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NEWS RELEASE

Aug. 31, 2009

Contact: Gay Allison, associate director, Montana National Science Foundation Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, 406-243-2617, gay.allison@mso.umt.edu.

**MONTANA, KENTUCKY AWARDED \$6 MILLION WATER-QUALITY GRANT
MISSOULA —**

The National Science Foundation has awarded Montana and Kentucky a \$6 million grant to install and monitor water-quality sensors in freshwater lakes and streams in both states.

The project — developed and funded through NSF's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, or EPSCoR — will manage new and historical data at two of the country's most successful biological field stations, The University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station in northwestern Montana and Hancock Biological Station on Kentucky Lake in western Kentucky.

Richard Hauer, limnology professor at UM, and Barbara Kucera, deputy director of the Center for Computational Sciences at the University of Kentucky, will head up the project, which will include faculty, staff and researchers from UM, Montana State University, University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, Murray State University and Eastern Kentucky University. This consortium, called the Virtual Observatory Ecological Information System, will serve as a test project for similar ecological information systems around the nation.

The water-quality sensors at Flathead and Kentucky lakes will provide researchers with key data on climate factors, such as temperature, precipitation and snow dynamics, and on the impact of human land use and environmental changes on freshwater lakes and streams.

The consortium will partner with software experts at the Illinois-based National Center for Supercomputing Applications and the UK Center for Visualization and Virtual Environments to analyze the data, and Cisco Systems Inc. will develop environmental data routers for the project.

The new computer network system also will help researchers in both states enhance graduate and undergraduate education and research. The system will develop ecological education courses and offer condensed versions of the data on the Internet. The program will involve underserved and underrepresented students in science and engineering, such as students at Montana's tribal colleges and economically disadvantaged students from eastern Kentucky.

For more information on the project, call Gay Allison, UM associate director of MT NSF EPSCoR, at 406-243-2617 or e-mail gay.allison@mso.umt.edu.

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