

‘LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No.3 2025

Annual meeting – All Welcome

**Fire Hall Community Room
Gopher Ln.**

Wednesday, August 6, 2025, 6:00 PM

*****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,

IV. KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

County Commissioner Randy Brodehl

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

Letter from the President

Greetings LBLA contributors and all who live at LBL. This is your annual LBLA meeting "notice" newsletter. Last year over 100 of you attended our lake meeting. As always, the meeting is held the 1st Wednesday of August. This year it falls on August 6th, at 6pm at the community room in the Marion rural fire dept on Gopher lane. Dinner will be provided. This is a meeting not to be missed. Dynamic things are happening, including the award of a \$20,000 grant (+\$5000 matching funds) for our "best in class" septic education and awareness program (SEAP). Thank you Kate Thomas and Lauren Shotnik for working so diligently to make that happen, and welcome Julia Maxwell (Marion school principal) who has signed on to manage this three-year effort. More details will be provided at the annual meeting, so don't miss it. A dynamic effort launched in recent years to partner with local politicians has proven highly successful. LBLA testified before a Montana house committee supporting our representative Tom Millett's HR242 which increased the fines on boaters not stopping at AIS check stations. Well done Tom, and thank you for your huge support of LBLA. At our annual meeting this year, our keynote speaker will be county commissioner Randy Brodehl. Randy was a great help taking on Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) when they entered our lake to do backhoe work on the dam. They did not properly complete a work permit and were fined by Planning and Zoning (more on this later). There is so much more to cover, please see detailed agenda and bring your questions and issues too!

Your LBLA is dynamic, which is now known throughout the state. Your contributions fuel this effort – please continue your generosity, and if you're not yet a member – join up! Support our efforts to save our lake for future generations.

Respectfully,
Captain Dan Handlin

Big Picture Annual Mtg Agenda Outline

- **LBLA Political Alliance Initiative – (Robbie)**
 - Tom Millett HR 242 plus
 - Randy Brodehl
 - Congressman Zinke Coordination
 - CAMAS Irrigators
 - Governor Letter/AIS initiative
 - Skye Cooley – new consultant
- **\$20,000 SEAP Grant (+\$5000 Matching) (Kate and Julie)**
 - 3 year program over next 4 Summers
 - House to House education
 - Water Sampling off your docks
 - Septic information database
 - Website developed for our program so other lake associations can use it
- **Dues and Membership Report (Robbie)**
 - Excellent contributions and membership (140+)
 - Fidelity non-profit brokerage account capability
- **Governor's multi-layered AIS defense program (Steve)**
- **Water Sampling (John Babcock)**
- **Clean Team Report (Steve/Jadin)**
- **Keep Calling Dan (Robbie)**
- **Loons (Mike Hemmer)**
- **Volunteers (Robbie) Join BOD/Help Jadin's LEAP**

ADDITIONAL REPORTS:

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 Option – Many tax deductible investment options are now available for your appreciated investments with our LBLA Non-Profit Brokerage Account

COMMUNICATION: Sent out 3 NEWSLETTERS so far in 2025 (6 in 2023/5 in 2024)

AMAZING SUPPORT BY YOU! Your generosity was Outstanding to Newsletter No.1 We appreciate your super response and comments.

We have built IMPORTANT CONNECTIONS with the LOCAL and STATE Agencies – Sheriff, Wardens, DEQ (Joe Russell) , FWP, DNRC, Planning and Zoning, a whole page of connections...How we did it and How it works: You call us, We investigate, We process as necessary, and **STAY ON IT!**

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

Our lake gets a yearly PHYSICAL – 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!*

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 is helping our SEAP effort by enabling a septic inspection program for those who use it. Forest Grant Program – Avoiding/Mitigating a wildfire – See Luke, Sean, Robert Dunn - Thanks Luke at Worman Forest Management for your contribution!

Why is the lake not higher? What is going on with the Dam. We want answers. Indian Water USE PROBLEM – See Water Court CASE – (Remember the Mine Problem – and our response was swift and effective...No inspectors on site, trashing the mountain – We got the inspectors to see the problem and the TRUTH. They even droned the watershed.) We are working on our water problem.(See updated article below)

Aggressively defended our Lake against gray water dumping, septic violations, zoning violations, and more...because of YOUR reporting! – Multiple Citizen Reports – An example: Antifreeze

Contamination and BOD Clean-up – *We will discuss the problem at the Annual Meeting (SEE OUR YEARLY NEWSLETTER)*

Maintain a Lake Education and Awareness Program

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

Squatters PROBLEM dealt with a partner ship with wardens.

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

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

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 2024 reviewed

Treasury report: Dan Handlin/Tyler Apgar

Buck Measure Secretary Duties

Robbie Torgerson V.P LBLA Key Coordinator of all projects! COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COODINATOR

Mike LaRoi Septic Education and Awareness Program (SEAP)

Tonia and Tyler Apgar Newsletter Editing, Accounting

Steve Moore Newsletter Writing/Editing

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

KEY STAFF

Kate Thomas – Manager SEAP

Julie Maxwell – Manager SEAP GRANT

Jadin Doerr – Manager LBLA

CLEAN TEAM – Lake Caretakers

OUR CONTRACTOR for LAKE TESTING and KEY VOLUNTEER

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

PRIMARY USE OF YOUR DUES and CONTRIBUTIONS

Educating the Public on Lake Etiquette and Safety

Our Effort includes: 11 NEWSLETTERS since 2023! NEW AIS signs, several Loon, 200 foot No Wake and Noise 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. The amount of people breaking that 200 ft No Wake rule has gone down drastically helping to protect our shorelines and those enjoying the lake.

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 Water & Environmental Technologies (WET) to test, evaluate and report on our lake's purity and quality. The expenditure for these efforts and reports are several thousand dollars. John Babcock 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 immensely proud of our Lake Education and Awareness Program (LEAP) Manager - Jadin Doerr! She is literally “ALL OVER our lake!”

She is a WONDERFUL active asset to our efforts! So 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 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.

As mentioned We WON a \$20,000 SEAP GRANT this year !!! Wow...We are joined by Principal Julie Maxwell who with Kate Thomas will built and deploy outstanding new multidimensional Septic Education and Awareness Program!!! What to help? We will be teaching homeowners about their septic systems and the impact they may have on our water quality. Please see our "How Septic's Work" NEWSLETTERS (in our website) 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)

Newsletter No. 2 2025 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 to inform landowners and members how to control noxious weeds by using safe practices. Newsletter No. 3 this year, was dedicated to explaining Weed control responsibilities and methods.

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	dhandlin@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org
Rob Torgerson	Vice President	rtorgerson@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org
Buck Measure	Secretary	bmeasure@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org
Tonia & Tyler Apgar	Members at Large	tgardner@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org
Mike LaRoi	Member at Large	mlaroi@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org
Steve Moore		

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

LAKE ADVISORY FLYER – 2025

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 2025

Did you know? All must observe a 200 ft. NO WAKE ZONE from shore. Wakes blast docks, boats and destroy shorelines. Wakes even “kill” Loon chicks because their nests are on wetland shoreline.

Motorboats and PWC max noise levels are 85 decibels within 50ft. Noise offends critters and neighbors.

Children under 12 MUST wear life vests at ALL times. 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 \$150 No Wake and Noise FINES.

Wash and Fertilize somewhere ELSE

Use of ANY detergent is unacceptable 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 contain toxins!

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! Some people drink our lake water. Many of us swim in it!

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

LEARN SOMETHING: *READ THE FINE PRINT!* 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. Infected: Noxon, Cabinet Gorge, Pend Oreille, the Kootenai, Lake Mead, the Eastern US and more... *Property values will decrease 13 to 19% if our lake becomes infected!*

“ATTENTION” BECOME AN ACTIVE BOATER

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!!! We will put divers in the water if necessary to eradicate the infestation...Be a Lake CRIMESTOPPER - You MUST CALL 1 800-TIP-MONT.

LBLA P.O 1003 Marion, Mt 59925 / dhandlin@littlebitterrootlakeassoc.org / (612)251-3778 /
<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.

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).

Lake Level Discussion (Some numbers from 2023 and 2024)

On Jun 11th, 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).

For 2025 the lake is at 3900 ft.

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 on that story later – Still investigating.

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 (Note: No written documents received on item 1 below):

- 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 3898 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). But Little Bitterroot Lake is not part of the FIIP infrastructure, and the Compact does not establish a minimum reservoir pool level for Little Bitterroot Lake so the Ordinance will not impact lake levels there.

That said, the Tribes did install a 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. Hope that helps. Let us know if additional info is needed,

Eric Hull

Water Rights Specialist

CSKT Natural Resources Department”

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

Additional Information: I surveyed the dam in 2025. Currently we are approximately 1ft from the bottom of the dam’s capacity according to the CSKT daily measurement system. (See how YOU can daily view the lake level below). A look at the intake of the dam shows maybe a foot or two to go NOT 3. Over the years sediment has deposited in front of the dam limiting the depth of water at the intake of the dam.

In conclusion: 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 \(mt.gov\)](https://mt.gov/flathead-reservation-water-management-board)

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 \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com/story/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 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.”
- 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.

ANNUAL DUES Min REQUEST \$50

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS

You are making a HUGE DIFFERENCE!

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 _____

YES - I WILL VOLUNTEER – My interest is to Serve On --BOD/Committee/Limited Support (circle one)



Little Bitterroot Lake Association
PO Box 1003
Marion, MT 59925

Annual Meeting

Please Attend !!!

Wednesday August 6th - 6pm

Fire Hall Community Room

BIG AGENDA

<<First>> <<Last>>

<<Address>>

<<City>>, <<State>> <<Zip>>

<<Country>>