae Bloom in Little Bitterroot Lake  
- SE Shoreline**

**NEW BIG MEMBERSHIP ACHIEVEMENT – 135 by Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023 WOW!**

**We have built IMPORTANT CONNECTIONS with the LOCAL and STATE Agencies – Sheriff, Wardens, DEQ, FWP, DNRC, Director Parks and Rec, Planning and Zoning...How we did it and How it works: You call us, We investigate, We process as necessary, and STAY ON IT!**

**BIG WAKE ISSUE** – The community did not know the rule. So we EDUCATED. Our 200 ft No Wake education is working - Another new sign installed. A big deal for Loon nesting!

**NOISE** really travels on the lake. We are now working on this noise issue. Noise education is in progress. - NEW signs are installed.

**TRASH** – Encourage ALL lake users to clean up after themselves. Planning 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks? A Big Party? – Make a plan a clean up too...

Our lake gets a yearly **PHYSICAL** by John **Babcock OUR Lake Scientist** – We constantly improve our Water Sampling Efforts... This year we continue and expand our *ALGAE Action Plan – NEW SEPTIC SAMPLING*...Based on Algae citizen reports...We are mapping and COMMUNICATING the problem...We continue our Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) lake sampling protocol. Now we are adding Septic Leachate because of YOUR reporting! *Thanks Ward Buckingham!*

Investigating and finding **DEALS FOR YOU!** See Newsletter No. 2 Great Deals for our lake residence...50% off septic service AND Tree Trimming GRANTS for you! SEPTIC PUMPING deal (see below)is helping our SEAP effort by enabling a septic inspection program for those who use it. Forest Grant Program – Avoiding/Mitigating a wildfire – **Call Karli Becher NRCS 406 309-3320** to start the grant process - Luke at Worman Forest Service 406 594-7648 can do the work.

New funding and guidelines for the **Septic Grants will occur on or about July 1, 2024**

<https://lakecountyconservationdistrict.org/septic-maint-reimbursement/> or Call Caroline McDonald at 406 747-0895

Aggressively defended our Lake against gray water dumping, septic violations, zoning violations, and more...because of YOUR reporting! – **Multiple Member/Citizen Reports** – Examples: Laurie and the Guy washing his boat with dawn. Jim and the FIIP backhoe team. Marv and the wetlands destruction. Mark and squatters. Ron and his initiative to get county help fixing the boat launches.

Maintain a Lake Education and Awareness Program which includes the “**LBLA's ACTIVE BOATER PROGRAM**” – Thank You VOLUNTEERS!!!

**South Day Use PROBLEMS** Porta Potty/Trash/Parking/Camping Overnight and Neighbor help...Sheriff Called

**Squatters PROBLEM** – Much improved – Focus primarily on one location- North and East of the Lions Camp there is TRUST Land - DNRC and Warden called and their partnership HELPED!

**Lions Camp** Education Easement/Support/Signs - Thank you - Carol and Rod!

AIS GRANT? – We worked hard last year but did not get it...The Granting Organizations do **NOT** properly support Volunteer Organizations.

**Notice:** Over 49,000 watercraft have been inspected so far this season with **28 mussel fouled vessels** intercepted to date and **205** with aquatic weeds. Our ACTIVE BOATER Program was built here at LBL to stop the “Lone Wolf”! We are trying to take it statewide – The Active Boater Program is like **Crime Stoppers** it WORKS – HOW? IF you see a LAKE CRIME – Call 1 800 TIP - MONT...We have tried to convince the state AIS leadership to a better approach.

YOU ARE ALL **WELCOME TO ATTEND Our monthly online BOD meetings** the first Wednesday of every month 7:30 pm email Dan for call in info...

**\*\*\*We NEED Volunteers and Welcome New BOD members.\*\*\***

#### **VI. BOD and SUPPORT STAFF – YEAR IN REVIEW**

BOD and Support Staff Members will weigh in on their *areas of responsibility*

**Secretary report:** Buck Measure Annual minutes from 2023 reviewed

**Treasury report:** Dan Handlin/Tyler Apgar

**Buck Measure** Secretary Duties

**Robbie Torgerson** V.P LBLA Key Coordinator of all projects!

**Mike LaRoi** Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP)

**Tonia and Tyler Apgar** Newsletter Editing, Accounting

**Steve Moore** Newsletter Writing/Editing/Investigator

**Mike and Shirley Hemmer** Loon Education and Awareness Program (LEAP)

#### **KEY STAFF and Support**

**Kate Thomas** – Manager SEAP

**Jadin Doerr** – Manager LBLA

**CLEAN TEAM** – Lake Caretakers

**John Babcock from “WET”** John will Brief our LAKE Sampling RESULTS and PLAN for 2023/4

**Laurie Shotnik** Brief our LAKE Sampling through the Volunteer Network RESULTS and PLAN for 2024.

## **PRIMARY USE OF YOUR DUES and CONTRIBUTIONS**

### **Educating the Public on Lake Etiquette and Safety**

Our Effort includes: Four NEWSLETTERS this year so far! NEW AIS signs, several 200 foot No Wake zone signs and LOON signs throughout the lake area. By teaching Governing Rules and Regulations we will be ensuring no one is endangering themselves, others, or the lake while out enjoying the water.

### **Continued Lake Water Sampling, Testing, Analysis and Reporting - since 1999**

An expensive process, but important to know how our lake is doing over time and may be affected in years to come. Monitoring nutrients, Chlorophyll, Phosphorus, Fecal Bacteria, Aquatic Invasive Species and more...Each year we hire John Babcock to test, evaluate and report on our lake's purity and quality. The expenditure for these efforts and reports are several thousand dollars. John has been managing this effort for many years.

### **LBLA Active Zoning Violation Initiative - Zoning Education and Awareness Program (ZEAP)**

As a result of your efforts being observant and reporting possible violation issues to your board, several issues were resolved in a positive and appropriate way in the last couple of years. Your board encourages continued efforts and actions in this regard. We work with landowners to protect our lake and the value of your properties. Please report any concerns directly to any board member for attention and resolution. We hope to keep conflicts between neighbors to a minimum. Let your board work on your behalf. **Peaceful Solutions** are the key to protecting our lake.

**We are proud of our Lake Education and Awareness Program (LEAP) Manager -Jadin Doerr!** She is literally **"ALL OVER"** the lake. Many many accomplishments... She built out our EXCEL address list which now it is key to our communication efforts. She manages our boat launch LEAP program - educating the public on how to help protect our lake by converting them from passive boaters to active boaters. She is helping make sure that AIS (aquatic invasive species) stay out of our lake.

**We have built important relationships and actively engage with DNRC, FWP, County Health, Planning & Zoning, LIONS, and Flathead County Sheriff to ensure public land use is appropriate, that our lake is adequately policed, boating laws are enforced, and to make sure individual lots and day-use areas are not over-used and challenge our lake's health.**

We are actively working with the ALL the local organizations to make sure that our lake stays safe and clean for many more generations to come.

**Kate's Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP) - Educating the Public on their Septic Systems and operating Responsibilities.**

We are teaching homeowners about their septic systems and the impact they have on our water quality. Please see our 16 page "How Septic's Work" NEWSLETTER No. 1 and NEWSLETTER No. 4 which explained a 50% off grant program for septic servicing...Many have used this program saving money all the while having their septic inspected! The association is investigating the south side for the source of algae along the shorelines.

**Fertilizer Education and Awareness Program (FEAP)**

Numerous LBLA Newsletters explained fertilizer use. Our best solution is not to fertilize but if you must...Remember, NO phosphorous!!!! Avoid ALL fertilizers near the lake.

**Weed Education and Awareness Program (WEAP)**

We are working with the Flathead County Weed Control District to educate landowners and members how to control noxious weeds by using safe practices.

**Concerns, Comments and Suggestions**

Your Board of Directors are all voluntary, and endeavor to represent you in the best ways 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, so please provide them to any of the following:

**List of Board Members with email addresses below**

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>
Buck Measure	Secretary	<a href="mailto:bmeasure@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org">bmeasure@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org</a>
Tonia & Tyler Apgar	Members at Large	<a href="mailto:tgardner@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org">tgardner@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org</a>
Mike LaRoi	Member at Large	<a href="mailto:mlaroi@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org">mlaroi@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org</a>
Steve Moore	Member at Large	<a href="mailto:smoore@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org">smoore@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org</a>

LBLA P.O 1003 Marion, Mt 59925 / [CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net](mailto:CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net) <http://www.littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org>



## **An Updated Report by Capt. Dan LBLA on the Little Bitterroot Lake (LBL) Dam.**

CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net

Before the Dam was built in 1916-17 (enlarged in 1918) LBL existed at a lower lake level. The Dam built up a level of water capacity that could be managed. The purpose was primarily for irrigation. If the dam ever failed, the lake would return to a level much like it was in 1915.

We had a problem with Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) using a backhoe in our lake last year. Your LBLA took aggressive action, received unanimous county commissioner support, and a promise by FIIP never to do it again. Planning and Zoning are negotiating the fine with FIIP.

Another FIIP Problem - The west wall of the dam is in poor shape (see pictures in this NEWSLETTER). We have advised FIIP and BIA of our concern.

FYI...CSKT has a solar powered lake level measuring system on LBL. See instructions below on how to access their website.

### **Dam Detail**

The dam's drain height is 8.5 ft tall. 8.5 ft of water measured over the entire 3,000-acre lake is 25,000 acre-ft (3,000-acre x 8.5 ft = 25,000 acre-ft).

*Updated Lake Level Discussion* (Some numbers from 2023 and 2024)

On Jun 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, we had 49% Dam Reservoir Capacity in the lake, (measured elevation was 3902.4 Above Sea Level- ASL) which is approx. 12,500 acre-ft of water. As of August 25, 2023, the water level was 3901.3 ASL, that is approx. 9,500 acre-ft of water.

On July 6, 2024 we had 3901.4 ft of water, that is about 3 ft from dam bottom (which is 9,500 acre-ft). Our lake was low last year and on July 6<sup>th</sup> 2024 it is about the same level as it was August 25, 2023. We currently are about 3 ft. (9500 acre-ft.) from bottoming out the dam.

If 9,500 acre-ft of water drains out via the dam, without being refurbished, then the dam will bottom-out. Once the dam capacity has exited the lake the only way to get more water out of the lake would be to pump it over the dam. Allegedly such pumping over the dam event was attempted years ago (a rumor), and your association stopped it.

### **More Details**

In recent conversations with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (CSKT) and Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) I have been told the following:

- 1) The authorized usage of water for Indian irrigation originating 1916 to 1918 from LBL is - 25,000 acre-ft. When the water level gets to 3898ft above sea level (ASL) the dam bottoms out (at 3898 ASL - 25,000 acre-ft. will have been used). FIIP's authorized water use ends at 3898 ASL and with the use of all 25,000 acre-ft. I have been told that the authorized use is what the dam was built for - PERIOD. Allegedly, no more water is "authorized" to be drawn from our lake once the "granted" amount (25,000 acre-ft.) is used. What would that look like? Well subtract 3 ft. from the water level TODAY and visualize the changed lakeshore. You will be looking at LBL circa 1915!
- 2) The dam is checked periodically by CSKT and FIIP. We think they set the height of the dam at 3898 ASL – free flow. However, flow is restricted by downstream canals capacity.
- 3) Regarding the Infamous "Compact". Below is what the Eric Hall at CSKT said to me:  
  
"The Compact does establish minimum reservoir pool levels for FIIP reservoirs (Appendix 3.1), including one off-reservation reservoir (Hubbart, which is on the Little Bitterroot River downstream of Little Bitterroot Lake). The Compact nor does not establish a minimum reservoir pool level for Little Bitterroot Lake so the Ordinance will not impact lake levels there.
- 4) The Tribes installed a solar powered monitoring station on Little Bitterroot Lake for informational purposes, which reports the lake water level by elevation. That real-time data can be accessed by going to the CSKT Water Data Web Portal (<https://cskt.aquaticinformatics.net/Data>), and *changing the Parameter field at the top from 'Discharge' to 'Lake/res elevation.*

**Comments by Dan:** It is very interesting that Eric said we would not be impacted by the Compact. I disagree.

We have a **good working relationship** with Skye Cooley and Eric Hall at FIIP.

Over the years sediment has deposited in front of the dam limiting the depth of water at the intake of the dam.

A major problem (previously discussed) event (unpermitted dirty backhoe in the water) by FIIP occurred last fall and it was reported to you. We prevailed in our challenge to FIIP. Commissioners supported LBLA and ordered FIIP BE FINED. FIIP promised never to do it again and apologized to your LBLA President.

Who manages/owns the water capacity of LBL? Short Answer (for over the last 100 years) is the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project of the Flathead Indian Reservation (FIIP). But it is not quite that simple – please see additional explanation below.

### **Definitions, Contact Information and Web Sites (for more detail):**

CSKT - Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (406 885-2888)

BIA - Bureau of Indian Affairs: protects trust assets between the United States and Native American Tribes

FIIP - Flathead Indian Irrigation Project: manages irrigation canals and reservoirs related to the Flathead Reservation (406 745-2661)

DNRC - MT Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation: Oversees the states natural resources including issuing and managing water rights in Montana

FRWMB – The Flathead Reservation Water Management Board: – implements the CSKT-MT Compact including issuing water rights on the Flathead Reservation (406 201-2532)

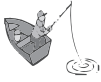
- [Flathead Reservation Water Management Board \(mt.gov\)](http://mt.gov)

CSKT-MT Compact – The Compact: a water rights agreement between the State of Montana, CSKT, and the United States.

- For more information: <https://dnrc.mt.gov/Water-Resources/Compacts/Flathead-Compact>
- Story and history of the Compact and the Ordinance: [The CSKT Water Compact has been enacted \(arcgis.com\)](http://arcgis.com)

### **Running the water “MAZE”:**

- 1) CSKT has reserved water through negotiations outlined in the Compact. CSKT has no direct control over lake levels of LBL – FIIP does...
- 2) 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.
- 3) In 2022, CSKT installed a monitoring system on LBL. **Anyone can view the lake level at any time** via a web Portal <https://cskt.aquaticinformatics.net/Data>. Important: Just change the parameter field at the top from “discharge” to “Lake/res elevation.”
- 4) 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.



Little Bitterroot Lake Association  
 PO Box 1003  
 Marion, MT 59925

MARK YOUR CALENDARS  
 \* EVERYONE IS INVITED\*

HAVEN'T PAID DUES DON'T WORRY  
 \* FIRST TIME – GREAT!\*

Annual meeting – All Welcome

Wednesday, AUGUST 7th, 6pm

Firehall Community Room

Name  
 Address  
 City, State Zip

**ANNUAL DUES \$50 - THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS**

**You are making a HUGE DIFFERENCE!**

**Now you can NOW contribute STOCK to LBLA – Tax Deductible**

We have many CHALLENGES to our LAKE! For example: Aquatic Invasive Species, Zoning Violations, Trash, Algae, Shore Degradation, Noise, and Septic Leachate. All can hurt lake quality, limit fishing, challenge our tranquility, and decrease our property values. LBLA BOD is aggressively taking on many challenges to our pristine lake. Your contributions improve our efforts and enable us to continue to have mutual enjoyment of our lake. You can make your contributions now or at any time during the year. We maintain a record of each contribution. Our reporting is accurate. Remember, your contributions whether large or small are tax deductible because we are organized under Section 501(C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



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

**PLEASE MAIL TO: LBLA - PO BOX 1003 - MARION, MT. 59925**

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

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

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

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

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