



## UC3 Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring Contract Progress Report September 4, 2019

Since finalization of the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission Monitoring Contract in June of 2019, the Whitefish Lake Institute (WLI) began identifying gaps in geographical coverage of monitoring and long-term stewardship of basin lakes and reservoirs. Potential priority waterbodies were identified including Bull Lake, Lake Como, Painted Rocks Lake, Upper Clark Fork, Georgetown Lake, Lake Kooconusa, Hungry Horse Reservoir, Thompson Chain of Lakes, and McGregor Lake. Specific watershed groups were also identified as potential partners and include: Yaak Valley Forest Council; Upper Clark Fork Basin Steering Committee; Swan Valley Connections; Swan Lakers; Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group; Lolo Watershed Group; Lincoln County Conservation District; Lake County Conservation District; Kootenai River Network; Flathead Lakers; Clearwater Resource Council; Clark Fork Watershed Education Program; Clark Fork Coalition; Clark Fork and Kootenai River Basins Council; Blackfoot Challenge; Bitter Root Water Forum; Watershed Education Network, and Granite Headwaters Watershed Group.

WLI recognized that an important component to getting new groups up and running was to provide them with a comprehensive set of monitoring and decontamination equipment. WLI program staff researched and purchased key equipment necessary for new groups to begin monitoring their lakes. Equipment for 11 monitoring kits was purchased and packaged for distribution including:

- Action Packer travel tote
- 30 cm x 120 cm x 64-micron plankton net
- Microscopy Sampling bottles
- ETOH sample preservative
- Secchi disc and measuring tap
- Water temperature thermometer
- Binder with sampling background, collection & decontamination protocols (attached)

WLI and the Flathead Lake Biological Station then partnered to plan the first of four workshops for new and existing monitoring partners in order to increase consistency in water quality monitoring and AIS early detection programs in the region. An invitation and training flyer (attached) were sent to twenty-seven potentially interested stakeholders, watershed groups, government agencies, and individual citizen scientists.

WLI and the Flathead Lake Biological Station hosted the first training on Friday, June 28 at FLBS. The morning was dedicated to indoor presentations by Phil Matson (FLBS), Rich Janssen (CSKT), Cynthia Ingelfinger (WLI) and Stacy Schmidt (MT FWP) and covered key information related to water quality monitoring, aquatic invasive plant identification, the life history and threats associated with dreissenid mussels, and training on how to use FWP's Survey123 data collection app. The key components of successful survey monitoring were also discussed including: plankton tow sampling techniques (horizontal, oblique, and vertical hauls), sample site selection criteria, equipment needs and specifications, sample preservation, ancillary data collection, equipment decontamination procedures.

After lunch the group focused on "hands-on" practical training of shoreline and boat site sampling protocols and procedures. Shoreline training took place along the FLBS lakefront and boat sampling training was held in Yellow Bay on Flathead Lake aboard the FLBS research vessel, the "Jessie B". We completed the day with an equipment decontamination lesson and debrief led by Phil Matson. Roughly half a dozen participants attended plus some FLBS interns. Groups attending included Kootenai River Network, University of Montana, Clark Fork and Kootenai River Basins Council, Swan Lakers, and Flathead Lakers. Representatives from the Yaak Valley Forest Council could not make it last minute.

WLI also met with two representatives from the Thompson Chain of Lakes (TCOL) and provided them with two sampling kits as well as training on AIS identification, Secchi disk and temperature sampling, plankton tow sampling procedures and decontamination. TCOL's goal was to recruit additional volunteers to sample five of the largest lakes for Secchi and temperature data and to collect three plankton tow samples each from the two largest lakes in the chain this season.

WLI and FLBS are currently promoting another Aquatic Invasive Species monitoring workshop on Oct 4, 2019 at the Red Bridge Fishing Access on Georgetown Lake. This all day training will cover the same topics as the June training including identifying aquatic invasive plants, water quality monitoring and plankton tow sampling and decontamination techniques and protocols. It will include morning presentations by WLI, FLBS and MT FWP scientists as well as an afternoon on the lake using an FLBS watercraft for practical training.