



# Spirit Lake Report

Periodic Update on Spirit Lake by the **SPIRIT LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

October 2024 Vol. 10

*SLPOA Mission: To develop the capacity within our community to provide a sustainable lake habitat that will allow all people who live, work and play within its environment an optimal North Idaho experience.*

## 2024 Annual Meeting Recap

**Overview:** The annual meeting was held at Timberlake High School. A special thank you to head custodian, Denise Berbig, and staff for their support. We are also grateful to each of our presenters. They take time out of busy schedules to give us updates on what is taking place in the City of Spirit Lake, our surrounding area, as well as on the lake itself. Three PowerPoint presentations are on our website for your viewing pleasure. In addition, you will find the notes submitted by our esteemed secretary, Jane Clark.



**Treasurer's Report and Implications:** SLPOA expenses are minimal since most of the work is done by volunteers. Major expenses included lake cleanup, monitoring and mitigating invasives, collecting and analyzing lake data, Brickel Creek restoration, and responding to issues such as sink hole leaks affecting lake levels. Still, our membership and income have been declining in recent years. SLPOA needs your financial commitment in order to do the work of improving the environment, habitat and maintaining enjoyment of the lake experience.

The board of directors is exploring options to better communicate the value of SLPOA to the lake and its members. In addition, the board is in conversation about how we can expand the value of the association to our members. The reality exists that we cannot continue to do the important work of our mission if resources continue to diminish. Expect upcoming requests for your ideas and suggestions or simply send us an email at [spiritlakepoa@gmail.com](mailto:spiritlakepoa@gmail.com).

**Business Meeting and Director Elections:** Progress reports were given by various board directors about projects and processes that took place in 2023 (PowerPoint and minutes available on the website). The major decision of the members during the business meeting was to elect board of directors. New directors that were appointed during the 2023 year were officially elected by the members. They include: Dan Beha, Margie Wilke, Justin Morrison, Ed Niblock, and Galen Beem. Current board members whose terms had expired were also elected including: Paul Sturm, Linda Pendleton, and Jerry Peterson. Board members are elected for three-year terms. Other board directors in the second year of their three-year term include: Brad Pendleton, Jane Clark, and Dustin Thiers. Directors in the third year of their term included Don Finney, Kurt Peterson, and Ron Largent. One position remained open and was filled during the next board meeting by appointment.

**Future of the Annual Meeting:** SLPOA bylaws require that the board of directors conduct an annual business meeting with the members. From feedback from members attending this year and in the past, the board is aware that there is a perception among some that it has become redundant and passive. We are exploring changes to the annual meeting format with the intention of making the time you spend together more interactive, productive and meaningful. You may receive requests for specific feedback from the board of directors for, ideas and suggestions about the structure of the Annual Meeting. As always, your suggestions are welcome.

## Board of Directors Report

Following the August 2024 Annual Meeting, the SLPOA board of directors met on September 10, 2024. SLPOA board meeting minutes are posted on the website. The board discussed the implications of declining membership, its goals and action plans, and reviewed the annual meeting. In addition, the board elected its officers. Finally, but importantly, the board had a conversation with Tod Kiblen, lake property owner and SLPOA contributing member, about his interest in becoming a board director. The board deliberated and, according to the bylaws, appointed Tod to the board to be officially voted on by the members next August. We believe Tod is a positive addition to the board and fills out the full fifteen directors permitted by the SLPOA bylaws. The next regular board of directors meeting will be January 18, 2025.

The board had discussion regarding the vice-president's role. Kurt Peterson has supported the board as vice president throughout 2024. He indicated his commitment to continue to support the board but was not enthusiastic about assuming the role of president in the future. The board appreciates Kurt's contributions and leadership in such areas as website administration, lake clean-up, and various committees to name just a few. The board appointed Dan Beha to the role of vice president. The SLPOA officers for 2025 are: Paul Sturm, president, Dan Beha, vice-president, Jane Clark Secretary, and Linda Pendleton and Jerry Peterson, co-treasurers.

## Your Dues Dollars at Work

**Lake Leakage Repairs:** Last fall SLPOA repaired a sink hole leak in the lake that developed on the east side of the narrows a few hundred feet from the Maine Street boat launch. A substantial volume of lake water was draining into the aquifer. This spring a homeowner observed another leak several yards away. Board member, Jerry Peterson, notified the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) and SLPOA was granted a permit to plug the leak. Subsequently, SLPOA board director, Galen Beem, and others executed the plug. The IDL has been very supportive and cooperative. This may be important in the future as it seems likely that these "leaks"—due to the deterioration of a legacy water pipe that was installed in the early 1900's—may continue to develop.

**Boating:** Signs have been installed at each boat launch informing boaters about navigation rules and courtesy regarding large wake damage. The SLPOA Wake Erosion Committee provided the leadership to develop and install the signs. Anecdotally, members have reported improved boating behavior, presumably due in part to the signage. The board recently approved the development and printing of flyers that will be distributed at boat launch locations, rental properties, resorts and campsites at the beginning of the 2025 boating season.

**Lake Cleanup:** SLPOA does not have the resources to perform a Lake Clean-up each year. However, our own board director and Boon Docks owner, Dustin Thiers, has been working with property owners to provide low-cost old dock removal and debris cleanup to minimize hazards to navigation. This is the best solution to lake clean-up—removing materials at the point of origin. Replacing a dock? Disposing of the old dock is the responsibility of the dock owner. Dustin and his crew have limited capacity for debris removal but are committed to assisting property owners when possible. If you need help with old dock or other shoreline debris removal, contact Boon Docks, LLC at [boondocksllc.dustin@gmail.com](mailto:boondocksllc.dustin@gmail.com) for an estimate.

**Membership Dues and Donations:** Your membership dues are requested to be paid in January. This helps us budget and plan projects for the coming year. Thank you to all of our paying members and to those of you who regularly make additional donations. Your generosity keeps SLPOA going.

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## Brickel Creek Restoration – More Dues Dollars at Work



In the first week of October, 2024, volunteers and contractors worked to restore the bank of Brickel Creek where it was damaged when the bridge collapsed in 2023. A watering run was also designed and created to minimize bank erosion and keep the cattle from entering the creek. Inland Empire Paper Company provided logs and other materials for the project. Hydrologist, Chris Hardy, planned the project, obtained necessary permits, and provided plantings and other materials needed for the project. Expert landscape excavator operator, Josh Clift, did most of the heavy lifting with a mini excavator. The SLPOA board allocated \$3000 toward

the project and provided volunteers. The weather was beautiful except for a wind and rain storm which delayed completion to Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers, Margie Wilke and Nadine Sturm hand watered the new plantings about every other day for the next week. The purpose of the restoration is to terrace and stabilize the bank and reestablish meandering to slow the waterflow (more information [here](#)\*). This should reduce erosion and help limit silt entering the stream and lake. Plantings further stabilize the bank, create shade to reduce the temperature of the stream, and provide cover for spawning fish. This is the fifth such restoration project SLPOA has undertaken over the past decade along Brickel Creek. Importantly, the work is challenging but fun and leaves volunteers with a sense of accomplishment benefitting the watershed and lake. A big thank you to those who did the work!



\* [https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/ecological\\_services/healthy\\_rivers\\_color\\_background.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/ecological_services/healthy_rivers_color_background.pdf)

# SLPOA, Lake and Watershed Info

## Why are Wetlands Important?

Wetlands are important features in the landscape that provide numerous beneficial services for people and for fish and wildlife. Some of these services, or functions, include protecting and improving water quality, providing fish and wildlife habitats, storing floodwaters and maintaining surface water flow during dry periods. These valuable functions are the result of the unique natural characteristics of wetlands (<https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/why-are-wetlands-important>).

## 2024 Lake Levels:

In March we reached a level of 2442.15 MSL, or about 1.8" above the Weir. By the end of September, we were down to 2437.58, a drop of about 55". Still 7" higher than 2023.

## Water Level Monitoring Equipment:

The City of Spirit Lake applied for and received funding from the Kootenai County Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer Protection District to install water level monitoring equipment at our new weir.

The outflow of the Mill Pond represents a direct recharge of—or flow into—the Aquifer and is currently only estimated.

The ability to directly measure the flow from the Mill Pond will provide data and better knowledge of the Aquifer recharge in this area. A stilling well will be installed beside the east wall of the Weir and will house the measuring equipment. The level information will be sent directly to the Public Works Dept at the City Hall, via their well monitoring system. The city is hoping to post this real time lake level information on their website in the near future. Unfortunately, due to the required location, level information will not be available once the water no longer reaches the dam in the latter portion of the year.

**Communications:** The SLPOA Board established a committee to experiment with alternative ways to communicate with our members. A Facebook page ([Spirit Lake Property Owners Association - Facebook](#)) is active and developing. We also have a texting service that allows us to send out brief bulk messages and to seek your input. We are committed to limiting texting to avoid the potential annoyance of repeated messages to your inbox. Likewise, we are using email when it seems appropriate for longer messages. We welcome your feedback regarding any of these means of communication. Electronic communications can significantly reduce the cost of communicating. Request text messages by providing your cell phone number via our website at [www.friendsofspiritlake.com](http://www.friendsofspiritlake.com) or email at [spiritlakepoa@gmail.com](mailto:spiritlakepoa@gmail.com). You can unsubscribe at any time.

**Invasive Species:** Milfoil exists in Spirit Lake. It typically does not show up until the lake level is lower and it begins to grow above the other vegetation. If you think you have found milfoil, contact SLPOA via our website [www.friendsofspiritlake.com](http://www.friendsofspiritlake.com) or email the location via [spiritlakepoa@gmail.com](mailto:spiritlakepoa@gmail.com). SLPOA member and diver, Doug Freeland, is experienced in milfoil removal and other invasive species. Please do not try to remove milfoil. If broken into pieces, each piece becomes a new plant wherever it settles and takes root in the lake. Doug is our best source to manage and minimize the spread of milfoil.

Chinese Mystery Snails are an invasive species that has become established in our lake. If unchecked they are likely to increase in numbers and become a smelly nuisance when they are washed ashore and die. If you find them destroy them.

River Otters have been spotted around the lake since last fall. River Otters are not invasive. However, they can be aggressive, especially when protecting their young and territory, or if they feel threatened. Be cautious if they are nearby. Like Canada Geese and Blue Heron, River Otters may leave a mess on your dock. The good news is that the Chinese Mystery Snails (see above) can become part of the otter's diet. An example of nature's remarkable balance.

