

A note of appreciation

Posted: Thursday, July 17, 2008 12:00 am

This note of appreciation for long-time Whitefish residents Jim and Lisa Stack is proportionately inadequate in comparison to the service these two have contributed to our community — most notably to the preservation of Whitefish Lake and lakeshore. Mr. Stack has announced his upcoming resignation from the Whitefish Lake and Lakeshore Protection Committee after 16 years of dedicated work — 10 as chairman.

Mr. Stack spent childhood summers on Whitefish Lake. He graduated as the valedictorian of his Montana State University mechanical engineering class. He and his wife built on Whitefish Lake in the early 1980s. They are truly experienced with every facet of the lake and lakeshore, not to mention the hundreds of lakeshore photos they have catalogued over the years.

Mr. Stack was awarded the Carnegie Medal for "Extraordinary Heroism" in 2000 for his 1999 rescue of two boaters who had fallen into the lake's frigid waters, one of whom did not survive. The Stacks, using the accompanying Carnegie monetary award, partnered with friends to bring to Whitefish Lake a Neoteric rescue hovercraft now housed at the City Beach.

The Stack's interest in the lake has carried over to participation in the Whitefish Lake Institute. The couple have been and are visible participants in a number of community charitable events as well. With land value inflation causing hardship on long-time Montana property owners, they traveled the state in the early 2000s advocating tax reform. The list goes on.

Jim Stack's engineering background combined with untiring research, study and observation — of water quality, pollutants and seasonal lake levels; ice formation and break-up patterns; wind storms, wave action and sediment; native vegetation communities; land surveying, design and construction — are some of the invaluable attributes he has brought to the Whitefish Lake and Lakeshore Protection Committee. He and the committee have struggled under different governing bodies to maintain consistency in state-mandated regulations to preserve our prized lakes and lakeshores.

His energy and zeal for Whitefish and its lake perhaps is seen by a minimal few as autocracy. Thus, some criticism was voiced at a recent city council meeting.

I grew up on Whitefish Lake, in later years went through the Lakeshore permit process and now serve on the Lakeshore Committee (since 1997). I see Jim Stack as a dedicated, "visionary" servant to the well-being of the lake for residents and visitors. I thank him and his wife for their many years of hard work in what has often been an uphill and contentious trek to make necessary lake regulations work and work fairly for all.

Marcia Sheffels lives in Whitefish.