

### CRC Releases New Film: *Keeping Clearwater*

The Clearwater Watershed of Western Montana is among the most beautiful and ecologically important in our region. Yet our lakes and streams face significant challenges: failing septic systems, a history of intensive logging and roading, rising temperatures and changing flows with climate change that threaten their capacity to absorb the changes. *Keeping Clearwater* vividly illustrates how local students and residents have become skilled and informed 'citizen scientists' with a commitment to monitor and learn about our streams and lakes. Working hand in hand with natural resource agencies, other non-profit organizations, universities and local schools, they have collected new information on



the health of our local waters and have begun the work needed to restore and conserve them for the future.

*Keeping Clearwater* DVDs are available for sale for \$10 or can be viewed at [www.crcmt.org](http://www.crcmt.org).

### Clear Vision

The mission of the Clearwater Resource Council is to engage the community and facilitate efforts that will enhance, conserve, sustain, and protect the natural resources and rural lifestyle of the Clearwater Watershed for present and future generations.

To receive this quarterly newsletter, email [info@crcmt.org](mailto:info@crcmt.org) or call 406-677-0069.

## Low Water Levels in 2016? What's Going On in the Clearwater Watershed



PHOTO BY ANNE MONDUL

This spring in the Clearwater Valley had many of us looking at our streams and rivers and asking: "Has the runoff started?" or "Is it already over?" We worry about timing and amount of stream flow because it controls the amount of water available for our uses, the flushing and condition of our lakes, and the conditions for fish and other organisms that depend on streams.

CRC and our local schools are in our 5th consecutive year of regular stream flow monitoring in Morrell Creek. In February we were a little nervous that 2016 was shaping up to be a repeat of 2015 with low water levels. We normally expect the runoff to start in April with a peak sometime in May, but the 2015 runoff was very different with flows ramping up in February, peaking in early March and May with much lower flows overall. 2016 started out with the early melt in February, but then things cooled down and didn't ramp back up until April.

We expect the total amount of water will likely be higher than in 2015.

The future of stream flows in the Clearwater Watershed remains uncertain. Scientists worrying about climate change predict that we will see more years like 2015 with earlier runoff and lower peaks and snow melt overall. They also predict we will see more variability from year to year with extremes being more common. We don't know what the future will bring, but the work by students, teachers and volunteers to maintain the Morrell gauge will help us see it unfold.

If you're interested you can check out the flows in Morrell Creek in real time. Go to the bridge near the High School and look over the north side on the west bank just above the bridge. It was around 2.05' on May 15 this year and the highest we've seen this year was about 2.70'. The highest we've ever recorded was about 3.50' and summer flows will get down close to 1.0'.

# Clearwater PARTNERS SUMMER

## Events



PHOTO BY CATHY HARRITS

Volunteer Jeff Harrits reads the temperature of Big Sky Lake

## In Its 8th Year, CRC's Adopt-a-Lake Program Keeps a Hard Eye on the Health of Our Lakes in the Clearwater Watershed

In order to understand the condition of our lakes in the Clearwater drainage, Clearwater Resource Council has managed the Adopt-a-Lake program in eight area lakes since 2008. This monitoring program educates us about how lakes work and their vulnerability to change. Alva, Big Sky, Clearwater, Inez, Placid, Rainy, Salmon, and Seeley are sampled about every two weeks, May to early October, by volunteers who contribute their time and personal resources to conduct sampling and to manage and analyze data. Volunteer Cathy Harrits shared her motivation: "We have very beautiful lakes. They are not in crisis. But only by watching them, can we be sure that they're not going to be in crisis."

Evaluating water transparency using a Secchi disk and recording water temperature are key to volunteer data collection. Additional details like what is observed in the water, what odor is noticed, and weather conditions are recorded. Also, periodic dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles data will again be gathered for Seeley and Salmon lakes.

A 2014 report based on the data gathered over five or six years states that "no trends are apparent in any of the lakes in that time though there are differences among the lakes. Clearwater Lake is in excellent condition, Alva and Big Sky appear to be in good shape, but there are concerns with Inez, Placid, Seeley and Salmon. These last four lakes are either borderline or clearly meso-trophic [having a moderate amount of dissolved nutrients]. Three show oxygen depletion and/or blue green blooms, and we have no comparable information on the fourth."

Our 2016 volunteers are: Patricia Bouta, Guido Niederoest, Chris and Carol Hunter, Cathy and Jeff Harrits, Karen and Ted Linford, Roger Marshall, Bruce Rieman, Dennis Rolston, Clyde and Sherry Sterling, David and Joann Wallenburn, and Sylvia Weisenburger. If you'd like to offer your support in gathering information about our lakes, please contact Joann at (406) 210-8453 or email [lakes@crcmt.org](mailto:lakes@crcmt.org). Training is provided and we would value your help!

## JUNE

### Donate to CRC during SLCF's Change Your Pace Challenge

CRC has a unique opportunity over the next two months to double your financial contributions. Beginning on May 20 and ending on July 16, the Seeley Lake Community Foundation has offered to match, dollar for dollar, all donations to CRC up to \$5,000.

To participate, you must make your check out to Seeley Lake Community Foundation designating CRC as the recipient of your donation and mail it to CRC, POB 1471, Seeley Lake, MT. 59868 by July 16.

## JULY

### Join Us to Celebrate the Clearwater at Camp Paxson, 3 pm, July 10

Get updated about the Seeley Lake Trails Project at CRC's Summer **Celebrate the Clearwater** event and BBQ on **Sunday, July 10**, 3-7 at Camp Paxson. The SL Trails Project envisions a landscape-wide multi-use trail system in the Clearwater Watershed. This will provide trails for all types of recreation such as hiking, biking, ATV and snowmobile rides, horseback riding, outfitting, dog walking, skiing, snow shoeing and trail running connecting our town to the beautiful natural resources around us and to nearby communities.

You'll learn from the experience of keynote speakers including Heidi Von Everen of the Whitefish Trails Project and Russ Ehness of the National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Council and the trail systems they've created. Free cookout plus music, silent auction and kayak raffle. All proceeds go to the Trails Project facilitated by CRC.