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May 25, 2012

The Honourable Keith Ashfield
Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Parliamentary Office, House of Commons
Room 107, Confederation Building
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

RE: Closure of Experimental Lakes Area

Dear Minister Ashfield:

We represent the leadership of the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS), a nongovernmental organization dedicated to the management and protection of lakes and reservoirs throughout the North American continent. Our organization represents nearly 1,000 members throughout the United States, Canada, and other countries around the world. Our membership is composed of researchers, scientists, administrators, and citizens who have dedicated their lives to improving the quality of lakes and reservoirs. It is with great concern that we write this letter regarding the imminent closure of the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) near Kenora, Ontario. Our work depends on findings from the ELA.

The Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) is a rare resource not only in Canada but throughout the world, as a dedicated research facility for ecosystem-scale experimental investigations and long-term monitoring of ecosystem processes. Operating for more than 40 years, it continues to study physical, chemical and biological processes and interactions operating on an ecosystem spatial scale and a multi-year time frame. These have led to extremely important discoveries. As an example, the world's fertilizer industry now recognizes the importance of phosphorus in lakes and reservoirs, 40 years after its importance was demonstrated at ELA. Regulatory actions have been supported by ELA research, and now there is action by the industry as a result of research and activities at ELA over several decades. The experience gained at ELA by many scientists has resulted in the dissemination of environmental expertise and problem solving throughout the world, improving human conditions, protecting the environment, and saving millions of dollars for citizens and government agencies. Furthermore, we consider the work now in progress at ELA very important to the future of lake and reservoir management.

We have some questions that should be considered as the Government of Canada moves forward on this issue. We would greatly appreciate responses to our questions.

- How does the federal government plan to oversee the collection of data that can identify and mitigate the effects of climate change and multiple stressors on Canadian aquatic ecosystems through the use of universities and nongovernmental organizations?
- What is the annual budget of ELA and how much of this can be saved by having the same work completed by universities and nongovernmental organizations which must also presumably be sponsored by federal funds and cover their own administrative costs?

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- How can we ensure that the long term data set which has been generated by ELA can continue to provide critical data for scientists in North America and throughout the world? Who will maintain the database, and ensure data quality? Will universities be required to share data with the private sector and the public, if they are expected to provide this service, and how will this be ensured? How will deposition values and other critical data for 2013 be obtained and added to the long term database that currently exists for the ELA area? If there are no plans to collect these data, what will take their place?
- Who will defend the decisions that are made on the basis of the data that is collected in the future? Will it be the Canadian Government, or will it be the universities and nongovernmental organizations? When you set policy in the future, will it be based on data collected by nongovernmental organizations?

NALMS appreciates your consideration of our concerns and questions. We understand the need for responsible management of public funds. However, closure of the ELA will adversely affect our mission to foster the management and protection of lakes and reservoirs. We urge the Government of Canada to reconsider its decision to close operations at the ELA.

Please direct responses to Al Sosiak, NALMS President.

Yours sincerely,

Al Sosiak, President

Ken Wagner, President 2007

Ann Shortelle, President-Elect

Steve Heiskary, President 2004

Reesa Evans, Secretary

Jeff Schloss, President 2003

Linda Green, Treasurer

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Eugene Welch, President 1993

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Cc Right Honourable Stephen Harper