



Welcome to the Northwestern Montana Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Network website.

Citizen scientists have long been part of water quality data collection in the Flathead Basin. One of the first citizen water monitoring programs was created in the early 1990's by the Flathead Basin Commission and the University of Montana Flathead Lake Biological Station on Flathead Lake. As part of my graduate program project for the University of Denver, in Colorado a new program was launched in 2008. Through a unique partnership between Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) and the Whitefish Lake Institute (WLI) the "Whitefish to Eureka Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Program" was born. These two programs were united to collect and analyze with water quality data, to conduct Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) early detection, and to avoid duplication of these efforts. With new AIS sightings occurring in surrounding western states, these programs took on enormous importance in helping protect our aquatic resources.

The need to gather information on conditions from Montana's lakes has never been greater. Local, state, and federal agencies as well as private organizations and citizens seek information for a variety of reasons related to early detection of AIS, education, water quality research, planning, and regulatory purposes. Unfortunately, public funding and staffing to carry out water sampling activities have not always kept pace with needs in Northwestern Montana.

To fill the gaps, many states have organized cost-effective programs that train local citizens to monitor the water quality of their waterways. Volunteer monitoring programs have been found to be of enormous value to states to develop a baseline and recognize changes that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. This volunteer monitoring program provides a great opportunity to obtain data, engage citizens in long-term stewardship, and build valuable partnerships in the Flathead Basin.

Montana, Fish, Wildlife & Parks; the Whitefish Lake Institute; and our program partners hope you can join the program as citizen scientists and assist in the ever critical work of data collection on our waterways.

Sincerely,

John L. Wachsmuth  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Kalispell, MT