

FALL
2021

CLEARWATER NEWS

VOLUME 6
ISSUE NO. 4

The Official Newsletter of the Clearwater Resource Council



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Photo by Jeff Harrits



Contact Us at 406-677-0069

CLEARWATER RESOURCE COUNCIL IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

CLEARWATER NEWS

OUR MISSION:

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.

OUR GOALS:

- Build community capacity to resolve issues;
- Create opportunities for interaction among citizens, businesses and agencies;
- Build common ground by consensus process;
- Facilitate timely collection and dissemination of information;
- Enhance the understanding of cumulative effects of land management practices; and
- Develop and support responsible resource stewardship programs.



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Executive Director



Jon Haufler, Board of
Directors President
and CRC co-founder

Clearwater Resource Council

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CLEARWATER NEWS

SEASONAL UPDATE

Dear CRC members,

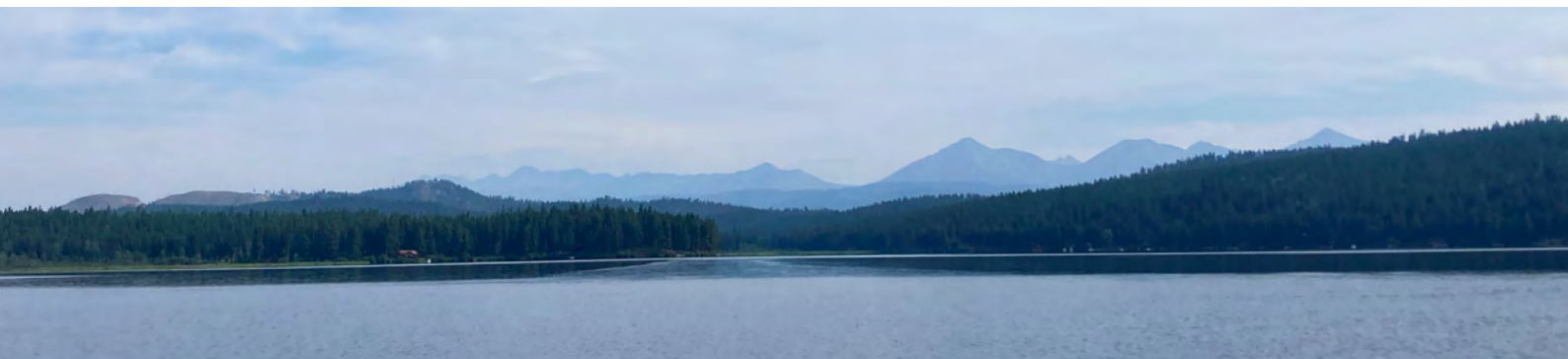
October is here and that means that fall has officially begun. Leaves are changing, temperatures are dropping, and CRC is transitioning to a new season of work. This month concludes our 13th full season of water quality monitoring and our first season of two new educational programs, Campfire Talks and Guided Nature Walks. While our time on the water is coming to a close this year, other projects are either starting or in full swing. Fuels mitigation work remains a priority, new bear containers are being installed outside local businesses, and we are breaking ground on our new pollinator garden, to name a few. Thank you, members, for continuing to support us and our cause as we work to preserve and conserve the value and beauty of this Valley. Happy Fall from CRC!



CLEARWATER LAKES ALLIANCE: PLACID LAKE

CRC's Clearwater Lakes Alliance was established in 2019, and with it has come exciting new developments. Among the six major lakes in the Clearwater Valley, CRC is working with Placid Lake cabin owners to develop a lake management plan designed to enhance the stewardship efforts of lakeshore property owners. The Placid Lake Management Plan is in the process of being drafted this year and provides guidelines for lakeside living. The plan includes, but is not limited to, best management practices for: boat use; riparian management; fertilizer and herbicide use; and upland management (i.e. dust abatement practices). The Placid Lake Homeowners Association, in partnership with CRC, also secured grant funds for infrastructure improvements for the dam at the outlet of the lake. Such improvements will better protect the lake from invasive fish species attempting to breach the dam. Using Placid Lake as a model, CRC hopes to extend this program to other lakes over the next three years.

In addition to lake planning, CRC also hosted a Native Trout Conservation Event on August 28. Divers from Underwater Soldiers and snorkelers from MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) searched for invasive Northern Pike, a species that would adversely impact the native bull trout, if detected. No pike were found this year! In 2020, FWP detected one female pike in Placid Lake during routine monitoring efforts. Since that time, CRC has partnered with FWP to heighten pike detection efforts on Placid Lake given the waterbody's ecological importance. Placid Lake is one of the few lakes in the region without Northern Pike, due in part to the dam at the outlet of the lake.



CLEARWATER NEWS

SUMMER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH EVENTS RECAP

This summer was a busy season for CRC! Various educational events included fuels mitigation tours and demonstrations, Campfire Talks, and a Guided Nature Walk.

On July 20, CRC's Chipper Demonstration showed how the use of a chipper can be beneficial to reducing potentially dangerous fuels on one's property. On July 23, CRC's Double Arrow Homeowners Association Fuels Tour included visits to various properties in a subdivision to



discuss fuels mitigation opportunities and thinning options. The tour also compared properties that had been treated in previous years to properties that had never been treated in an effort to show the reasons for and advantages of fuels mitigation efforts.

Our second Campfire Talk took place on July 15 at Placid Lake State Park. CRC's Community Forester discussed fuels mitigation and wildfire safety, as well as forest ecology and tree identification. Children were also invited to identify fire safety techniques on a model home. On September 2, CRC's Aquatics Director presented at our third and final Campfire Talk of the summer. We discussed the importance of beavers in our local ecosystems and how we can coexist with beavers living in the surrounding landscape. Both presentations drew crowds from those staying at the State Park Campground and from the local community. We look forward to continuing this program next summer.

Our second of three Guided Nature Walks took place on June 19. Participants visited a unique fen ecosystem and learned how such wetlands form and the unique attributes of the rare species found in this ecosystem. After exploring the fen and bouncy peat, walkers traveled to a nearby but distinctly different upland ecosystem. In the upland, hikers learned how to identify a wide variety of wildflowers. The walk concluded with a magnificent view of Salmon Lake and the Clearwater Valley. We are grateful to Steve Shelly, retired USFS Botanist, and Rachel Feigley, retired USFS District Ranger, for guiding and interpreting throughout the day as we explored these habitats.

Our third and final Guided Nature Walk of the year will take place on Saturday October 9 from 11:30 am- 3:00 pm. We will be learning about larch ecology, disturbance on the landscape, and fire adapted communities. Sign up here: <http://crcmt.org/registration>.



CLEARWATER NEWS

INVASIVE LILY REMOVAL EFFORTS

This past July CRC held its second annual Make-The-Cut invasive lily removal event. Participants competed to cut and collect as many waterlilies as they could from noon-4 pm at Big Larch Campground and Beach Area. At the conclusion of the event, 37 bags of waterlilies, weighing over 850 pounds (300 pounds more than what was collected last year!), were removed and collected.

The winning team, Michelle and Shawn Holmes, collected the most lilies by weight and won \$100. Other participants won raffle prizes, featuring gift certificates from various local businesses.



Photo by Heidi Sedivy

CRC's first Do-the-Dig event was debuted earlier in the summer at a pilot demonstration site on Seeley Lake. For this event, CRC staff and Montana Conservation Corps members from across the state worked together to dig up invasive waterlily rhizomes (clonal root systems). A total of nine volunteers dug and removed an entire truckload of lily rhizomes that were taken to Missoula Garden City Compost. This demonstration site will continue to be used in the upcoming years as a test site to explore the most effective and environmentally friendly ways to combat invasive waterlily infestation.

Digging and cutting lilies, in combination, have been shown to reduce waterlily populations. However, these efforts need to be consistent and, ideally, community-wide. This work was made possible with sponsorships and in-kind contributions from Citizens Alliance Bank, Missoula Textiles, Garden City Compost, Rovero's Ace Hardware, Cory's Valley Market, Heritage Outdoors, Stageline Pizza, Ice Cream Place, Grizzly Claw, and Trail Creek Merc.

Photo by Heidi Sedivy



CLEARWATER NEWS

SUMMER MONITORING WRAPPING UP

The end of September has brought along the end of our 2021 monitoring season. While we are sad to be concluding our time out in the field, we are excited to start looking at the results from the data we've been collecting. Water samples from lakes and streams in the Clearwater Watershed have been sent to the University of Montana Flathead Biological Station for nutrient analysis and data collected bi-weekly using our dissolved oxygen meter and multiparameter sonde will be processed and reviewed in the upcoming months to look for trends.

In addition to water quality monitoring, aquatic invasive species (AIS) monitoring has also come to an end. In 2021, CRC conducted five rounds of AIS monitoring on the 6 major lakes in the Valley (Alva, Inez, Seeley, Placid, Big Sky, and Salmon). In addition, three rounds were completed on Browns Lake and two on Upsata Lake. Volunteers independently monitored Lindbergh Lake and Coopers Lake this summer. Although we are still waiting to receive results for round 5, so far, all samples have come back negative for the presence of invasive zebra and quagga mussel veligers.

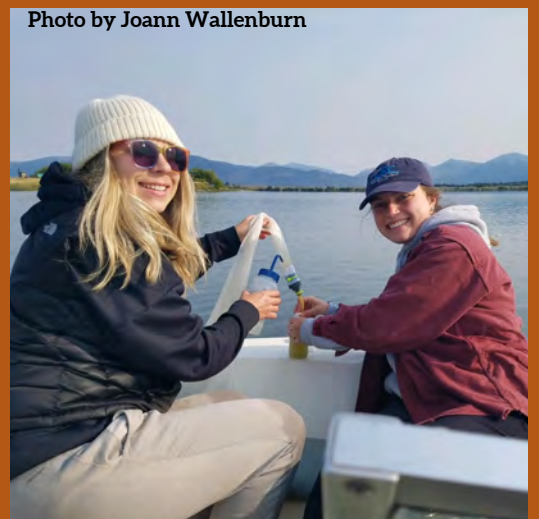
Additional monitoring efforts this summer included macrophyte mapping and shoreline land use assessments.

Without volunteers, CRC would not be able to conduct as much monitoring as we do. Thank you to all of our volunteers who donated their time, boat transport, and assistance throughout the summer. We are grateful for all of the help you have provided to CRC.

If you are interested in getting involved with any of our monitoring programs and would like to volunteer with CRC, contact us at crc.watshd.coord@crcmt.org!



Photo by Joann Wallenburn



Want to get involved? CRC is lucky to have a wonderful set of volunteers who work with us each year. There are many different volunteer opportunities, so if you would like to be a part of our team and join the fun, please contact us at 406-677-0069 or crc.watshd.coord@crcmt.org

CLEARWATER NEWS

POLLINATORS: WHAT ARE THEY GOOD FOR?

by Kristjan Johnson

Quite a bit! Pollinators form an important cornerstone in the foundation of life. Without pollinators, many parts of the worldwide ecosystem would collapse, including our local area. Moreover, ninety percent (90%) of flowering plants around the world would fail to reproduce, including most crops grown and eaten by humans. Unfortunately, these days are tough on our friends, the pollinators who buzz around our environment working their natural wonder. Shrinking habitat and lack of food stifles the growth of future pollinator generations.



What can we do about this? The good news is that everyone can make a positive impact by planting a pollinator garden. A pollinator garden is a garden planted with native flowers to attract bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds or other beneficial creatures that transfer pollen from flower to flower, or in some cases, within flowers. This type of garden requires a diverse arrangement of plants that flower at different times throughout the year. For our

community, flowers such as Blanket Flower, Penstemon, Scarlet Gilia, Sulfur, and Cushion Buckwheat are great choices. Late bloomers include Rocky Mountain Bee Plant, Showy Milkweed and Hairy Golden Aster. Anyone who is looking to spruce up their yard and provide beauty can plant these varieties of flowers in their garden.

To help the pollinators in our community, CRC is breaking ground on our first pollinator garden. John Fulton, a CRC board member, built raised beds for the pollinator garden which will be planted with native pollinator plants at the Fat Hippie retail location in Seeley Lake. We will even be installing our own hive with the help of Terry Lucke! We are seeking sponsors to defray the costs associated with the garden – if you are interested in financially supporting this effort or volunteering at our upcoming planting event(s), please email us at crc.watshd.coord@crcmt.org.



Photos from mt.gov: Monarch – Danaus plexippus. Montana Field Guide. Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on September 22, 2021, from <http://FieldGuide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=HLEPP2010>

CLEARWATER NEWS

NEW INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

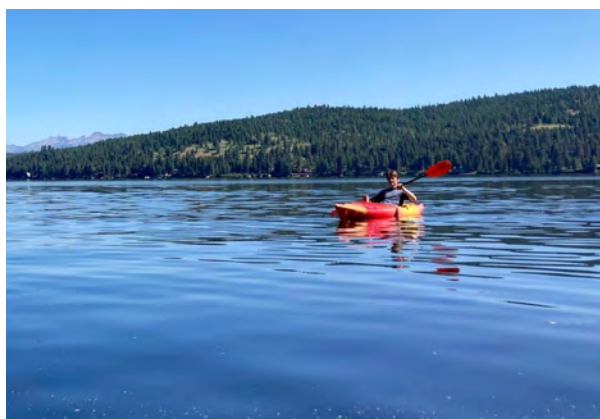
This year CRC established an internship program, and we were fortunate to have three amazing interns! Seeley Swan High School students Conner Chadwick (sophomore) and Cora Stone (junior, pictured right) completed a three-month summer high school internship with CRC, monitoring and collecting samples on Morrell Creek at a site next to the high school. For June, July, and August, Conner and Cora visited the site every other week to measure the stream gage reading and the water temperature, while also collecting water samples to be



analyzed for nutrients, total suspended solids, and turbidity by CRC and/or the University of Montana Flathead Lake Biological Station. The high school internship program was an extension of CRC's ongoing Students-in-Action (SIA) program hosted by CRC during the school year.

This summer, CRC also hosted college intern Kristjan Johnson (pictured below). Kristjan assisted with data collection in CRC's water quality and AIS monitoring programs. He also built over 30 substrates to be deployed as part of CRC's citizen science AIS early detection program. These substrates are distributed on multiple lakes in the area and will be one of the first lines of detection if our lakes become infested with invasive mussels (if you are interested in participating in this program, contact crc.watshd.coord@crcmt.org). In addition to his contributions in our aquatic programs, Kristjan worked on making it possible for CRC to break ground on our new pollinator garden by connecting with community partners, locating a suitable garden site, and conducting research to facilitate the planning process.

Thank you, Conner, Cora, and Kristjan for all of your hard work this summer!



CLEARWATER NEWS

WATERSHED PLANNING MEETING: OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

A Watershed Planning Meeting was held on September 7th at the Seeley Lake Community Foundation. This meeting, which was open to the public, was designed to identify and prioritize water quality issues and discuss possible solutions. Currently, CRC is developing a Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP) for the Clearwater Watershed, and public input is key. This plan, once published, will be instrumental to moving forward with watershed restoration and monitoring projects. The WRP will also enable CRC to apply for watershed restoration grants which we were not previously eligible to apply for as we lacked a site-specific watershed restoration plan. Stakeholders identified multiple issues of concern, including native fisheries, pollutant loading, septic systems, blue-green algae blooms, shoreline erosion, aquatic invasive species, fire, etc. It is our hope that more community members will provide their perspective and ideas at future meetings.

STAFF UPDATE: WELCOME, RYAN BELL!

CRC is excited to welcome forester Ryan Bell to our staff! Ryan began his career working out of Charleston, South Carolina focused primarily on prescribed fire. He has spent time working out of Yellowstone National Park on a fuels reduction crew and on a hotshot crew in Darby, Montana. Lately, he has been running a forestry business assisting landowners with wildfire prevention and forest health improvement. As CRC's community forester, Ryan will be doing home assessments, educational events and assisting with on-the-ground fuels mitigation projects. Ryan is also trained on invasive lily removal, and will be supervising selected removal projects in the coming year. When not on a job, Ryan enjoys a relaxing day on the river or skiing in the backcountry!



Photos belong to Ryan Bell

CLEARWATER NEWS

NEW BEAR BOXES IN SEELEY LAKE

This fall, the Clearwater Resource Council, in partnership with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and the Blackfoot Challenge, completed the installation of two bear-proof trash enclosures. The first installation, located at the Ice Cream Place, includes electrified fencing to keep bears at bay. The second installation, located at the Filling Station, uses welded metal bars and roofing materials to ensure bears are no longer able to raid used cooking oil and trash receptacles.



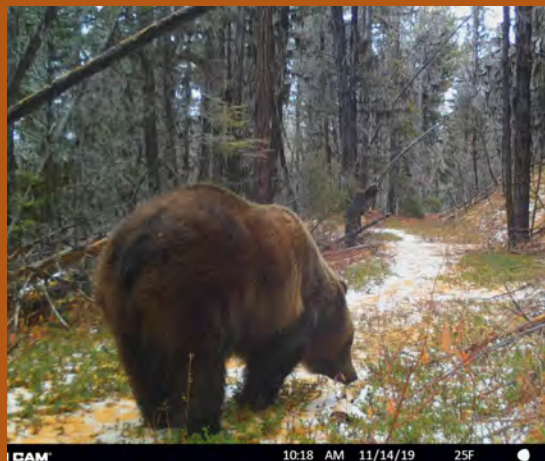
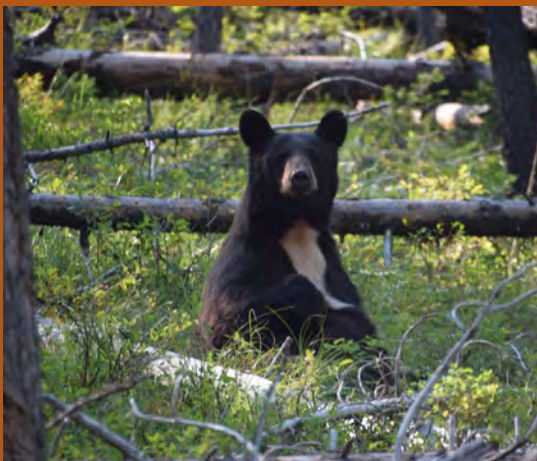
The more bears feed on easily obtained human food sources, the more likely that bears become habituated. Once habituated to human food sources, bears come into contact with humans on a more frequent basis, raising the likelihood of human-bear conflict. Such bears can become “problem” bears, necessitating management actions by FWP. In other words, keeping bears out of the trash is important for both their safety and ours.



CRC hopes to obtain additional funding for more bear-proof enclosures at other establishments handling food refuse in downtown Seeley Lake. Please contact us at 406-677-0069 if you are interested in participating in future efforts to reduce human-bear conflicts.

Top: Bear-proof electric fencing enclosure located behind the Ice Cream Place; Bottom: Bear-proof fencing with metal roof cover located behind the Filling Station.

This project would not have been possible without funding provided by the Vital Ground Foundation.



Left: black bear posing for camera; Right: grizzly bear caught on trail cam in Seeley Lake area by CRC member/volunteer. Both photos by Jeff Holm.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please check our website or call 406-677-0069 for the most up to date information.

Nature Walk 3: Larches and Forest Ecology

October 9

11:30 am - 3 pm

Meet at CRC office at 11:30 to carpool to site location

Watershed Planning Meeting

Fall Date TBD

Open to the Public

6 pm @ Seeley Lake Community Foundation

Garden Party

Fall Date TBD

Help celebrate our new Pollinator Garden in downtown Seeley Lake and enjoy some hot cider!