



**FLATHEAD LAKE
BIO STATION**

UNIVERSITY OF
MONTANA

2025 - 2026





Greetings from FLBS!

Time flies when you're having fun, right? Well, this message is being written as I mark the end of my 10th year as Director of FLBS. In early 2016, my wife Monica and I arrived at the Director's house at Yellow Bay, dazzled by the bright snowy landscape and the lake out the window; excited but a bit apprehensive about what the coming years would bring.

What an amazing decade it has been!

There is a lot to reflect on - all the events and efforts across the last 10 years have led us to the accomplishments you will read about in this report. During those first years it was like drinking from a fire hose to take in all the history of FLBS as well as to get a grasp on its myriad of ongoing activities. What emerged from that initial familiarization was an appreciation of the dedication and expertise of the existing FLBS staff, most of whom are still in place and continue their impactful contributions in research, monitoring, and education.

Early on, we brought in two new tenure-track faculty members (Bob Hall, Matt Church) who have built flourishing research, teaching, and mentoring programs. Indeed, FLBS continues to attract talented scientists to pursue graduate studies and postdoctoral work with us. We onboarded new staff who took up FLBS' culture of excellence, working to manage our personnel, finances and facilities, strengthen our long-standing summer classes, expand our monitoring programs to a broader set of rivers and lakes, develop and implement our FLARE K-12 education program, and grow our community of philanthropic supporters.

Together:

We weathered a global pandemic. We were identified as the Flathead's most trusted source of information about water in the Flathead. We sustained our Flathead Monitoring Program into its sixth decade. We celebrated the 125th anniversary of our founding. We even built a new wastewater treatment plant!

In the coming pages, you can get updated on the many ways in which FLBS continued to thrive during 2025. Special kudos to FLBS Assistant Research Rachel Malison, whose outstanding work merited international recognition during the past year via the prestigious Maxwell/Hanrahan Award in Field Biology. You'll see plenty of her impact in other items in this report highlighting the Monitoring Montana Waters program and the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program that she runs. Also honored this year was FLBS Research Specialist Phil Matson, recognized for his tireless efforts to protect the Flathead from aquatic invasive species. Read more about FLARE K-12, growing and expanding for 10 years now under the leadership of FLBS Educators Monica Elser and Kelly Minear. Are you inspired by all this activity to support us via charitable giving? Then in these pages you can get to know our new development officer, Kylie Schumacher!

Through 2025 and indeed during this entire wonderful decade, I have come to appreciate even more the excellence of our FLBS team and the deep engagement of our Flathead community in all that we do. My gratitude grows with each passing day as we embark on the next 125 years on the shores of Yellow Bay. I hope that you enjoy this year's annual report and I thank you for your continued support of the Bio Station.

Sincerely,



Collaboration, Community, and Connection!



FLBS Continues Partnership with Owl Research Institute

In the fall of 2025, the Owl Research Institute (ORI) continued an impactful long-term Northern Saw-whet Owl migration study at FLBS. ORI scientists captured 232 owls, an increase of 20 owls from the 2024 banding season. The team also introduced over 200 members of the public to the wonders of wild owls through a public Visitor Nights program, providing attendees a front row seat to the significant research being done to advance understanding about Montana's owl populations.



Running for the Love of Flathead Lake

Hosted in beautiful Lakeside, MT by the Lakeside-Somers Chamber of Commerce, the 2025 Flathead Lake Run offered local runners and outdoor enthusiasts an opportunity to take part in a professionally timed run along the shores of Flathead Lake. Featuring popular 5k, 10k, and a kid's 1-mile run options, the mission of the event is to encourage local community members to get outside while raising awareness around protecting and preserving Flathead Lake. As an added bonus, a portion of all proceeds are donated to FLBS.



Monitoring Montana Waters Collaborative Training

FLBS Monitoring Montana Waters program united with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the Montana State University Extension Water Quality Program to host the 2025 Water Quality Monitoring Training Workshop at FLBS. Engaging water quality monitoring volunteers from across the state, the workshop provided training topics and activities focused on field monitoring methods and peer learning opportunities to implement effective volunteer water monitoring programs.



FLBS and the International Wildlife Film Festival

The 2025 International Wildlife Film Festival (IWFF) was coordinated by FLBS Ted Smith Environmental Storytelling Internship alum Josh Moyer, and included in its lineup *Balancing the Scales*—a short film highlighting the impact of beavers on British river systems that features the expertise of FLBS Assistant Research Professor Rachel Malison. Additionally, FLBS Marketing and Communications Manager Ian Withrow had the honor of serving as an IWFF juror.

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**Point your phone's camera at the QR code above, tap the link notification that appears on your screen, and view your 2025 FLBS Holiday Card!*



FLBS Unveils New Modular and Expandable Membrane Bio-Reactor Wastewater Treatment Plant at Annual Bio Station Open House Event

FLBS publicly unveiled a new modular and expandable Membrane Bioreactor wastewater treatment plant during the annual Bio Station Open House in August 2025.

Flathead Lake began showing signs of water quality deterioration back in the late-1960s and early 1970s. Working with partners that included the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Bio Station scientists determined that this water quality deterioration was the direct result of human inputs of the nutrient phosphorus.

In the mid-1970s, the Bio Station received funding from the EPA to construct a demonstration wastewater treatment plant to prove that removal of phosphorus to low levels was possible. The Sequencing Batch Reactor plant was state-of-the-art for the era, and the first tertiary treatment plant in the Flathead Watershed.

After demonstrating the plant's success, other wastewater treatment plants in the Flathead were upgraded to make them capable of modern phosphorus removal, and Flathead Lake water quality has remained outstanding ever since. Data from the Bio Station's long-term monitoring program show phosphorus levels in Flathead Lake have been stable, or perhaps even decreasing, over the past forty-plus years. The evidence is clear that investment in innovative wastewater treatment technology—in addition to the banning of phosphorus detergents and other phosphorus reduction efforts—worked.

In 2015, FLBS began working with the University of Montana and the State of Montana to replace the aging system, which was

kept operational by our diligent staff. A preliminary engineering study was conducted to explore replacement options. Ultimately, FLBS decided to implement Membrane BioReactor treatment technology. Unlike existing municipal plants, the technology for the Bio Station's plant is modular and arrived pre-assembled in shipping containers.

These package plants are cost effective. Where a traditional plant would've cost upwards of \$10M, the total costs for the implementation of the Bio Station's new containerized plant was roughly \$2.1M.

Package plants also provide an option of scalability. For example, if the Bio Station (or a local community using a similar plant) were to grow significantly, additional treatment technology and capacity could be added through the addition of more pre-assembled containers at an affordable cost.

These benefits, in concert with the package plant's demonstrated effectiveness of continued phosphorus removal to low levels, may once again provide local communities with a blueprint for wastewater treatment innovation to protect the world-renowned pristine waters of the Flathead Watershed.

Given the increases in development and population, containerized wastewater treatment plants could provide smaller, rapidly growing developments and communities an affordable, scalable, and effective wastewater treatment option in the Flathead—both to provide for growing housing demand and to continue to protect our beloved waters, which are a primary driver of our local economies.





FLBS Senior Scientist Logan Peoples Helps Uncover a New Species of Deep-Sea Snailfish

Last summer, a team of researchers that included FLBS Senior Scientist Logan Peoples confirmed the discovery of a new species of snailfish previously unknown to science: the bumpy snailfish (*Careproctus colliculi*). This confirmation was made after Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) scientists initially encountered the unfamiliar pink snailfish swimming over 13,000 feet below the surface of the Pacific Ocean back in 2019.

Peoples and his fellow researchers published their findings in the scientific journal *Ichthyology and Herpetology*, describing the bumpy snailfish observed by MBARI researchers alongside two other snailfishes from the abyssal seafloor offshore of California.

Snailfishes typically have a large head, jelly-like body covered in loose skin, and narrow tail. Many snailfish species have a disk on their belly that allows them to grip the seafloor or hitchhike on larger animals, such as deep-sea crabs. Shallow-water snailfishes often cling to rocks and seaweed, curling up like a snail. Scientists have described more than 400 different species of snailfish worldwide.

These fishes make their homes in a variety of ocean habitats, from shallow tide pools to deep-sea trenches. In fact, a snailfish holds the record for the deepest-dwelling fish.



FLBS Assistant Research Professor Rachel Malison Receives 2025 Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation Award in Field Biology

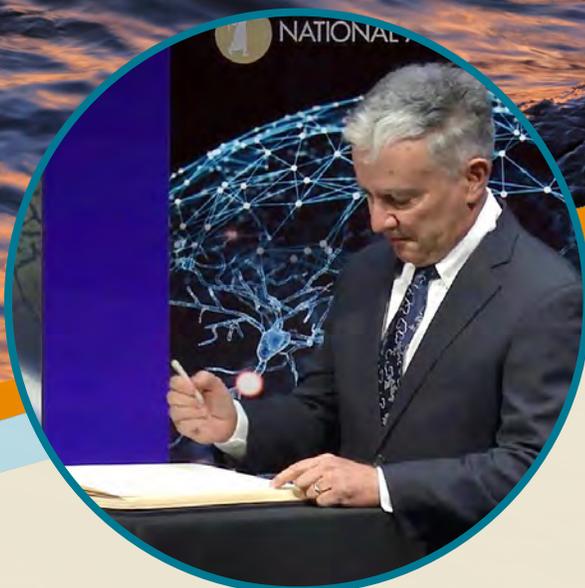
In 2025, the Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation honored FLBS Assistant Research Professor Rachel Malison with the foundation's prestigious Award in Field Biology.

Only five awards are made each year from nominations received from around the globe. Each awarded scientist received \$100,000 in unrestricted funds supporting their individual work, elevating their diverse perspectives and enabling them to commit time to observation and experimentation that helps us better understand ourselves and the world around us.

Launched in 2020, the awards provide scientists support at critical junctures in their careers so they can focus on mastery and creativity, elevate often underrepresented perspectives to problem-solving and promote progress in the biological sciences through individual research focused on our natural world.

In the selection process, nominators from around the world confidentially identified scientists for consideration and a committee selected winners based on impact in the field, originality and the momentum an award could provide at a critical career point.

The Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation powers people who explore and ask, teach and try, conserve and connect, and create and captivate. Its funding supports individual scientists, teachers, conservationists and creators whose diverse perspectives enable us to discover new things about the world.



THE ELSER ERA: 2019

Elser Inducted into the National Academy of Sciences

2019: FLBS Director Jim Elser is inducted into the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). NAS is a private, nonprofit institution that was first established under a congressional charter signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. Elser's election is made in recognition of his distinguished and continuing achievements in scientific research. He is the first person from UM inducted into the prestigious academy, and only the second in the history of Montana.

“By supporting our conservation efforts, we ensure both the ecological and economic sustainability of our priceless natural resources.”

Phil Matson
FLBS AIS Specialist



FLBS Committed to Protecting Our Waters from Aquatic Invasive Species

In 2025, the FLBS Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) monitoring program continued to expand the efficiency and effectiveness of AIS early detection, serving as another critical line of AIS defense that is keeping our waters clean and blue for generations to come.

Partnering with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), FLBS AIS Specialist Phil Matson and his team conducted three rounds of AIS sample collection from thirty-one different sites around Flathead Lake. FLBS scientists also conducted two rounds of sample collection from six additional Flathead Watershed lakes: Swan Lake, Ashley Lake, Echo Lake, Little Bitterroot Lake, Lake Mary Ronan, and Hungry Horse Reservoir.

This early-detection monitoring ensures that—should a mussel-infested boat somehow make it into our waters without getting cleaned, drained, and dried—the invading mussels or other AIS are detected as early as possible. Accurate early detection plays a key role in the ability of stakeholders and managers to respond to the arrival of zebra or quagga mussels and prevent invasion.

No evidence of invasive mussels has been detected in any of the samples from the Flathead Watershed processed thus far.

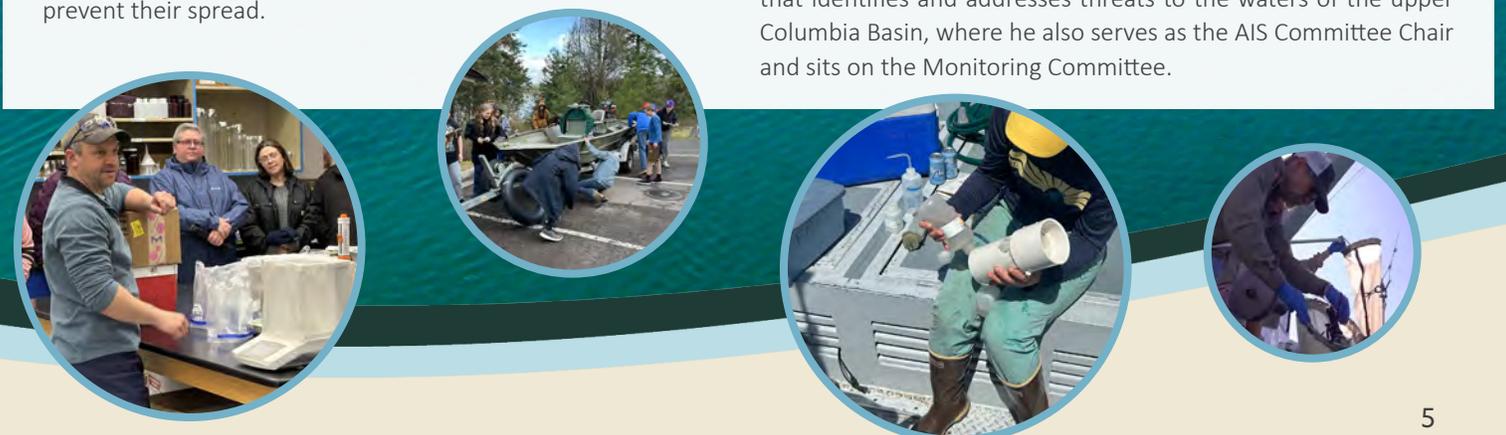
But the impact of the FLBS AIS program goes beyond sample collection. Matson and his team also provide impactful education and outreach opportunities sharing important information about the threats that AIS pose and the statewide efforts underway to prevent their spread.

In June, the FLBS AIS team—including FLBS AIS Lab Manager Leif Howard—hosted a day-long AIS training in conjunction with FWP. Participants from federal, tribal, and state agencies joined members of local watershed associations to learn native and non-native aquatic species identification, sampling techniques for microscopy and genetic detection techniques (i.e., PCR analysis), and environmental DNA best management protocols. Following the training, participants had the opportunity to join the FLBS AIS team during sampling events to put their newly acquired skills to go use.

Additionally, FLBS AIS team member and Big Sky Watershed Corps member, Evan Youngblade was a regular inspector at the Swan Lake watercraft inspection station run by the Swan Lakers watershed group, another strong partner in the battle against AIS.

The FLBS AIS program also teamed up with our FLARE K-12 program, CSKT, and FWP to host the popular Mussel Walk (pictured above) and Lake Honoring events, which provide students from local K-12 schools the opportunity to learn about lake ecology and AIS prevention. This year over 250 students surveyed Flathead Lake beaches for mussels and other invasive species and gained a deeper respect for protection our aquatic resources.

Recently, Matson was reappointed to another four-year term as a citizen-at-large voting member on the Western Montana Conservation Commission, a State of Montana organization that identifies and addresses threats to the waters of the upper Columbia Basin, where he also serves as the AIS Committee Chair and sits on the Monitoring Committee.





FLBS Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program Integrates Research and Education to Protect Montana’s Waters

It was another big year for the FLBS Montana Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program (PSPP). Led by FLBS Assistant Research Professor Rachel Malison and coordinated by FLBS Research Coordinator Janelle Groff, PSPP is funded through a \$6.6 million Environment Protection Agency grant.

PSPP utilizes both direct outreach—such as speaking at Bio Station community events or giving presentations to local homeowner’s associations—and indirect outreach through partnerships with the Montana Watershed Coordination Council and others to spread information about proper pesticide use and best stewardship practices.

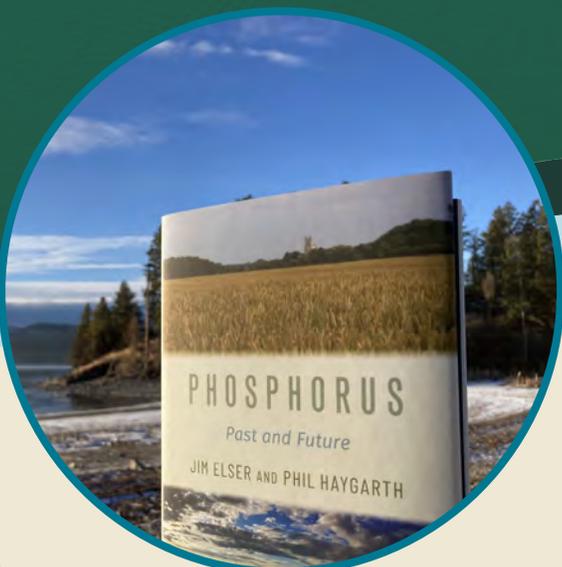
The education work also covers important water science concepts, like the idea that water moves pollutants, including how large rain events or excessive lawn watering can move chemicals on the land into the groundwater or nearby streams.

Malison expects the education portion of the program to continue to grow as PSPP progresses. Now embarking on the program’s third year, Malison and her PSPP team are developing more outreach materials and attending more in-person educational events than ever before. The pesticide sampling work will help guide this outreach, letting the team identify areas with particularly high levels of pesticides and target outreach to the have the maximum impact.



Montana Named “Best in the West” for AIS Early Detection and Prevention Programs

For decades, FLBS has played a pivotal role in Montana’s vigilant and joint efforts to prevent the arrival and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in Big Sky Country. In 2025, FLBS and the entire Montana AIS early detection and prevention collaborative team were recognized by the Western Regional Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species as “Best in the West” for their exceptional efforts in preventing the spread of invasive species.



THE ELSER ERA: 2021

Elser (co-)Writes the Book on Phosphorus

2021: Co-authored by Elser and his colleague Phil Haygarth, *Phosphorus: Past and Future* hits bookshelves nationwide. Phosphorus is essential to the production of our food, but it also triggers algal blooms in lakes, rivers, and oceans when it slips through our hands. In their book, world authorities on phosphorus sustainability Elser and Haygarth explain the element’s involvement in biology, human health and nutrition, food production, ecosystem function, and environmental sustainability.

\$12.5M*

**TOTAL GOAL FOR
FLBS125: AN ANNIVERSARY INITIATIVE*

*OVER
\$12M
RAISED SO FAR!*

For more information about FLBS125, contact:
FLBS Associate Director Tom Banskak

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☎ 406.872.4503



125

Anniversary

1899

2024

**FLATHEAD LAKE
BIO STATION**

In 2024, we launched FLBS125: An Anniversary Initiative to commemorate the Bio Station's 125th anniversary advancing world-class research, monitoring, education, and outreach for cutting-edge aquatic science. This initiative includes a multi-year fundraising effort to benefit the future of our waters by building impactful support in five major areas at FLBS: **Aquatic Research and Professorships**; **Monitoring our Waters**; **Sustained Operations and Facility Modernization**; **Advancing K-12 Education Opportunities**; and **Investing in Student Success at the University Level**. Thanks to your overwhelming generosity, we are deeply grateful to announce that **FLBS received a record-breaking \$4.8 million** in philanthropic support in 2025. **At the end of 2025, we have raised over \$12 million toward our current FLBS125 fundraising goal of \$12.5 million!**

For more information about DAF, contact: Alison Schultz
UM Foundation Sr. Dir. of Planned Giving
Phone: 406-243-7449 Email: alison.schultz@supportum.org



Your Donor Advised Fund, Our Future

You can direct a Donor Advised Fund (DAF) Grant to the Flathead Lake Biological Station

Put your Donor Advised Fund to work in a way that makes a lasting impact. By directing a grant to the University of Montana Foundation to benefit the Bio Station, you can support FLBS operations, facilities, student opportunities, or aquatic research and monitoring. Whether your passion is educating K-12 students, providing life changing scholarships, or helping the Bio Station protect our waters for future generations, your DAF gift can make a meaningful, lasting difference at the Bio Station. Additionally, you can add the Bio Station to your DAF as a beneficiary, as part of your succession planning to continue your support into the future.





Partnering with Local Businesses: Go Sail Montana and FLBS Work Together to Benefit the Future of Our Waters

In 2021, Go Sail Montana and FLBS partnered to create a navigational map (pictured below) for Flathead Lake’s robust sailing community. Working together, Captain Genevieve Evans of Go Sail Montana and FLBS Associate Director Tom Bansak sat down with the FLBS GIS team to create a new, waterproof map highlighting navigational hazards, water depth, safe harbors, and more on Flathead Lake. These popular maps continue to be available for purchase through Go Sail Montana, FLBS, and select businesses around Flathead Lake, with proceeds benefiting FLBS monitoring programs.

In July 2025, to celebrate the continued success of their partnership, Go Sail Montana generously invited members of the Bio Station team on a sailing tour of Flathead Lake. It was a beautiful morning of fair winds and following seas. As an added bonus, Go Sail Montana simultaneously announced that every Go Sail Montana sailing patron who made a donation to FLBS in August would receive a discount off of a Go Sail Montana booking during the 2025 sailing season. FLBS remains deeply grateful for the many partnerships and collaborations with business communities in the Flathead and beyond as we all work to keep our waters clean and blue!



Look for us on Social Media!



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https://flbs.umt.edu



Answering the Call: FLBS Donor Liz Rohde Invests in the Future of our Waters

A calling to help preserve healthy water began early in life for Liz Rohde. Now, she is helping the next generation of scientists carry on her passion.

Liz recently included a gift in her estate plan that will ultimately establish two enduring funds at the Flathead Lake Biological Station. The Liz Rohde Endowed Scholarship will provide financial resources to students pursuing hands-on education at FLBS. The Liz Rohde Endowed Lake Monitoring Fund will sustain critical long-term lake science. Together, these funds will kindle curiosity in ecology and safeguard freshwater health for generations.

For Liz, who is a University of Montana alum, being near water has always felt like home. The expansive shores of Puget Sound sparked her curiosity as a child, a sense of wonder mirrored now by Flathead Lake. Her adopted motto became, “Preserve the best, restore the rest.”

During her 30+ year career with the Flathead National Forest, Liz surveyed alpine lakes for acid rain impacts and streams nationwide for impacts from land management. Along the way, she delivered hundreds of field samples to the labs at FLBS, building an enduring connection to its mission and place in the scientific community. The Bio Station is grateful to Liz for her generosity, which reflects her lifetime devoted to healthy, accessible water.





FLBS Monitoring Program Continues to Stand Watch Over the Health and Sustainability of Our Waters

Overseen by FLBS Professor Matt Church, the Bio Station's long-term Flathead Monitoring Program (FMP) is honored to report after another year of rigorous monitoring, Flathead, Whitefish, and Swan Lakes all remain clean, clear, and blue.

While threats to water quality in the Flathead remain, scientists like FLBS Research Scientist Tyler Tappenbeck and the FMP team continue to play a vital role as the first line of defense against the degradation of our pristine waters and impacts to the fish and wildlife that depend upon healthy ecosystems.

Since 1977, the program's flagship activities have included monitoring and research on Flathead Lake, monitoring of Whitefish Lake, tracking nutrient inputs to our waters, and conducting river and floodplain research on the Middle Fork Flathead River. This consistent monitoring has resulted in one of the best long-term ecological and water quality records in the world.

Over the years, these activities have uncovered dramatic changes in Flathead Lake's community following the arrival of *Mysis* shrimp, documented the importance of free-flowing rivers and intact floodplains for fish and wildlife, and resulted in significant conservation successes such as a ban of phosphorus detergents, the upgrade of sewage treatment systems, and prevention of mining along the North Fork Flathead River.

FLBS scientists once again produced a number of significant water quality-related accomplishments this year. These accomplishments included the continued growth and development of the Bio Station's Monitoring Montana Waters program, and another impactful year of the FLBS Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program.

Additionally, FLBS expertise in the Kootenai Watershed played a prominent role in a historic agreement between U.S. and Canadian federal governments to ask for International Joint Commission intervention to study transboundary water pollution.

Though the Flathead Watershed continues to be free from impacts of widespread nutrient pollution that are degrading many other freshwater lakes and rivers around the world, we need to be more vigilant and collaborative than ever to ensure the health of our waters.

FMP is largely funded through philanthropic investment, and your support remains the driving force sustaining our ability to keep watch over our waters. Support from our FLBS community has strengthened our ability to monitor, understand, and protect Flathead Lake, its watershed, and waters across Montana for future generations.





Monitoring Montana Waters Program Celebrates Five Years of Helping Citizens Make a Difference for the Future of our Waters



Created by FLBS Assistant Research Professor Rachel Malison, the Monitoring Montana Waters (MMW) program celebrated its 5-year anniversary in 2025. Through MMW, Malison and her team offer in-depth training, including teaching citizen-led watershed groups how to use equipment, collect and submit samples, upload data to the Montana DEQ database, and carefully document the entire process. While the Bio Station’s analytical lab conducts most sample analyses, specialized analyses like metals are sent to external laboratories around the U.S.

All of this guidance guarantees that the monitoring conducted by citizen watershed groups is following solid scientific methods, yielding credible results, and providing data for use by Montana DEQ and other government agencies. This is important because Montana is a large state with a lot of water and agencies don’t have enough resources for monitoring. MMW gives volunteers the ability to fill those monitoring vacancies, collecting data that would otherwise be missing.

Since its initiation in 2020, this program at the Flathead Lake Biological Station has aided 19 community water monitoring programs across Montana, providing technical assistance, lab support and funding to ensure these programs collect rigorous, scientifically sound data that support their goals and are used for management of our waters. MMW has also funded the analysis of over 8,000 samples from some of the most valuable and sensitive rivers and lakes in Montana, including the Big Hole River and Bitterroot River.



THE ELSER ERA: 2022

Microplastics Discovered in Flathead Lake

2022: Elser joins international scientists to examine Flathead Lake water samples for the occurrence, distribution, and types of microplastics. The study found that, while levels of microplastic pollution measured in Flathead Lake are lower than in lakes in densely populated areas, the microplastic levels in Flathead are similar to or higher than lakes studied in other less-densely populated areas of the world. Notably, the study also discovered microplastics in rainwater samples.



Philanthropically-Funded FLARE K-12 Program Expands Reach and Engages Thousands of K-12 Students and Teachers in 2025

In 2025, the FLBS Flathead Lake Aquatic Research and Education (FLARE) K-12 Program completed another busy year at the Bio Station. More than 1200 students visited FLBS through in-person class field trips, and the program engaged 2000 additional students through a variety of off-Station activities that included library programs, summer camps, powwows, Boys and Girls Club visits, and more.

Funded entirely through philanthropic support, and led by FLBS Education Liaison Monica Elser and FLBS Education Coordinator Kelly Minear, the program also engaged two new schools (Charlo Elementary and Eureka High School) and partnered with Flathead Lake State Park, the Flathead Audubon, and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to provide science kits to kids throughout the winter months.

Additionally, 2025 FLBS Education Intern Emma Thompson, who attended FLARE K-12 field trips when she was a K-12 student in Bigfork, MT, helped the Bio Station continue a recent partnership with the Boy Scouts of America Camp on Melita Island. Once again, this collaboration brought high school-aged scouts from across the country to FLBS for immersive science education experiences during the summer

months. FLARE K-12 educators also helped host students taking part in the University of Montana’s summer experience opportunities.

With support from 2025 FLBS Big Sky Watershed Corps member Kaitlyn Webb, who provided essential educational programming to students across the Flathead Watershed, FLARE K-12 once again partnered with educators from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Flathead Lakers, and Montana State Parks to increase invasive mussel awareness through four Mussel Walk events.

Utilizing Aquatic Invasive Species curriculum that FLARE K-12 educators helped create and pilot, the Mussel Walk culminated in hands-on learning activities with middle school students on the shores of Flathead Lake.

As FLARE K-12 embarks on its 10th year connecting with local students in 2026, more schools and programs are reaching out to FLBS educators and opportunities to collaborate with the program are filling up fast. If you are a K-12 educator or program director and are interested in working with the FLBS FLARE K-12 program, visit the FLBS website and contact our FLARE K-12 educators today at flbs.umt.edu.



A Home for the Future of Aquatic Science and Education

All areas of the FLBS mission depend upon the quality, functionality, and safety of our facilities. Though rustically endearing, the aging facilities at FLBS highlight a growing need for infrastructure investment and modernization. With your help, we can make new facilities like the **Flathead Discovery Center** a reality for our ever-expanding education programs, accommodate increased productivity of a growing research staff, and support critical administration for sustainability of operations.

Contact: **Kylie Schumacher**
FLBS Director of Development
Email: kylie.schumacher@supportum.org



Want to make an impact?

Contact FLBS Director of Development Kylie Schumacher to learn how you can help us protect our waters for generations to come!

 kylie.schumacher@supportum.org  406.243.7478



The Creative Collaboration of Art and Science at FLBS

Now in its eighth year, the FLBS and Open AIR collaborative Artist-in-Residence program continues to play a significant role highlighting the important intersection of art and science at FLBS. This year's program culminated with the Art & Science Conference at FLBS.

Co-hosted by FLBS and Open AIR, this day-long conference featured artists, scientists, and educators leading various sessions, including hands-on activities, demonstrations, and art-making that engage audiences in conversations on place, art, and science. The 2025 event included presentations from 2025 Artists-in-Residence **Terry Conrad**, **Olivia Gorham**, **Eva-Maria Maggi**, and **Annabelle Sigmond**.



FLBS Director of Development Kylie Schumacher Brings Outdoor Enthusiasm and Fundraising Experience to FLBS

Joining FLBS in 2025, FLBS Director of Development Kylie Schumacher first began her career in wildlife after earning a degree in Zoology from Colorado State University. After graduation, she spent a summer studying northern goshawks in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest before securing a job as a Biological Science Technician for the USDA-National Wildlife Disease Program (NWDP). After four years with the NWDP, she spent a summer ear-tagging elk calves for mortality monitoring in the Apache-Sitgreaves and Gila National Forests of Arizona and New Mexico.

Prior to her new role at FLBS, Kylie was inspired by her passion for conservation and public lands to lead the fundraising and outreach efforts at the national nonprofit Backcountry Hunters & Anglers as a Regional Coordinator for seven western states. Kylie is currently an MBA candidate at the University of Montana. Outside of work, she enjoys cooking, gardening, yoga and spending time outdoors—whether in the woods, on the water or adventuring with her black lab, Holt.

As the FLBS Director of Development, Kylie helps secure resources to support the Bio Station and its ongoing and critical work to protect the longevity and health of the Flathead Lake ecosystem.

THE ELSER ERA: 2016

Elsers Create the FLBS FLARE K-12 Program

2016: Monica and Jim Elser create the Flathead Lake Aquatic Research and Education (FLARE) K-12 Program. Overseen by Monica Elser as the Bio Station's Education Liaison, the program will engage over 20,000 K-12 students and teachers with real-world science education during Elser's tenure at FLBS



Another Outstanding Year for the FLBS Summer Academic Program

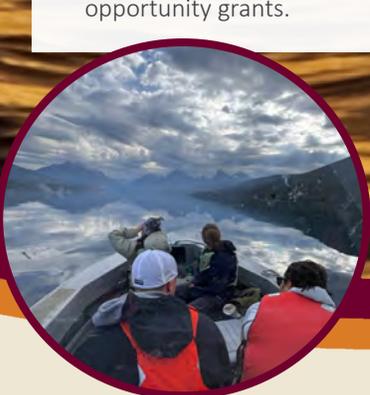


Since 1899, FLBS has offered an immersive, world-class education in the Flathead Watershed. In 2025, graduate and undergraduate students from 22 universities attended the FLBS summer program to take one or more of our field-based ecology courses. The 2025 course offerings featured place-based educational experiences that included outings to Wild Horse Island, midnight Flathead Lake samplings, whitewater rafting down the Middle Fork Flathead River, and more.

Overseen by FLBS summer session program manager Hannah Gerhard—with support from 2025 summer session assistants Abigail Lamoutte and Emily Salmonsén ('24 FLBS summer session alum)—the FLBS 2025 summer courses offered students hands-on learning and real-world research opportunities alongside world-renowned FLBS scientists. These opportunities included 10 overnight field trips to Glacier National Park and other ecologically significant locations.

We are extremely honored to announce that \$80,000 in philanthropically-funded scholarships were awarded to 60% of our 2025 FLBS students, which covered the costs of nearly 50% of their summer student expenses.

Many of these financial awards are possible thanks in large part to the named and endowed scholarships created by our generous Bio Station community, which continues to play a vital role in expanding access to FLBS courses for college students in Montana and throughout the country. 2025 students also benefited from \$10,000 in grant funding from Applied Materials, in addition to funding through University of Montana student opportunity grants.



“ I get to be out in this place, learn about the science and really see the impact that everyone at the Bio Station has on the surrounding communities and environment. I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of it all. ”



Grace Porges
2025 FLBS Marketing Intern



FLBS Internships Provide Life-Changing Experiences for University Students

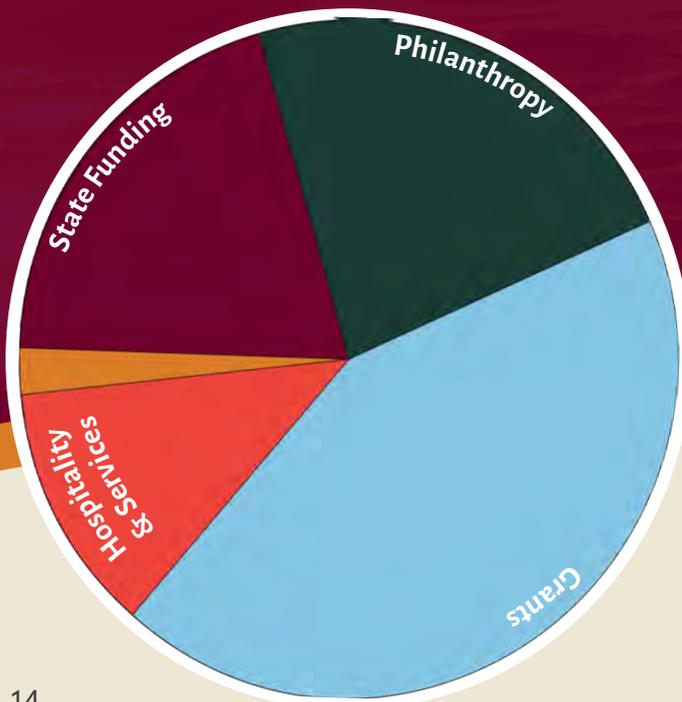
FLBS hosted ten paid interdisciplinary interns from Montana and around the nation during the summer of 2025. Made possible through philanthropic support and collaborative partnerships, these interns played a crucial part in advancing all areas of the Bio Station’s mission, leaving a lasting and positive impact on FLBS research, monitoring, education, and outreach for years to come.

With internship costs on the rise, the continued support of our Bio Station community is more important than ever to give our interns these life-changing, real-world experiences that benefit their career development and our waters for years to come.



THE ELSER ERA: 2025 Elser Announces His Retirement

2025: After a decade of transformational leadership, FLBS Director and Bierman Professor of Ecology Jim Elser announces his plans for retirement, stating that 2026 will be his final year at the University of Montana’s Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS). During the Elser era, FLBS underwent a lot of growth, increased its productivity, and enhanced its impact in science, education, and the community. A commemoration of Elser’s tenure at the Bio Station will take place in the fall of 2026. **We invite you to join us as we embark on another wonderful year of research, monitoring, and education—ensuring that 2026 is the exclamation point on an already storied Elser legacy at FLBS!**



PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

Second Highest Funding Source for FLBS

2025 FLBS Funding Sources

- Grants (43%)
- Philanthropic Support (23%)
- State Funding (20%)
- Hospitality and Services (12%)
- Academic Tuition/Fees (2%)





**FLATHEAD LAKE
BIO STATION**
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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2026 FLBS EVENTS:

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



»»» FLBS Open House - August 7, 2026

We invite you to visit beautiful Yellow Bay campus and engage in hands-on science activities; meet our faculty, staff, and students; listen to informative presentations on the State of the Lake and Bio Station programs; and more! Come early and enjoy food, music, and a boat ride on the *Jessie B.*!

»»» UMAA/FLBS Flathead Lake Cruise - July 16, 2026

Climb aboard the *Far West* in Lakeside, MT for the first FLBS/University of Montana Alumni Association (UMAA) Flathead Lake Cruise. Learn about Flathead Lake directly from FLBS scientists while enjoying great food and outstanding conversation with FLBS community members and UM alumni!

»»» Science on Tap Flathead

For over a decade we have partnered with the Flathead Lakers to host informal science presentations at the Flathead Lake Brewing Company Pubhouse in Bigfork, MT. Join us for topics that range from Flathead Lake history to water quality to aquatic invasive species!

»»» Data and Donuts

During the first four Mondays of our summer program in June, scientists from FLBS, Montana, and around the world give a one-hour lecture on a fascinating research topic. Join us for a great opportunity to learn while enjoying a tasty pastry or two!