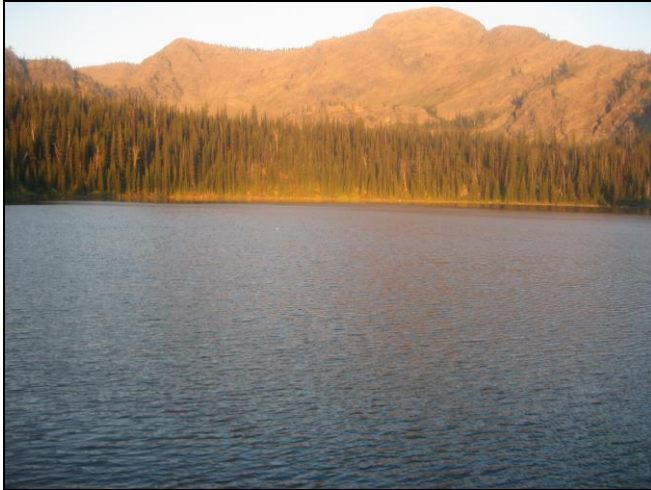


# Big Lake



**Description:** Big Lake is a large (40.2 acres), remote glacial cirque lake located within designated Wilderness in the Rattlesnake Creek drainage near Missoula at ~ 6,875 ft elevation. To increase storage volume, the lake was artificially impounded by a dam at the outlet in 1915. This structure elevates the normal surface water elevation, but may also increase annual water level fluctuations. Big lake is one of the three largest lakes in the Rattlesnake Wilderness Area.

**Location:** T15N, R18W, Section 19; Latitude N47.0398°, Longitude W113.9180°; Nearest Town: Missoula, MT  
Surrounding land ownership: Lolo National Forest (Missoula Ranger District). Big Lake lies near the center of the Rattlesnake Wilderness Area.

**Access:** Although this lake is geographically close to the city of Missoula, access is difficult. There are several USFS routes from which to choose. Route distance and difficulty varies, but all require non-motorized travel. Common starting points are the trailheads at West Fork Gold Creek (Trail # 52), Ravine Creek in lower Grant Creek (Trail # 34), or in lower Rattlesnake Creek at the main Rattlesnake National Recreation Area trailhead (Gated Road #99). Please refer to USFS maps for specific travel routes and connecting trail numbers. Total travel distance from trailheads to the lake ranges from 9-17 miles.

**Camp Sites and Use:** Big Lake lies in a remote setting that receives light use. There is an established trail to the lake, and one lightly used campsite on the south end of the dam embankment. 'Leave no trace' camping and recreating is essential, as the lake lies within designated Wilderness.

**Angling Opportunity:** Big Lake supports a wild rainbow trout population. Shoreline topography and access lend well to shoreline angling from about 75% of the lake perimeter.

**Stocking History:** Big Lake was historically stocked with rainbow trout (prior to 1982) and has not been planted in recent decades. There are no plans to stock in the future as the rainbow trout population is self-sustaining.

**Angling Pressure:** Estimated angling pressure from Montana state-wide mail surveys in 2005-2009 was low and averaged < 25 angler-days per year.

**Other Nearby Lakes:** There are several other lakes near Big Lake. Sheridan Lake lies less than 0.25 mile to the east, but access to it requires hiking on a steep, unmaintained trail through densely forested terrain. Worden Lake lies ~ 1 mile to the south and can easily be reached off USFS Trails #1265 and #534. There are also several fishless lakes within 0.5 miles to the west of Big Lake (Rattlesnake Lakes #9, #10 and #11) that may be reached via easy off-trail hiking.



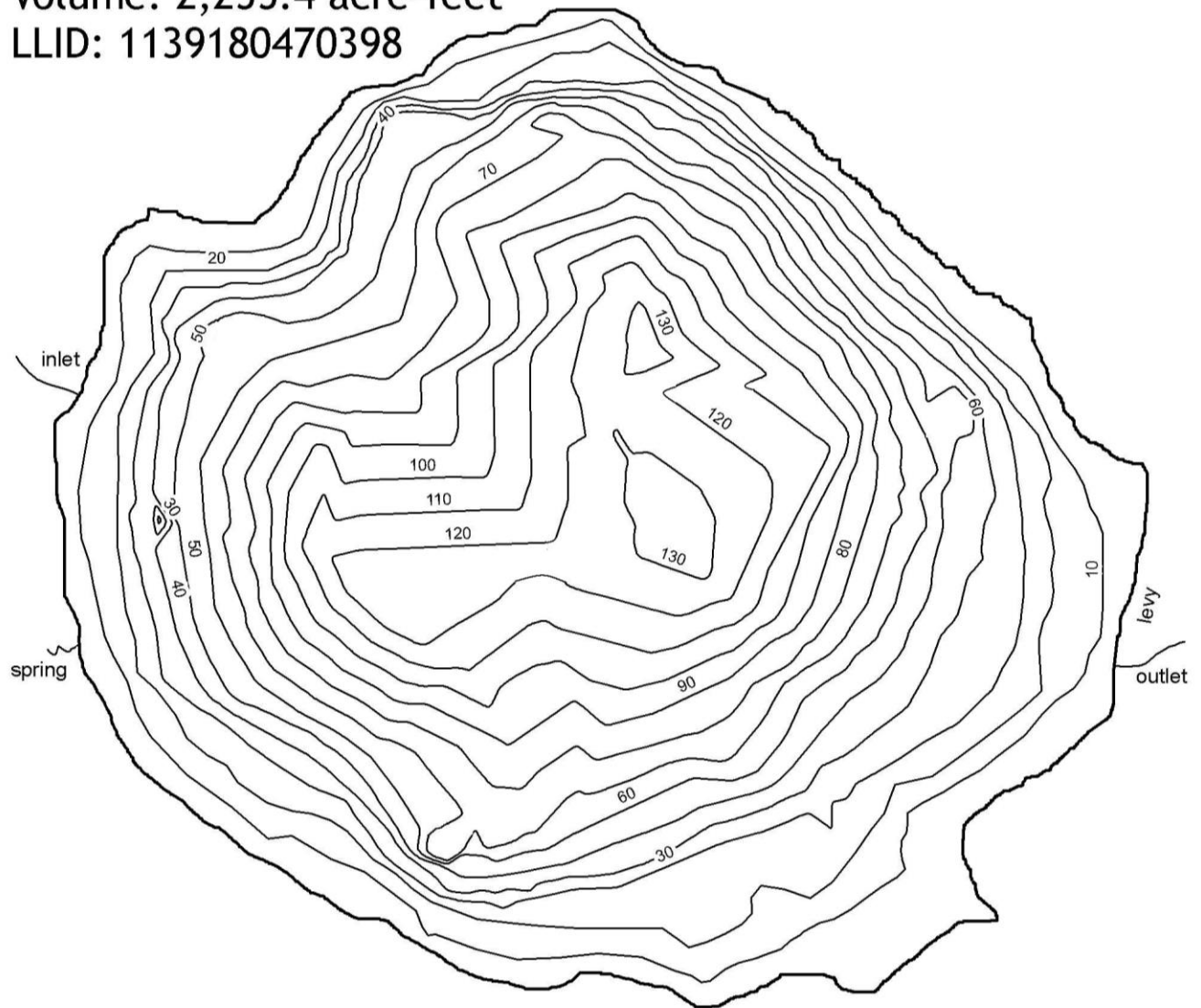
# Big Lake

Surface Area: 40.2 acres

Max Depth: 136 ft

Volume: 2,255.4 acre-feet

LLID: 1139180470398



0 125 250 500 Feet

Ten foot contours and volume calculations produced in ArcMAP  
using field measurements collected September 12, 2007.  
IS Request 8035 - R2 Mountain Lake Bath Maps  
Strategic Planning and Data Services  
Helena, MT  
May 27, 2010