

March 2013

Experimental Lakes Area: FOCA Position & Background

FOCA supports the ongoing operation of the Experimental Lakes Area research facility, and opposes the planned closure slated for March 31, 2013

FOCA is a non-partisan, not for profit Ontario Corporation. We are an association of 500+ waterfront community associations, located in over 280 different Ontario municipalities. For over 50 years FOCA has represented the interests of Ontario's 250,000+ residential waterfront property owners.

This demographic is a major force in rural Ontario, contributing over \$600 million per year in property taxes, supporting local governance, programs, and infrastructure in rural Ontario. Residential property owners own and steward over 50,000 hectares of waterfront lands and over 15,000 kilometres of lake and river shorelines. Much of this property has important ecological and buffering capacity, and our success as the Provincial lead on sustainable waterfront communities depends on a strong foundation in the model whereby government leads through sound public policy and research, and the citizenry acts. It is therefore extremely important that relevant and informed science exists to guide our efforts to influence this group of stakeholders.

While we have many interests as a community, our primary focus over the past 50 years has been on water quality, and citizen engagement in healthy waterfront environments. FOCA was active on the issues related to Acid Rain in the 70's, and are directly involved to this day in the monitoring and control of phosphorus inputs to Ontario's freshwater environments, specifically through the MOE Lake Partner Program. Through this program alone, the Province realizes a 10:1 dollar benefit through our extensive network of volunteers. Building on this successful type of partnership through ELA may allow Ontario to further benefit with a modest financial investment.

The important research underway at the MOE Dorset Environmental Science Centre is made more robust, and the data borne out, through the additional and complementary research at the ELA that uses whole lake or whole ecosystem manipulation.

With the Government of Canada seeking to reduce their financial and management responsibilities related to the ELA, FOCA expects the governments of Canada and Ontario to negotiate in good faith and to cooperate in making a realistic transitional offer to alternative operators, such that there is an increased chance of ELA's future success.

Recognizing the limited time available to ensure this plan can be put in place by March 31, 2013, FOCA is also looking for an extension of this timeline to accommodate a fair and achievable transition.

FOCA will support the efforts of an appropriate, viable ownership and management structure that meets the following criteria:

- That research methodologies and findings remain transparent, and not limited to special interests.
- A broad-based scientific panel is created to approve research projects and manage access to the ELA.
- Data is warehoused and publicly accessible.
- A strong business and financial plan is in place to ensure long-term success of the research area.
- If appropriate, a board of directors or comparable strategic management structure is in place made up of academia, industry, scientists and government representation.

FOCA believes it has a responsibility to care for our water, to preserve and protect it.

We also have a responsibility to our communities to positively impact Ontario and Canada's freshwater legacy. We believe this legacy should be built on a successful long-term science commitment which includes the whole lake research opportunities available through ELA.

Our role will be to maintain lines of communication with potential coalitions who may be considering alternate management arrangements for the ELA. We will continue to update our members and interested members of the public on the status of this important facility.

FOCA will work with the Federal and Provincial governments as required towards a solid future for the ELA, including meetings with government representatives and other appropriate organizations/individuals, and through a call to action to our membership if warranted.

Terry Rees
Executive Director, FOCA
201 – 159 King St.
Peterborough, ON K9J 2R8

trees@foca.on.ca
705-749-3622

For more information visit: www.FOCA.on.ca