



Smithsonian Environmental
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Ministers Kent and Ashfield-

I write to ask that you reconsider the closure of the Experimental Lakes Area.

I am part of a US-Canada team of scientists using the unique resources of the ELA to find solutions to mercury contamination of our environment. Our decade-long research project (METAALICUS) at ELA provided the research to answer a basic policy question: Would reductions in mercury emissions in North America lead to reductions in mercury risk to people and ecosystems? Given 150 years of mercury contamination to our watersheds, policy makers wondered whether reductions in current mercury emissions would make any difference. Our answer was a resounding yes.

Our research at the ELA has been substantially funded by research agencies outside Canada, including support from the US National Science Foundation, the US Geological Survey, the US EPA and my own institution. The uniqueness and value of research at the ELA is evident in this international support from government and industry alike.

As a result of our research at ELA, many US states, and most recently the US federal government have promulgated regulations on mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. Mercury concentrations in rain across North America are beginning to decline.

<http://nadp.sws.uiuc.edu/mdn/>. The US EPA estimates the public health benefit for these air quality improvements at \$10's of billions of dollars a year in the US alone.

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/1e5ab1124055f3b28525781f0042ed40/bd8b3f37edf5716d8525796d005dd086!OpenDocument>. The US and Canadian investments in the ELA and the METAALICUS project are funds well spent.

By shutting ELA you remove a critical tool for finding the most reasonable and cost-effective solutions to national and international environmental issues. The small federal investment in the research station has been returned thousands of times over in public and ecosystem health.

Thank you -

Cynthia Gilmour
Senior Scientist
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