

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.*

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

Approximately 120 people attended and registered for the Friends of Spirit Lake Annual Meeting on August 8, 2026. The Power Point presentations for the meeting can be accessed at the Friends of Spirit Lake Website www.friendsofspiritlake.com. Use the SLPOA drop-down menu to find the “2026 Annual Meeting” and “Health Presentation” or scan the QR Codes.



*Annual
Meeting*



*Health
Dept*

We appreciate Spirit Lake Mayor, **Charlene Phipps**, for her introduction to her administration and the City’s goals and initiatives.

Jason Peppin presented several important issues related to lake health from the Idaho Department of Health perspectives (use QR Code for the PPT presentation).

We enjoyed meeting **Evan Neal** the new Forest Manager for Inland Empire Paper Company. While he has been with IEPC for about a decade, he has been working in the background as Paul Buckland was the Manager and face of IEP for many years. Welcome Evan Neal!

The presentations were followed by the annual general member’s business meeting. The current board directors whose terms had expired were re-elected. The maximum of fifteen board directors is filled.

Liz Krise won the 50/50 raffle and generously donated her winnings back to Friends of Spirit Lake and to the Spirit Lake Food Bank. Thank you, Liz, and everyone that participated so generously.

LAKE QUALITY REPORT



Spirit Lake water level continues to drop, but has declined from ½” per day averages in July/August to ¼” per day in September. We are only 1” above our 2023 level, but 6.5” above the 2015 level, which was our lowest in the past 20 years.

Even with the low water levels and warm temperatures, only two Harmful Algae Blooms (HABS) and a light surface scum in some parts of the lake were observed this year. Luckily these dissipated quickly due to wind, waves and temperature.

Phosphorus is the main culprit of algae and cyanobacteria blooms in our lake.

Why Phosphate Matters

- **Growth Limiting:** Phosphorus is the key nutrient that controls plant and algae growth in most freshwater systems.
- **Impairment Threshold:** Concentrations from **0.03-0.05 mg/L** often trigger accelerated algae growth and shifts toward toxic cyanobacteria (blue-green algae). (*see graph*)

BECOME A FRIEND OF SPIRIT LAKE

Anyone (not limited to lakefront property owners) who shares our mission to protect, preserve and improve Spirit Lake is welcome to join and contribute to this mission. Your voluntary membership of \$40 crucial to the work of SLPOA. Use the QR Code to join or donate.



Thank you to all of our current members and generous donors.

Phosphorus continued from page 1

Common Sources

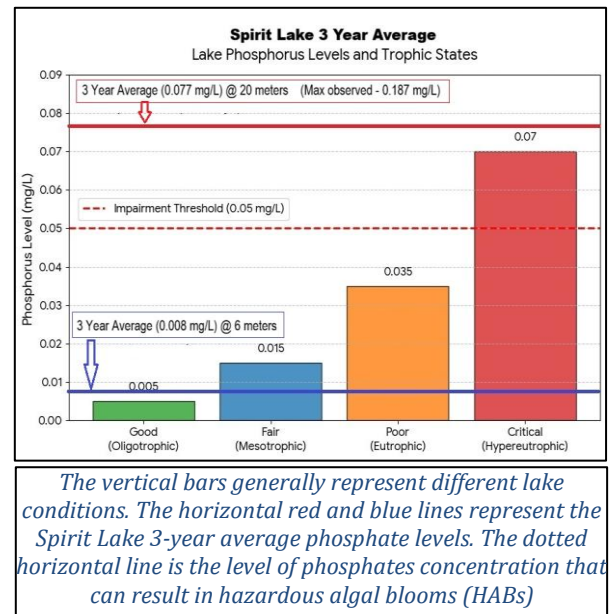
- **Natural Runoff:** Weathering of rocks, soil erosion, and decaying organic matter.
- **Internal Cycling:** The very low oxygen in our deep water causes sediment to release stored phosphorus back into the water column. We have seen readings as high as 0.187 mg/L (see graph).
- **Human Activity:** Fertilizers, animal manure, urban runoff, leaking septic systems and wood ash.

How Ash Affects Phosphate Levels

- **High Nutrient Content:** Wood ash contains about 1.5% to 2% phosphorus by weight, releasing soluble phosphate compounds when it dissolves in water.
- **Alkalinity Release:** Ash contains metal oxides and hydroxides that raise water pH. Higher alkalinity then will help release legacy phosphorus trapped in bottom sediments.
- **Algal Blooms:** A sudden spike in phosphorus acts as a powerful fertilizer, which can trigger rapid and heavy growth of algae and phytoplankton (*plant-like organisms*).

Direct Phosphorus Loading: Leaving a pile of ash on the shoreline guarantees that 100% of its soluble phosphate content will dissolve directly into the near-shore water column. This area is the most vulnerable to localized cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms.

Fully cooled and extinguished ash can be scattered thinly across dry land—at least **300 feet away** from the shoreline and any water sources. **(Just one pound of phosphorus can generate 500 pounds of wet algae.)**



EURASIAN MILFOIL



On September 22 and 23, Doug Freeland, his son and daughter-in-law removed between 400-500 lbs. of Eurasian Milfoil from the lake near Bronze Bay. Doug said, “I have been telling people for a few years now that I think there is a mother lode of milfoil left in our lake. I have not been able to find it myself, that's why the push for teaching people what it looks like and how to look for it. Well, my son and his wife found it yesterday.” According to Doug, left alone it would be about 3 years from taking over much of Bronz Bay. They caught it in time but it will take a few years to get it under control.

The board will take action at the next board meeting on compensation for the extra and unexpected work to remove the milfoil. In addition, we will consider the 2027 budget in regard to future unforeseen expenditures such as this.

Thank you to Doug and his family for their diligence in seeking out invasive outbreaks and managing them for all of us. We are all fortunate that you care about Spirit Lake!

CONNECTION TO REGIONAL AQUIFER

Regional Aquifer is both important and vulnerable:

At least some of the seepage from Spirit Lake ultimately ends up in the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer. The Aquifer is a designated critical sole-source of drinking water for 600,000 people. Yet it is constantly at risk of contamination from liquid materials (fuels, oils, paints, etc.) used by businesses and individuals living over it. Learn its history, how it functions, and how to protect the aquifer and the drinking water it supplies by implementing the safe storage practices discussed in this five-minute video from University of Idaho Extension. You can view it by pointing your browser to <https://youtu.be/C4vl3VVv91c> or use your smart phone to open the QR Code.



WHAT'S UP WITH WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS?



thankfully, have not yet been found in Spirit Lake, our inspection stations and boater vigilance are currently the major means of keeping them out of our lake.

Structural and Ecological Chaos

Unlike native species, these invasive mussels use hair-like "byssal threads" to glue themselves into dense, concrete-like mats. This behavior spells disaster for regional infrastructure and native wildlife:

- **Clogged Public Utilities:** Mussels pack tightly inside water intake pipes, blocking flow and driving up maintenance costs for municipal drinking water, wastewater treatment, and agricultural irrigation.
- **Hydropower Disruptions:** They foul dam mechanisms, cooling systems, and fish-passage infrastructure, threatening the clean hydroelectricity our region relies upon.
- **Starving Native Fisheries:** A single mussel filters massive volumes of water daily, siphoning out microscopic phytoplankton. This strips away the foundational food source for local salmon, trout, and bass populations.



Ruining Local Recreation and Tourism

An established infestation would permanently degrade the iconic outdoor lifestyle of the Inland Northwest. Mussels quickly encrust boat hulls, clog engine cooling lines, and trigger catastrophic motor failures.



Additionally, when massive populations of these mussels die off, their razor-sharp shells wash ashore by the thousands. Famous beaches along Lake Coeur d'Alene, the Spokane River, or Lake Pend Oreille could become virtually unusable, as the jagged shells easily slice through footwear, paws, and skin, while filling the air with a pungent odor of decay.

To Prevent the Spread: Clean, Drain, Dry

Microscopic mussel larvae (veligers) can survive out of water for weeks, easily hitchhiking on recreational watercraft, trailers, and paddleboards. To protect our waters, boaters, anglers, and paddlers must practice the **Clean, Drain, Dry** protocol after every outing:

1. **Clean** all mud, plants, and debris from watercraft and trailers.
2. **Drain** all bilge water, livewells, and ballast tanks before leaving the boat ramp.
3. **Dry** the boat and all equipment thoroughly before launching into a different waterbody.

Stop at Mandatory Watercraft Inspection Stations

Stopping is required by law for **all watercraft**—including kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards.

Interested? Explore more with these QR Codes:



ID Stations



USGS



USDA



News

See Something? Report It Immediately!

If you spot suspected invasive mussels, or are transporting a boat into the region from out-of-state, utilize these official hotlines for free inspections and reporting:

- Idaho Reporting Hotline: Call the Idaho State Department of Agriculture at 1-877-336-8676.
- Washington Reporting Hotline: Call the WDFW Aquatic Invasive Species hotline at 1-888-WDFW-AIS (1-888-933-9247) or report online via the Washington Invasive Species Council (<https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/>).



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

BOARD ELECTS 2027 OFFICERS

Changes are coming in 2027:

At the September 19 board meeting, the board regrettably accepted resignations from **Jane Clark** and **Don Finney**. Their contributions to SLPOA will be sorely missed. Wyatt Brown, currently on the SLPOA advisory board, was nominated and elected to the board of directors to fill one of the resigned positions.

President, **Paul Sturm**, made a motion to nominate **Dan Beha** as 2027 president. Paul outlined his rationale referencing Dan's business leadership experience, commitment to SLPOA, connections with the City of Spirit Lake and its business leaders. Paul has been both vice president and president for the past six years. He said, "it is good for the organization to experience diversity in board leadership." The motion was seconded by Jerry Peterson and Dan was elected by unanimous vote. Dan thanked Paul for his service and work on behalf of SLPOA. Paul will remain on the board and committed to specific tasks including the newsletter, small waterways coalition representation, assisting with the annual meeting and consulting with Dan if requested.



Dan Beha

Dustin Thiers offered his nomination to be secretary. Following a brief discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. Jerry Peterson was reelected as treasurer.

One Board position and the position of VP remain open.

Summary of 2027 Officers:

President: Dan Beha – Vi President: Open – Secretary: Dustin Thiers – Treasurer: Jerry Peterson