MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Annual Meeting
August 6th Wednesday, 630pm at the Marion Fire Hall

Little Bitterroot Lake Association
"Spring" Newsletter No. 2 Apr 2025

Greetings LBLA Members and Members-To-Be,

Spring is a time of ACTIVITY. At LBLA we have a huge amount of activity. I will explain BUT before I do I have a REQUEST. If you are reading this and have NOT joined (or sent in your dues)…

Please JOIN Today!

LBLA started in 1935. Its purpose is to do GOOD for our lake. We support, educate, build awareness and try to positively influence county and state organizations to do the right things for our lake. We ask everyone to make it a priority to TAKE CARE OF THE LAKE and all the critters who live here with us!

It is time YOU JOINED! Don't just let others support this effort – DO YOUR PART - join the CARING TEAM of LBLA Members. It is the right thing to do…Please send in the membership form (at the end of this NEWSLETTER) with your donation – TODAY!
Big challenges face us and there is STRENGTH in numbers. Let's go! Join up! It is the right thing to do…

We NEED You!

A partial list of LBLA activities and accomplishments:

- LBLA proudly partnered with Rep Tom Millett to submit and testify (Capt Dan testified for the bill) for HR-242. Tom is our outstanding New House Representative (HR-2). This bill increases the fines for bringing Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) from "Out-Of-State" into Montana. So many states are infected with AIS but NOT Montana. We NEED to stop them from infecting us!

- A Huge amount of work by Lauren Shotnik and Kate Thomas went into the construction of a $20,000 GRANT request. We are hoping to use this money to work on our urgent septic issues at the lake! Our goal is to have the best safe septic program in Montana
- Your LBLA has led the charge to IMPROVE the DEFENSE of Montana's lakes, rivers and streams from Aquatic Invasive Species (primarily Quagga and Zebra Mussels). LBLA representatives (Capt Dan and Steve Moore) met on March 19th with Tom Woolf (State AIS Manager) and Phil Matson (Flathead BIO Station Manager and Coordinator of the AIS Western Montana Conservation Commission). We explained that our current Montana AIS defense system was INADEQUET and detailed our LBLA PLAN (we worked a ton on this…) that is a Multi-Layered Defense Program. We are now sending the Governor a letter (SEE NEXT PAGE) advising him of our problematic state program and explaining a better AIS Multi-Layered Defense Program. Your LBLA is going to the top to get ACTION. Thank you *Steve Moore* for your support on this important LBLA initiative.
- LBLA has extensively lobbied and worked with the county to fix the boat launches. There is progress: A permit from planning and zoning is "in the works", when received we will have a vote by the commissioners, then work by the county begins this spring on the North Launch. The South is still in the planning stage.

Thank You ALL for caring, keep in contact (call ANYTIME) and enjoy our beautiful lake!

(BOD) Capt Dan, Robbie Torgerson, Steve Moore, Mike/Shirley Hemmer, Buck Measure, Tonia/Tyler Apgar, Mike LaRoi

(STAFF and SUPPORT) Jadin Doerr, Kate Thomas, John Babcock, Lauren Shotnik, Chris Saucier

A Letter from LBLA to Governor Gianforte
(Sent Thursday April 3rd)

Dear Governor Gianforte,

Regarding the protection and defense of Montana's nature and way of life – This may be one of the most important letters you receive. I will be blunt.

- *We appreciate the job you are doing!*
- *We totally respect the job FWP and Tom Woolf have done to build our AIS programs from nothing. Tom especially has a keen desire to improve our AIS Defense Program.*
- *There are current limitations in funding and high-level support that severely limit our AIS defense capability.*
- *(FACT) Your Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Defense Program (particularly Quagga and Zebra Mussels) is INADEQUATE.*
- *There is a good chance that our lakes, rivers and streams will be "infected" with AIS Mussels while you are serving your term. (It just happened in Idaho-AIS are getting closer and more threating).*
- *It would be a sad circumstance for your administration (for all the good you have done…) to be known as the one that let them get through and allowed the devastation of our beautiful waterbodies.*

- *We MUST expedite and expand your understanding of the significant gaps in our AIS Defense and give you specific tasking that will save Montana from being infected with AIS.*
- *We must build a robust Aquatic Invasive Species (focused on Zebra and Quagga Mussels) Multi-Layer Defense System (AIS – MLD System).*
- *This threat is REAL, will forever be destructive to our "Last Best Place" and needs immediate attention.*
- *Please allow me (and Little Bitterroot Lake Association Representatives) time with you as soon as possible to discuss and present how to save our precious waterbodies from this destructive invasion by using an improved AIS MLD System (built through partnerships with current stakeholders and newly developed technology). We have designed elements of a better Defense System – that if applied NOW, gives us a much better chance to save our beautiful Montana for future generations. If we do NOT act - AIS Mussels will surely infect us like so many other states. Presently, we do NOT have an adequate AIS Multi-Layer Defense System. What we have WILL fail without YOUR action.*

Respectfully,

Capt. Dan Handlin

President, Little Bitterroot Lake Association(LBLA) "A Non-Profit - Serving to Protect Little Bitterroot Lake for Future Generations since 1935 "
612 251 3778 / 406 854 9444
CaptainDanNWA@centurytel.net

TWO BIG OPPORTUNTIES

*(1) "**Septic Pumping** Renewed Clean Water Act Grant Funding"* – **SAVE up to $200 - ACT NOW**
Limited FUNDS are available, and you MUST APPLY "first" before you PUMP. This is Grant MONEY for pumping YOUR Septic System. This is a great deal. YOU MUST APPLY NOW. See QR code and details below in this Spring NEWSLETTER.

AND

(2) LAST YEAR OF AVAILABILITY!!! **Grant MONEY for Forest Thinning is available - ACT NOW**. The Kalispell Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has targeted our area and is offering YOU financial INCENTIVES to help pay for forest thinning…Must apply this year - if approved you can do the work this year or next year.
DON'T WAIT.
Weed Eradication Money may be available too.

PROGRAM DETAILS (Save $$$)

(1) Reimbursement for "Shoreline" Septic Maintenance

Your LBLA Association, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) and the Flathead Basin Commission are pleased to announce renewed 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!

Why Maintain Your Septic System?

- ***Save money – prevent backups & extend the life of your system***
- ***Safeguard your health & drinking water***
- ***Help keep local streams & lakes clean***

Septic system repairs and replacements can be costly. Regular maintenance can help keep your system functioning properly and help extend its life. Properly maintained systems can help keep your drinking water clean and reduce pollution into nearby streams and lakes.

To maximize water quality benefits, the Flathead Basin Septic Maintenance Program is offering cost-share funding to help cover the cost of septic pumping for systems located within 500 feet of a lake or stream. The program will prioritize septic systems using these three criteria: near impaired waters, length of time since last pumping, and age of overall system.

By offering cost-share benefits, we hope to raise awareness and encourage pumping and good septic system maintenance to ultimately lead to a healthier watershed for all who enjoy this unique area.

In addition to this cost-share program, we have resources available including a list of local Septic Pumping Professionals, a link to DEQ's Impaired

Waterways Interactive Map, and various publications with information that can help you extend the life of your septic system.

Basic Eligibility Criteria:

- **You MUST apply BEFORE you pump!**
- **Own property in Lake or Flathead County that is supported by an individual septic system**
- **Have NOT had the septic system pumped for at least 3 years**
- **Have a septic system located LESS THAN 500 feet from surface water *(see application for details)***

Thank you to everyone who has participated in this program. By maintaining your septic system, you help protect our fragile watershed!

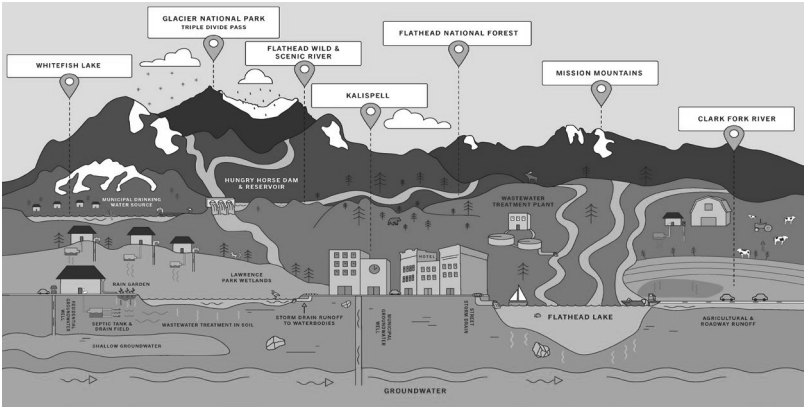
Access Application and Information Here

QR CODE FOR APPLICATION

Submit applications, questions and inquiries to:
Caroline McDonald, Conservation Coordinator
flatheadsepticprogram@macdnet.org
406-676-2811 x102 Lake County Conservation District 64352 US Highway 93, Ronan, MT 59864

The applicant will be notified of their application approval or denial within 2 weeks of submission. Following a completed septic pumping and inspection, a receipt from the Septic Pumping Contractor/Entity as well as a complete Septic Reporting Form must be submitted in order to receive reimbursement.

Thank you for helping protect Montana's treasured waters!



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THANK YOU!!!

Septic Companies…some pump others do install/maintence.
(Some previously *contributed* to our NEWSLETTER)

<u>Mel's Pumping</u> 752-5318
<u>Pedersen Pumping</u> 752-4321
<u>A-1 Sanitation</u> 755-3938
<u>Murphy's Excavating 854-2210</u>
<u>Mountain State Construction</u> 212-4787
<u>Surefire Septic Mx</u>. 756-1806

STOP ALGEA GROWTH
PUMP YOUR SEPTIC–KEEP OUR LAKE BEAUTIFUL

PROGRAM DETAILS (Save $$$)

(2) Reimbursement NRCS Forest Thinning INCENTIVE Program

The Kalispell Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is continuing to offer a financial incentive GRANT program for forest landowners in the Little Bitterroot Lake Area.

Your forest could greatly benefit from their **science-based approach to thinning** which promotes forest health, reduces wildfire hazards, 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.**

To talk to the GRANT folks at NRCS and get details: **Call Karli Becher** at 406 309 3320 Karli.becher@usda.gov **She is great and will help you build a Forest Stewardship Plan**

If you have already received funding and are seeking a bid for work, **CRW Resources 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 highdivideforestry@gmail.com**

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KEEP THE "P" OUT OF LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE

AVOID USING ANY FERTILIZER NEAR OUR LAKE

(If you must – "ONLY" use PHOSPHORUS FREE)

LAWN AND PLANT FERTILIZERS CONTAINING PHOSPHORUS IN THEIR CHEMISTRY ARE HARMFUL TO LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE. PHOSPHORUS IN FERTILIZERS WASHES OFF FERTIILIZED LAWNS AND PLANTS OF LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS AND IS LEACHED INTO THE LAKE. DON'T DO IT!

HARMFUL EFFECTS OF PHOSPHORUS OVERLOADING OUR LAKE FROM FERTILIZERS

1. Aquatic plants absorb dissolved nutrient Phosphorus like it is sugar laced dessert. *One pound of Phosphorus can produce 500 pounds of blue green algae*, and results in unwanted algal blooms.
2. A sharp decline in water clarity results.
3. Algal blooms and accelerated growth of other aquatic plants in the lake dramatically decrease oxygen levels in the lake which is harmful to fish and other animals which inhabit the lake.
4. Unwanted fish and bacteria thrive in Phosphorus polluted low oxygenated lake water.
5. The lake becomes less desirable for recreational purposes such as swimming, boating, and fishing.

PROACTIVE MEASURES YOU CAN TAKE TO KEEP PHOSPHORUS OUT OF OUR LAKE

1. If you must…Use Phosphorus free (w/Slow-Release Nitrogen) fertilizer.
2. Use fertilizer as directed in small amounts being sure to not over fertilize.
3. Do not fertilize directly by the lakeshore.
4. Limit the number of times you fertilize to once/year or not at all.
5. The best time to fertilize is in spring around Easter or fall, a couple of weeks after Labor Day.
6. Plant bushes and shrubs close to the lake to decrease and slow the flow of water runoff.
7. Remove grass clippings and other decomposing organic material close to the lake.
8. Encourage friends and neighbors to buy Phosphorus Free (w/Slow-Release Nitrogen) fertilizer.
9. Encourage local stores with fertilizer to stock Phosphorus Free (w/Slow-Release Nitrogen) fertilizer.
10. If you use a lawn care service do NOT allow them to treat your lawn with phosphorous chemicals!

FERTILIZER NUMBERING-ZER0 in the middle means phosphorus free!

BUY "ONLY" PHOSPHORUS FREE with Slow-Release NITROGEN!

The "P" stands for phosphorus. It is one of the most polluting substances in lakes across the United States and is a serious potential threat to Little Bitterroot Lake. Presently, phosphorus levels in Little Bitterroot Lake are stable, but with leaking septic systems, new development of property surrounding the lake, large tracts of "disturbed bare land", excessive invasive noxious weeds, and overuse of phosphorus in fertilizers on grasses and other plants, the threat to Little Bitterroot Lake becomes very real. If we educate ourselves, and care about keeping Little Bitterroot Lake clean and pristine, and act proactively we can contain the potential hazards of phosphorus pollution in our lake.

This short essay will give the reader a basic, easy to understand approach about fertilizers and their dangers to the lake in what is actually a very complicated complex bio-chemical subject.

Most property owners try to eradicate and control invasive noxious weeds and replace them with grass and other plants. These grasses and plants need nutrients for their survival. There are many nutrients found in the natural ecosystem, but the most important ones for healthy plants are in the form of Nitrogen (nitrates, nitrites, ammonia), Phosphorus (phosphates), and Potassium (apatite, potash). *Nitrogen (N*) is used by plants in a process called photosynthesis to produce chlorophyll, which aids in plant growth and greens up lawns, and for aquatic plants nitrogen makes the water look green. *Phosphorus (P)* is important in the development of healthy roots and is also important during seeding. *Potassium (K)* aids in the

general health of plants, the formation of chlorophyll, and in disease immunity. In small quantities these nutrients are good for the overall health of the Little Bitterroot Lake ecosystem. Environmental problems in the lake begin when fertilizers containing excessive amounts of these nutrients end up in the lake.

Nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium are the most important ingredients in any fertilizer. If the proper fertilizer is selected and used in small amounts, they may have a low impact on the lake, but over fertilization of grass and plants can have devastating environmental effects on any lake, including Little Bitterroot Lake. The pollution problems created by fertilizer used by unknowing property owners around Little Bitterroot Lake could be catastrophic to the environmental integrity of the lake.

The following is a worst-case scenario for a future Little Bitterroot Lake

Dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus in fertilizers are leached from fertilized grass and plants from rain and snow melt into the lake. Soluble phosphates containing phosphorus are also released into the soil from the decomposition of grasses and other plants, then leached into the lake by rain and melted water from snow. Aquatic plants which include blue green algae and invasive noxious Eurasian watermilfoil absorb these nutrients into their cells providing growth and other important plant functions.

The environmental problems involving phosphorus begin when the lake becomes over-loaded with intolerable levels of dissolved phosphorus (phosphate, PO4). Aquatic plants absorb dissolved phosphorus like sharks in a food frenzy. The result of this pollution produces blue green algal blooms and a proliferation of all aquatic plants in the lake.

It is estimated that one pound of phosphorus can produce about 500 pounds of blue green algae! The lake becomes eutrophic, that is the lake is over saturated with nutrients, especially phosphorus. When a lake is in eutrophic state, aquatic plants deplete dissolved oxygen to very low levels resulting in negative unwanted shifts to the natural aquatic plants and animals which inhabit the lake. If phosphorus pollution is extreme, naturally desired species rapidly decline or disappear from the lake while undesirable species thrive. Water clarity would greatly decrease taking on an unhealthy green appearance along the shoreline. Fish would often be seen belly-up in the water, dead or fighting for oxygen. In addition, once a lake is heavily polluted with phosphorus it is extremely difficult to get phosphorous levels back to normal, often showing phosphorus pollution retention periods greater than fifteen years!

Is this what we want for Little Bitterroot Lake? The answer is obvious - NO. Can Little Bitterroot Lake realistically change like the lake depicted above? YES.

Water quality monitoring of Little Bitterroot Lake by Water & Environmental technologies and now by John Babcock since 2004 shows that although phosphorus levels in Little Bitterroot Lake are presently low and stable, nitrogen levels have "significantly risen" since 2012. Nitrogen levels in the lake are presently high enough for rapid algae growth in the lake, but by itself probably will not produce algal blooms, even with more additions of nitrogen. There is also a relationship between nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations. Increased nitrogen levels in Little Bitterroot Lake have not yet produced large algal blooms and by itself probably will not, but if phosphorus levels increase as nitrogen levels continue to increase, a tipping point will soon be reached limiting any further addition of phosphorus to the lake. The lake becomes what is termed a "phosphorus limited lake". Little Bitterroot Lake is

presently phosphorus limited. Increased concentrations of nitrogen in the water decreases the amount of phosphorus the lake can hold to reach its tipping point limit and any increase in phosphorus could directly cause algal blooms in the water to explode. Oxygen levels in the lake would also decrease (eutrophication) having negative effects on the lake.

Little Bitterroot Lake is approaching that limit.

What can individual property owners proactively do to decrease or at least help stabilize increased phosphorus in Little Bitterroot Lake? One very important thing we all could do to help with this serious developing problem would be to choose the correct fertilizer to use when fertilizing property. Choose a 0 % phosphorus free fertilizer. The way you can tell if the fertilizer is phosphorus free is by the 3 numbers on the label on the fertilizer bag. For example: 20 – 0 - 5. These numbers indicate the % by weight of the nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K) in the bag of fertilizer. In this example, a 100-pound bag of fertilizer would have 20 pounds of N, 0 pounds of P free, and 5 pounds of K in the fertilizer. The middle number needs to be zero. REMEMBER: USE PHOSPHORUS FREE FERTILIZER. The remaining 75 pounds would be inert filler ingredients.

What else can we do to protect Little Bitterroot Lake? Use fertilizer in small amounts as instructed. Fertilize less by the lake – better yet **DO NOT fertilize by the lake**! Limit the number of times per year in which you fertilize to once per year or in some years not at all. The best time of year to fertilize is around Easter (spring) or shortly after Labor Day to October (fall). Avoid fertilizing in summer. Try to purchase organic insoluble nitrogen fertilizer that is phosphorous free because they decompose into soluble

plant nutrients much slower than soluble chemical nitrogen fertilizers. Plant bushes and shrubs close to the lake to decrease and slow the flow of water runoff. Remove grass clippings and other decomposing organic plant material because it decomposes into soluble phosphorus phosphate harmful to the lake. Encourage your lake friends and neighbors to buy phosphorus free fertilizer. Encourage agricultural/country stores and treatment companies to stock/use phosphorus free fertilizer to help protect and save our area lakes from the dangers that phosphorus pollution creates.

In summary, there are many environmental issues attacking Little Bitterroot Lake. Phosphorus in fertilizers is a serious problem that we as individual property owners can eliminate and control if we proactively select and properly use phosphorus free fertilizer when using fertilizer on our property. Knowledge and awareness of these environmental issues is important if we expect to make a cohesive proactive plan to protect Little Bitterroot Lake. Why should we wait for Little Bitterroot Lake to suffer the same environmental problems that so many lakes in the Midwest and Eastern United States have been affected by? **Avoid fertilizing. If you must fertilize make the right choice: use phosphorus free fertilizer (with slow-release nitrogen).**

SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR GREATER DETAIL

1. Little Bitterroot Lake Water Quality Monitoring Program 2020 Annual Report, Water and Environmental Technologies, Butte, Montana
2. The Montana Lake Book, Whitefish Lake Institute
3. Ted Peters, Director, Geneva Lake Environmental Agency (GLEA), Phosphorus Free Fertilizer, 2009

Welcome BACK!!!

Alaska Andy reported from the South Side on April 4th the sighting of Loons. The Loon is precious to have on LBL. Only small populations are found in Northern Montana. PLEASE give them space to nest in the shoreline grassland areas.
Do NOT disturb or landscape our critical shoreline area.

Also seen by Andy - Cranes, Herons, Osprey and Eagles.

LBL is truly an important bird area. Please help protect them. This is their home too!
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Interested in the DAM, Flathead Irrigation Project, Lake Level, Our Septic Program, and more?

SEE OUR LIBRARY of NEWSLETTERS on the LBLA Website!

3 Ways to find our website?

1) Do a Google search for Little Bitterroot Lake Association
2) https://littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org/index2.html
3) Scan our NEW Website QR Code (below)

Our LBLA BOD Lead Committees manage important areas and programs:

- The Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP) -Kate Thomas
- The Lake Education and Awareness Program(LEAP) – Jadin Doerr
- The Loon Education and Awareness Program – Mike and Shirley Hemmer
- The Lake Water Sampling Program – John Babcock
- The Montana Political Liaison and Partnership Initiative – Tom Millett and Capt Dan
- The Grant Writing Committee – Laurie Shotnik and Kate Thomas
- The Clean Team Program – Jadin Doerr and Capt Dan
- The Editorial Board for Communication – Robbie Torgerson, Steve Moore, Capt Dan
- The County Land Use Advisory Committee – Mike Hemmer
- Lot 5 (Just West of the DAM) Rehabilitation Program – Charles Gieschen and Capt Dan
- The Western Montana Conservation Commission Membership – Capt Dan
- Financial Advisory Committee – Tyler Apgar
- Accountant Support – Tom Torgerson

<u>Want to JOIN a committee?</u>
Sign up with your Contribution Form

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ALL HANDS-ON DECK CONTRIBUTION FORM

BECOME AN LBLA MEMBER TODAY

Tax Deductible - Minimum Contribution Request is $50

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

NAME(S)_____CONTRIBUTION_____

MAILING ADDRESS_____

_____

LAKE ADDRESS_____

_____

EMAIL ADDRESS(S)_____

PHONE NUMBER(S) _____CELL(S) _____

___ I would be interested in serving on the Board of Directors

___I would be interested in serving on an LBLA Committee (Clean Team Leader, Septic Education, Loon Preservation, Water Sampling, etc.)

___ I would be interested in occasionally volunteering my time for projects undertaken by this Association (water testing, county meeting attendance, writing and editing material, research etc.)

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Please send the enclosed postcard to the County Commissioner concerning our boat launches.