

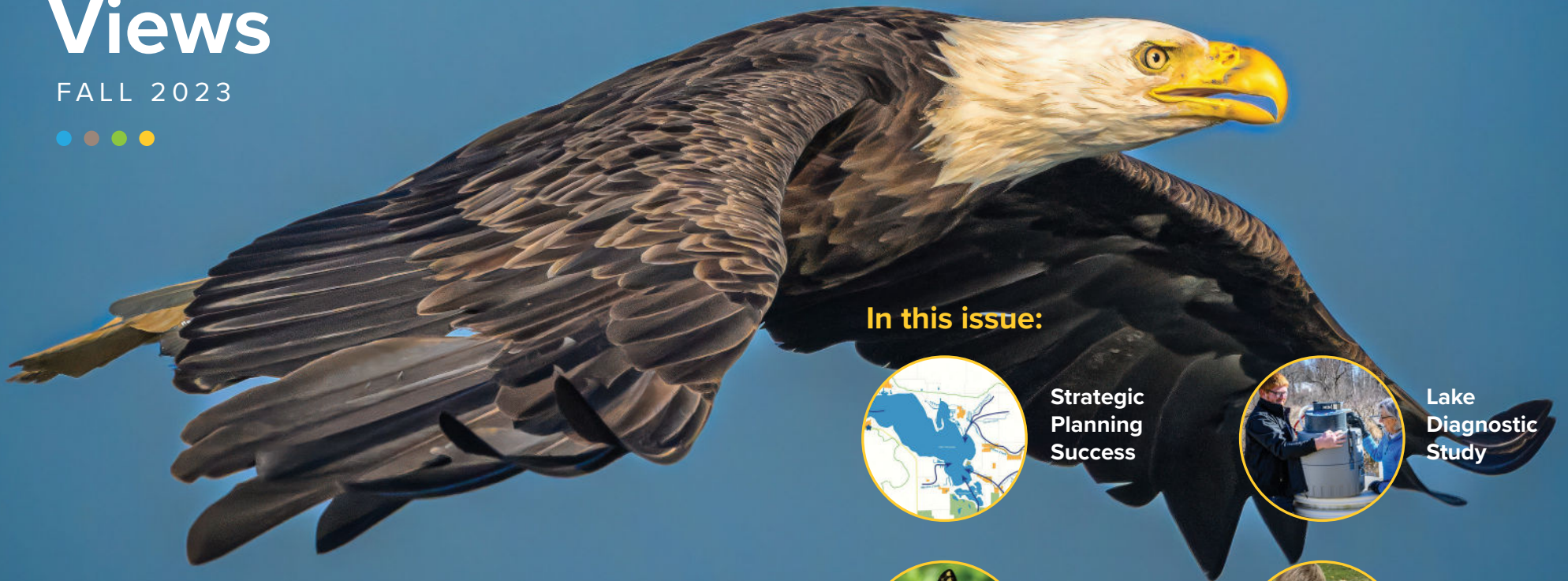


WAWASEE AREA CONSERVANCY FOUNDATION

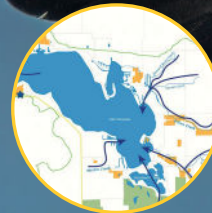
Protecting our watershed through **AWARENESS, ANALYSIS** and **ACTION**.

Conservancy Views

FALL 2023



In this issue:



**Strategic
Planning
Success**



**Lake
Diagnostic
Study**



**Our Ecology
Committee
Priorities**



**Fun
with Fall
Events**

Photo credit: Larry Baumgardt

Chairman's Message

by J. Terry Clapacs, Board Chair

DID YOU
KNOW?

Wawasee Area
Watershed is

24,448
ACRES

The summer of 2023 has ended, and the dazzling colors of our indigenous Indiana hardwoods are on display around the Wawasee watershed. It is a beautiful time of year that produces some of the best sunsets across our waters.

This has been a good year for your WACF with many accomplishments. An introspective planning process, guided by past chair John Bearss, led to the adoption of a new strategic plan for WACF that will allow for more focused decision making. It is important that we maximize available resources and philanthropic support in a way that identifies priorities and goals. We now have a better road map for future investments.

The Ecology Committee, under the careful guidance of Beth Morris, has expertly managed the WINS study resulting in a set of data that provides a whole new direction for WACF remediation projects. Partnering with Professor Emeritus Jerry Sweeten and his EcoSystems Connections Institute staff, the WINS study is gaining national recognition in the field of

Lakes and Streams best practice conservation.

We lost a great Board Member this year with the passing of Tom Yoder but his work in assembling properties in the Wawasee Watershed will provide necessary protection for generations. Tom worked against a long-term real estate plan and his most recent land acquisitions almost completed his initial goal. There is a small amount of work to do but we are in a good position to shift our focus to other components of the WACF mission.

Cindy Peterson and her Education Committee touched hundreds of young lives in our region through creative programs that teach the fundamentals of proper lake use. Good habits ingrained early in life will serve us all well.

Our friends (That's You!!) continue to generously support WACF. Under the able leadership of Bill McCully, WACF has recently enjoyed record fundraising years. Emily Maggart joined the WACF team this year and brings outstanding experience to the

Development Officer's position. New funding resources have enabled new initiatives so important to keeping up with our challenges.

You'll notice we have a new brand! Thanks to Shannon McNett-Silcox the Board adopted a new face for our organization that is refreshing and easier to identify. You will see the new look appearing on our property ownership signs and letterhead soon.

Perhaps the most important WACF strength is the passionate set of Board members that seem to not only enjoy their volunteer work but thrive in knowing they are making a real contribution to the Lake area we all love and treasure. If you are interested in becoming part of the WACF volunteer network please contact our Executive Director, Heather Harwood, and let her know how you would like to help. She can be reached via email at Heather@wacf.com.

Heather is our Rock and leads the operational side of our organization. WE have been in her good hands for decades now and she is the BEST!

Honorariums and Memorials

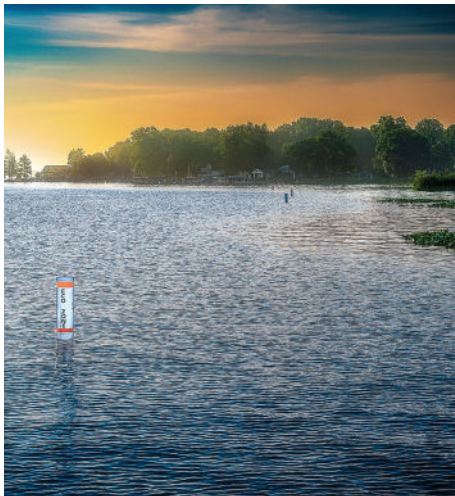
Please know we have moved Honorariums and Memorials to [WACF.com](https://www.wacf.com) to ensure that the generosity of our neighbors and friends is always available to be seen and appreciated. We are so grateful for this support and wish to highlight it continually.

Executive Director Update

by Heather Harwood, Executive Director

WACF operates with the mission to **protect and enhance water quality and natural attributes in the Wawasee area watershed through water related land acquisition, educational programming, and scientifically informed action to preserve the lakes for future generations.**

The 'scientifically informed' action is the result of analyzing data from our 5-year WINS (Wawasee Inlets Nutrient Study) work to protect the water quality of the Wawasee watershed. We have pursued intensive water testing with EcoSystems Connection Institute and Dr. Jerry Sweeten, generating a collection of data that has quantified external loadings of



nutrients and sediment, water budget, and internal loadings of nutrients and sediment.

The WINS data provides backup for justification of areas of concern in the watershed and positions us to identify more opportunities for improvement throughout our watershed.

The next step using the outcome of WINS data: a broader 'Lake Diagnostic Study' (LDS) utilizing data generated to determine nutrient focus areas. This will direct us to the most appropriate conservation practices in the watershed to reduce nutrients and sediment watershed-wide. This year, our partners at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Lake and River Enhancement awarded WACF a grant to partially fund a LDS.

The WINS data shows elevated levels of phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment in the Greater Dillon Creek and Turkey Creek sub watersheds. In the study spanning 2019-2021, Turkey Creek subwatershed generated over 300,000 lbs. of sediment. Dillon Creek over 250,000. The desired goal: mitigate the quantity of sediment and nutrients generated from the upper watershed. Turkey Creek contributed over 40% of all phosphorus and sediment entering Wawasee. Dillon Creek contributed



over 50% of the total nitrogen to Wawasee.

We need more information of root causes to fix the problem. Sediment is by far the largest nonpoint source pollutant and most consequential ecological and social challenge for glacial lakes. The LDS will address sediment and nutrients in excess proportion that result in poor lake water quality. The LDS would include an overview sampling tributaries, collecting water in pertinent sites, prioritizing potential watershed improvement projects, prescribing restoration strategies, and be a guide for future projects in the watershed.

The LDS will examine the overall health of the watershed's lakes, streams, and sub-watersheds, identify existing and potential threats to the water quality of area lakes. It will also help develop a long term management plan of preventive maintenance to be used as a guide for future activities to preserve and improve existing lake water quality and the integrity of the watershed ecosystem. Data will include Greater Dillon and Turkey Creeks that provide approximately 80% of the surface water supply and contributed 80% of the sediment and nutrients, and review the outflows and functionality

of their wetlands. The LDS will also include Martin Creek with the highest % per acre of the subwatersheds and elevated levels of nutrients coming from the Tri-county Preserve and farmlands into Papakeechee Lake.

WACF values important lands, water quality, people and long-term thinking. We invest in important lands that protect water quality. We acquire key property, manage land, educate our community, and we study the best ways to improve and protect water quality. The LDS will identify so many more opportunities for improvement throughout our watershed.

WACF enjoys our partnerships with the IDNR, EcoSystems Connections Institute and Dr. Jerry Sweeten, the Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams and Dr. Nate Bosch. This fall's Tree ID walk led with Dr. Bosch during our annual Falltastic Trail Walk at our Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center was full of fun facts about the trees and their value to wildlife and overall health of the watershed. By joining with Dr. Bosch and other organizations like the IDNR, we expand our knowledge and community outreach.



Your WACF Ecology Committee:

Applied Science for our Watershed by Beth Morris, Ecology Committee Chair



WACF Ecology Committee

First row: Beth Morris, Shelley Lukemeyer, Heather Harwood, Lisa Hetler.

Second row: Rob DeBeck, Pam Schumm, Diana Castell, Judy Roberts, Steve Coyle

Not pictured: Russell Anderson, Kathleen Francoeur, Jacquie Giles, Lori Queisser, Mike Smith, Joan Szydal, Diane Tulloh.

Who we are:

- Backgrounds include environmental sciences, environmental engineering, education, public health, accounting, chemistry, nursing, dentistry, research, and quality assurance.
- 5 committee members have earned certificates from Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy, an in-depth 5-month program sponsored by Purdue University to strengthen watershed leadership skills.

Actionable goal: Sense, search out and solve threats to the Wawasee Area Watershed and water quality.

Conduct research on our watershed.

- Wawasee Inlets Nutrient Study (WINS) 2019-2023 - Developed a data-driven baseline characterizing nutrient and sediment loading of Lake Wawasee that is being used to prioritize remediation projects and to measure long-term progress on managing lake health.
- Volunteer monitoring of Lake Wawasee through the Indiana Clean Lakes Program, maintaining data since 1989.
- Volunteer monitoring of Ten Lakes Chain, sampling lakes for clarity during WACF Canoe Trips since 2014.
- Develop monitoring and maintenance program for key wetlands in the watershed.

Take action to reduce phosphorous and sediment, a “carrier” for phosphorous, entering streams and lakes.

- Initiate targeted remediation projects on upstream creeks to stabilize stream banks to reduce erosion and slow the flow of water.
- Through partnerships with county Natural Resources Conversation Services, Soil and Water Conservation District and Ecosystems Connections Institute, encourage voluntary on-farm conservation practices that improve soil health and water quality, funded by National Water Quality Initiative grant.

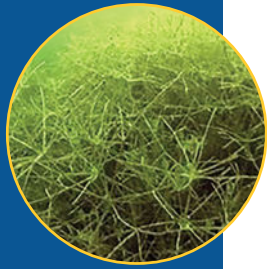
DID YOU KNOW?



WACF, a land trust, protects **1,037** ACRES (4% of watershed)

65% of the watershed is agricultural acreage

Inflow to Lake Wawasee by 4 subwatersheds: Turkey Creek (46%) Martin Creek (12%)
Dillon Creek (37%) Papakeechee (5%)



Enjoying all Seasons at the Lake

**By Bill McCully,
Development Committee Chair**



Oversee management of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.

- Oversee yearly maintenance treatments for aquatic invasive species (Eurasian Watermilfoil and Starry Stonewort) in heavily used recreational areas of Lake Wawasee and Syracuse Lake to keep these invasive weeds in check. Proactively work with WPOA and SLA to develop long-term funding streams for these treatments as historical grant funds disappear.
- Partner with Kosciusko Water and Woodland Invasive Partnership (KWWIP) to remove terrestrial invasive species such as purple loosestrife, phragmites, and tree of heaven from key wetlands.

Stay abreast of research by partners and other experts.

- Invited speaker Dr. Nate Bosch from Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams to share research on our lakes and microcystin and blue-green algae.
- Attend annual Indiana Lakes Management Society meeting and other watershed management forums.
- Explore various modes of phosphorous sequestration such as “P-traps,” edge-of-field digesters, and lanthanum-binding for possible future use.
- Field trips to benchmark strategies for constructed and remediated wetlands.

Build and maintain relationships with partner organizations.

A few examples of our many partnerships in action:

- Partner with Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams on tree identification walks.
- Participate in an educational day for incoming boaters at the Wawasee public boat ramp with DNR and KWWIP.
- Explore possibilities for funding wetland remediation projects with US Fish and Wildlife Services and Ducks Unlimited.



As we close out another great lake season, we have been blessed with unusually warm autumn weather. The latter part of September and early October have been the big payoff to our decision to move to the lake full time. Although, around our house, we have a saying, “There is no bad weather at the lake, only weather!”

As I look back on the summer season, I also am excited as we initiate some of the actions we are undertaking at WACF as a result of the strategic planning process. We continue to drive a mission that includes the acquisition of strategic properties in the Wawasee Area Watershed to not only protect them, but also to enhance their ability to filter out harmful substances. We are also working to build community partnerships that will result in a reduction of nutrients and sediment which threaten the viability of our lakes through responsible practices, conservation easements and other activities.

As we move forward in realizing the benefits of our plans, we continue to do so only with the support of our friends, partners and donors.

We have had several years of record support, not only in the form of dollars, but also in volunteer hours, engagement and participation in our many education and community events.

We have worked to make it as easy as possible for you to provide that support through a number of programs, including the Waco Pavilion Society where your annual contribution of \$1,000 or more allows you to join in a variety of fun and meaningful activities. In addition, we have recently updated our website to facilitate simple and secure online donations.

I would also ask you to reflect on another opportunity. The WACF has established the Legacy Society that provides an opportunity for planned giving that will allow for a permanent legacy for you or your family to support the mission of clean and healthy water for generations to come. Please contact Emily Maggart at WACF to learn more.

As the seasons change, whatever the weather, enjoy it!



A Busy – and Exciting – Fall Calendar

by Pam Schumm, Education Officer



You could say that the WACF Education Team and their bevy of volunteers have been a little busy this fall! Between Aug. 21 and Oct. 3, we have hosted all students in the Wawasee School System in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9 at an educational field trip – that’s 1084 students total! Each trip is different and requires a minimum of 12 volunteers. It’s exciting for the students and they all learn something about the watershed, organisms in the watershed and how to protect it. Grade 1 looks at different ways organisms can survive in the environment; grade 2 learns about birds; grade 3 studies trees; grade 4 gets up close and personal with bugs; grade 5 experiences ways that populations are limited in number or health; and grade 9 rafts through Mud Lake in search of water plants and water quality. Hats off to all the volunteers who help with these incredible field trips! Teachers LOVE these trips and wish we could offer more for other grades. Students tell us that they love learning things while being outside and this is the best trip ever! We encourage them to come back to walk the trails with an adult and to attend our annual Earth Day Festival and Falltastic Trail Walk.

It’s not enough that we educate the students, but we also educate the

chaperones who attend. It’s a win-win for our environment! The Falltastic Trail Walk happened on Oct. 7 and 8. Over 350 people enjoyed the decorated trails and the children loved the activities and experiments. The fire warmed us all up on those cool autumn days, while the free cookies and candy were appreciated too. Our trails were once again decorated for Fall and Halloween. There were witch’s hats, ghosts and spider webs hanging from trees; educational posters scattered throughout the trails; fall décor beautified corners and a few skeletons or witches pointed the way along the trails. It’s always a fun weekend to come to WACF! If you missed it this year, next year’s dates are Oct. 5 and 6.

We are so proud of our Education Team! Our total number of activities offered this year numbered 29 which served 1612 youth, 887 adults for a total of 2499 people and a core of volunteers who put in 1684.25 hours!



DID YOU KNOW? Lake Wawasee is **3,060** SURFACE ACRES

Actively Improving

by Shannon McNett-Silcox, Marketing Committee Chair

After the completion of our Strategic Plan earlier this year, several things became clear:

1. We undertake efforts now that weren't even on the radar when we first started.
2. Our understanding and depth of knowledge has been greatly enhanced.
3. There are new tools and approaches at our disposal that allow us to drive our mission.
4. Wow, we've accomplished a lot over the last 30+ years (thanks to your support & trust!).
5. THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME FOR OUR LAKE COMMUNITY.

DID YOU KNOW?



The two **biggest culturally driven threats** to our watershed are **sediment** and **phosphorous** coming from our yards and farm run-off.

Through out the strategic planning process, we felt the excitement and were incredibly encouraged by the direction we were taking. While most in the community may not be aware of all the little details of our past work, we were certain that even more were unaware of what was to come. It was important that we begin to change that through our communications, our actions and even our brand. Hence, what you will notice in this newsletter: a refreshed brand to support the next phase of WACF!



- Sun/life/bright future!
- Water
- Land/Soil
- Plant life/vegetation

Please know this wasn't simply a matter of changing our logo. It was about clearly messaging our new direction with a supporting look and tone that highlighted how we have evolved. Yes, that did include creating an updated logo with a refreshed modernized look. However we still wanted to give a nod to our important history, to our founders, board and volunteers who had the vision to start WACF. That's why you'll see the logo still has some of the components of the original. We aren't a new non-profit, we are a 30+ year organization that is actively improving and looking to best practices to make a difference. WACF has evolved to meet the changing needs of prioritizing clean water in our lakes.

From this point forward you will start to see our new look in all of our communication tools. But as a good steward of our resources, it will be a rolling launch. If we still have materials with the old logo in inventory, we plan to use them until we run out or it is time to update. We appreciate your patience and all of your support through the years. We will continue to work hard, look forward and adapt when necessary to ensure the preservation of our watershed. Thank you!



Wawasee Area Conservancy Foundation
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Officers & Directors

Terry Clapacs
Chairman

Tom Cottrell
Vice Chairman

Heather Harwood
Executive Director

Donn Baird
Treasurer

Emily Maggart
Development Officer

Jeff Herdrich
Land Management Officer

Pam Schumm
Education Officer

Russell Anderson

John Bearss

Robert Fanning

Bill Herdrich

Jay Jorgensen

Tom Kelly

Dan Kiley

Becky Levinson

Bill McCully

Beth Morris

Cindy Peterson

Chris Roberts

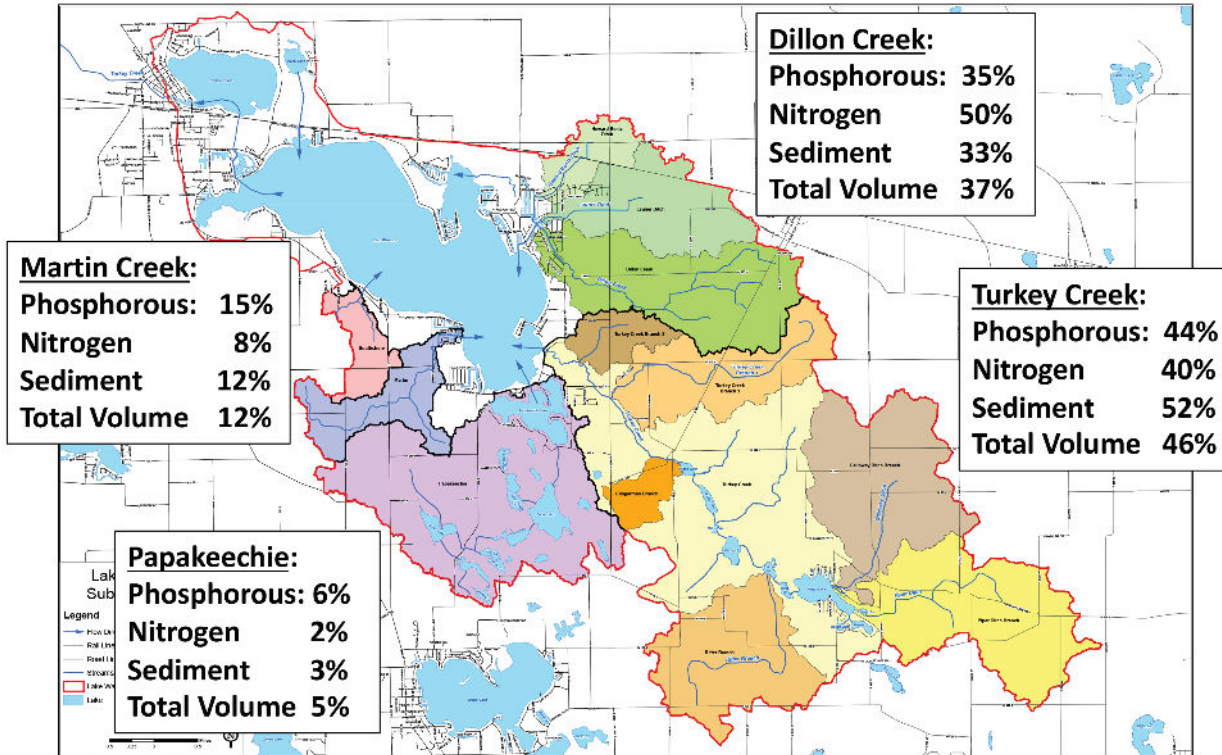
Shannon Silcox

Joan Szynal

Brian Warren

Wawasee Inlets Nutrient Study (WINS) by the Numbers

4-Yr. Avg. Contribution to Nutrient and Sediment 2019–2023



DID YOU KNOW?

• • • •

The Wawasee Area Watershed has 4 Main Subwatersheds

Turkey Creek
 (10,149 acres or 41.5%)

Papakeechee/Tri-County Fish and Wildlife
 (3,479 acres or 14%)

Dillon Creek
 (3,358 acres or 13.7%)

Martin Creek
 (700 acres or 3%)