

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.*

What's With the Lily Pads?

Recently, a question was raised: **Are the expanding water lilies in Spirit Lake a problem?** The short answer is: not in the immediate future, but they are worth watching.

Native vs. Invasive Lilies

Water lilies are common native aquatic plants found in shallow, still waters. However, **invasive varieties** can appear when ornamental lilies—sold for home aquariums or backyard ponds—are illegally or accidentally introduced. Once established, these non-native species can outcompete our local flora and disrupt the ecosystem.



The Role of Lilies in the Ecosystem

Water lilies provide essential shade and shelter for fish. Through photosynthesis, they consume carbon dioxide and release oxygen. However, they also play a role in succession:

- **The Process:** Each year, dying lily vegetation sinks to the bottom and decomposes.
- **The Result:** This buildup of organic matter gradually makes the lake shallower over time. This is a natural "aging" process for all freshwater bodies.

The Threat of Eutrophication

While succession is natural, **eutrophication** is an accelerated, often harmful version of it. When excessive nutrients (like nitrogen and phosphorus) enter the water, plants and algae—specifically cyanobacteria—grow at an explosive rate.

When these massive blooms die, their decomposition can deplete dissolved oxygen levels so severely that fish and other aquatic life cannot survive. In some cases, certain algae blooms can even release toxins into the water.

What can we do?

We can all extend the "healthy life" of Spirit Lake by reducing nutrient loading. Common culprits include:

- **Runoff:** Landscape debris, pet waste, and lawn fertilizers.
- **Waste:** Ash from burning and unmaintained septic systems or cesspools.
- **Solutions:** Maintaining a **riparian buffer** (a strip of native vegetation at the shoreline) acts as a natural filter, trapping nutrients before they reach the water while providing a habitat for local wildlife.

Our Path Forward

Spirit Lake remains a healthy ecosystem. To keep it that way, the **SLPOA** and local property owners are expanding efforts to reduce sediment and nutrient inflow.

Current projects include:

- addressing erosion in **Brickel Creek**
- installing off-shore livestock watering stations
- improving wetlands and fish habitat
- addressing potential leakage in the millpond
- informing members and visitors about boating and other practices that can preserve Spirit Lake as a valuable resource.

Learn more in the *Update – Brickel Creek* section of this publication.

Sources for more information

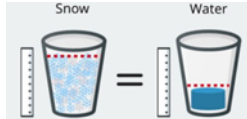
<https://www.solitudelakemanagement.com/the-stages-of-lake-and-pond-succession/>
<https://untamedscience.com/biology/ecology/ecology-articles/what-is-lake-succession/>
https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/nymphaea_odorata.shtml
<https://iere.org/are-too-many-lily-pads-bad/>

Lake Data — Jerry Peterson, SLPOA Board Director

Well... if you were hoping for one of those classic La Niña winters — cold, snowy, and piling it on — *this wasn't it!*

This winter at Spirit Lake has been unusually mild compared to last year (and plenty of others we can remember). The lake froze over briefly a couple of times, but not enough to tempt anyone to wander too far out.

Snow depth and snow water equivalent were very low — possibly record low. Not exactly what winter enthusiasts had in mind.

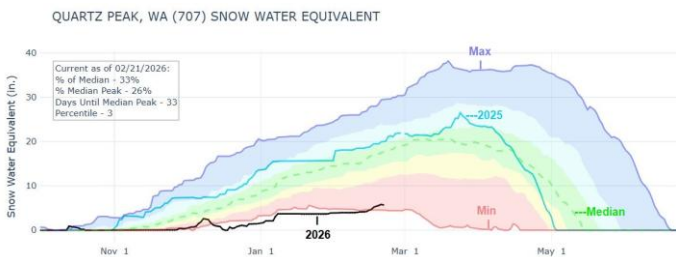
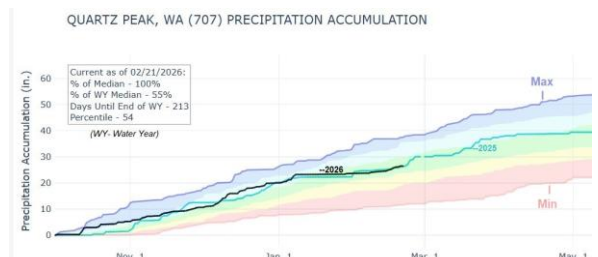


That said, the Snow Gods did throw us a little bone in late February, delivering about 10 inches

up in the mountains. We'll take it! But overall, warmer temperatures meant much of our precipitation came down as rain instead of snow. Rain runs off quickly into the lake, which explains why lake levels are actually sitting a bit higher than normal for this time of year.

Looking ahead, reaching “full pool” this year may be a stretch. Snowpack on Mt. Spokane is pretty limited, so we don't have much reserve waiting to melt. The silver lining? Overall total precipitation is about average — which is better news than it might feel like.

So now we wait — and hope for a good, wet spring. With a little luck, we'll see water flowing over the dam and a strong start to the season. Keep those fingers crossed!

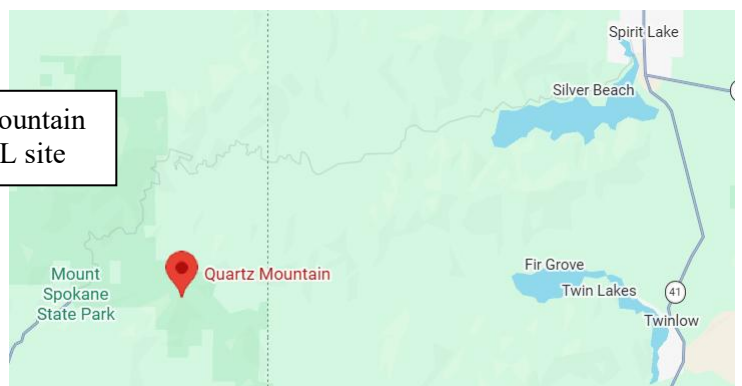


These graphics are from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. These data are collected at the Quartz Peak Station near Mt Spokane. Additional data can be obtained by pointing your smart phone camera at the QR code or your browser at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/sswsf-snow-survey-and-water-supply-forecasting-program/national-water-and>



Quartz Mountain SNOTEL site



Update – Brickel Creek

Why is SLPOA planning for the construction of Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs) on Brickel Creek?

- The lower Brickel Creek is a fast-flowing straight stream
- Silt erodes from the banks and the bottom of the creek
- These silts along with nutrients are deposited into Spirit Lake
- Brickel Creek was once a fish spawning habitat
- Now, with fast water and little shade, it is no longer such a great fish spawning habitat

So, what are BDAs anyway?

- BDAs are structures made of natural materials (posts and tree limbs)
- They are placed to mimic a beaver dam
- Like beaver dams, they slow the flow of the creek
- Silt drops out and accumulates behind the BDA
- Eventually, the slower, meandering creek restores the wetlands
- Wetlands filter out nutrients and create plant and animal habitat
- Less silt and nutrients make for a healthier lake

Over the past five years, SLPOA and the property owner have focused on minimizing the watering of livestock in the creek. We have also constructed log and rock structures and installed plantings in an attempt to slow the flow of the stream and to provide more shade to cool the water and provide shelter for fish during the hot summer days. These efforts have had some limited impact.

As we have investigated other options, we have learned about the success of BDA installations in similar streams such as **Thompson Creek** flowing into Newman Lake. We are convinced that BDAs can have a greater beneficial impact on restoring Brickel Creek to its more natural and original state.

The project requires surveys, design and permits. We cannot simply gather materials and start altering Brickel Creek without a solid and reliable plan. This will take funds, mostly for the design and engineering of where best to place the structures. The construction materials are simple and low cost. The construction will be low impact with volunteers building the structures during low runoff periods in the fall.

This is a long-term project. The course of a stream such as Brickel Creek is not changed quickly. BDAs will need to be added each year and some will require repair.

In addition, we are also planning and applying for grants to help the property owner create off-shore watering stations for livestock so that nutrients are not being deposited directly into the creek.

Your help will be needed in the form of funding and volunteer help with construction. The initial cost of the project is estimated to be between thirty and forty thousand dollars. After the initial engineering and construction, the cost to add to and maintain the BDAs will require an estimated five to ten thousand dollars per year—mostly doable with the proceeds from member dues.

Survey, engineering and design will be required in order to obtain permits. One of our own lake property owners is capable of conducting the survey that we will need. We are in the process identifying design and engineering experts. The construction materials are available once the permits have been issued. At that point it we will call for volunteers to do the construction work.

You can learn more about the success of BDAs on Thompson Creek at: <https://www.fws.gov/story/2023-03/leave-it-beaver-partners-collaborate-beaver-dam-analog-project-0> or point your smart phone camera at the QR Code.



**BDA on Thompson Creek
Newman Lake, WA**



**Volunteers do shore restoration near the
bridge across Brickel Creek 2024**



City of Spirit Lake Has New Mayor

A New Chapter for Spirit Lake: A Message of Partnership and Progress

Whether you reside within the city limits, live along the county shores, or visit us for weekend recreation, we all share one common bond: **the lake is the heart of our community**. The Spirit Lake Property Owners Association (SLPOA) is pleased to officially introduce our new Mayor, **Charlene Phipps**, a leader who understands that the town and the lake share a vital, symbiotic relationship.



“In my new role as mayor of the City of Spirit Lake, it is my intent and with great interest to work closely with SLPOA to ensure the viability of our wonderful lake. Without Spirit Lake, this city would not exist. I am also aware of the fifty plus years SLPOA has diligently worked to keep our lake quality and shorelines healthy and beautiful.” — **Mayor Charlene Phipps**

Leadership Rooted in Service

Mayor Phipps background as a **Registered Nurse** prepared her for high-pressure environments, while her tenure on the City Council since January 2024 has allowed her to apply her expertise in finance and operations to benefit our city.

A dedicated community advocate at heart, Charlene has already made a significant impact through:

- **Fundraising:** Founding the Spirit Lake Meals on Wheels Silent Auction.
- **Engagement:** Actively participating in the Spirit Lake Community Coalition (SLCC).
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Strengthening ties with Avista, the Innovia Foundation, and the Idaho Department of Commerce.

A Vision for Collaboration and Transparency

Mayor Phipps is committed to a platform of openness. Her goals include ensuring City Council meetings remain accessible for resident input, posting financial audits online for clarity, and forming a **Business Consortium** to help our local entrepreneurs thrive.

Most importantly for our members, Mayor Phipps recognizes the incredible **50-year legacy of stewardship** provided by the SLPOA. From maintaining water quality to the vital construction of the new weir, she values the work you do to protect our "gem of a lake."

"Working hand in hand will allow both the town and the lake to thrive. By combining our minds, skill sets, and enthusiasm, we can make positive things happen in a successful and timely manner." — **Mayor Charlene Phipps**

Looking Ahead: Spring 2026 and Beyond

The future is bright with new avenues for cooperation. This spring, members of the SLCC and the SLPOA boards are planning to meet to explore potential alignment among their goals. With many lake property owners traveling through our downtown to reach their cabins, there are shared interest in protecting the quality of the lake and revitalizing our local businesses and events.

Mayor Phipps maintains a firm open-door policy, saying, “Together, we can ensure that our town and lake remain the best small-town experience in America. **Let’s do this together!** Please feel free to reach out to the Mayor's office or visit City Hall to share your thoughts.”

Your Membership in SLPOA is Important

A friendly reminder: SLPOA puts your membership dues and donations to work to benefit the lake environment. Become a member on our website by pointing your smart phone camera to the QR code.

Thank you to the many property owners and friends that have already sent in their dues. A special thank you to those of you that have made generous donations!

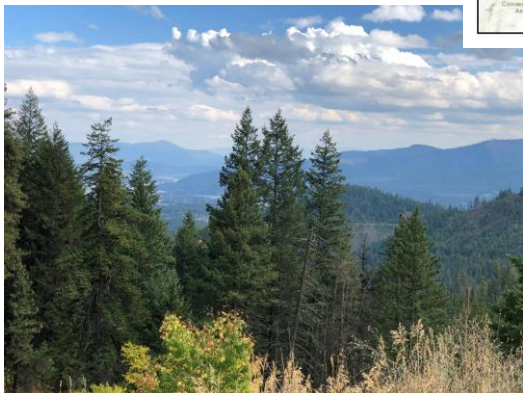
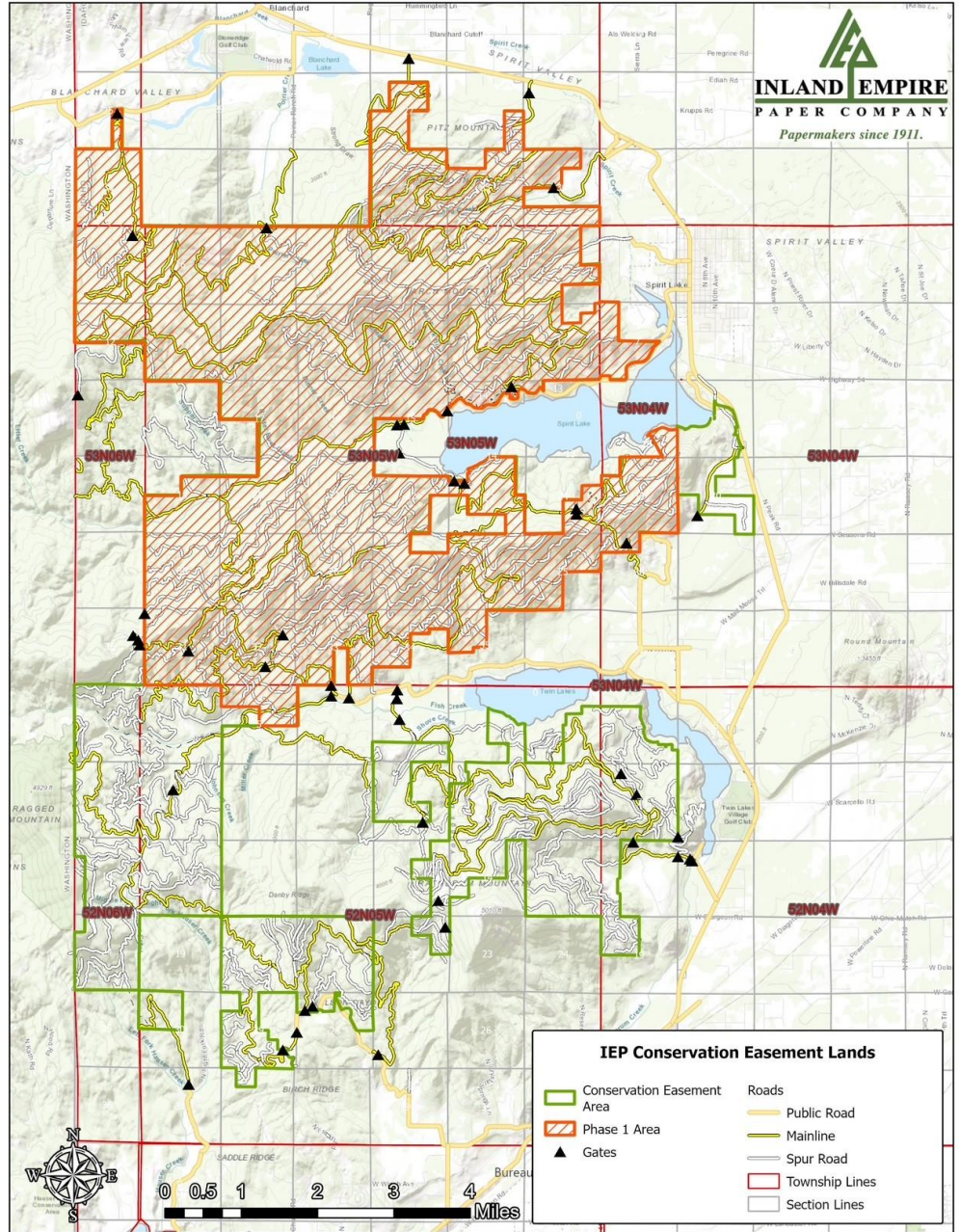


Inland Empire Paper Company News

“More than 22,000 acres of privately owned working forestland in North Idaho are now permanently protected following the first phase of the Spirit of Mount Spokane Forest Legacy Project. ...”The agreement ensures the land will remain an actively managed working forest in perpetuity, while also protecting public access, wildlife habitat and regional drinking water resources.”
—CDA Press, March 27, 2026

The property is between Mount Spokane and Spirit Lake in Bonner and Kootenai counties. It borders state property near the Idaho-Washington border and horseshoes around Spirit Lake, covering land on the north and south sides of the body of water.

The map to the right shows Phase 1 of the Spirit of Mount Spokane Conservation Easement. Phase 2 will simply be the lands to the south of Phase 1. Phase 2 is expected to close near the end of 2026 or early 2027. The Washington side (Phase 3, if you will) of the Conservation Easement is expected to close later this year, 2026, in the third or fourth quarter. In summary, by this time next year, we expect to have about 41,000 acres of contiguous timberland under a Conservation easement This will include both Idaho and Washington lands.



In other IEP news, **Evan Neal** will be taking over as the Inland Empire Paper Company Forest Resource Manager when **Paul Buckland** retires on April 10, 2026. Paul has been a responsive and collaborative friend of SLPOA—a reliable source of information about forestry in the Spirit Lake watershed. He has provided materials and support for stream restoration on Brickel Creek and a regular contributor during the SLPOA Annual Meeting. Paul will be missed! SLPOA welcomes Evan and we look forward to a positive working relationship with him, as well.

<https://cdapress.com/news/2026/mar/27/conservation-project-protects-22000-acres-of-north-idaho-forestland/>
<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2026/mar/25/idaho-forest-land-near-mount-spokane-protected-fro/>



Friends of Spirit Lake
Spirit Lake Property Owners Association
PO Box 363
Spirit Lake, ID 83869

Invasive Species Update

Invasive species is one of several issues to which SLPOA pays attention. Spirit Lake resident and invasive species mitigation specialist, Doug Freeland monitors invasive species, in particular milfoil, for SLPOA and the lake. Doug and Jim Bolzar of Peak Media created an informational video to show how milfoil is removed from the lake and how we all can play a role in the mitigation efforts. You can watch this incredible, informative and entertaining video on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVm8ahZICE8> or point your smart phone camera at the QR code below.

