

Secchi Dip-in and the Lake Observer app recognized at White House Water Summit

Madison, WI – March 22, 2016 – The White House Water Summit recognized the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) and the Global Lake Ecological Observatory Network (GLEON) today for empowering citizen scientists with tools and resources essential to effective water quality monitoring. Citizen scientists play a vital role in raising awareness about the health of our nation's lakes and reservoirs. Their efforts can help document water clarity and track harmful algal blooms and other indicators of poor water quality instrumental to resource management.

The Secchi Dip-in is an event held during July each year that helps citizen scientists collect water transparency data. Dip-in participants monitor all types of waterbodies including lakes, streams, and estuaries. Since 1994 the Dip-in has grown to include more than 375 partner programs and 6,000 volunteers. With their input, Dip-In data now includes more than 41,000 records on more than 7,000 waterbodies. Using a simple 8-inch metal disk on a cord – dubbed a Secchi Disk – volunteers measure water transparency, an important water quality indicator. This year, participants will be able to record their findings with Lake Observer and, for the first time, results will be available to the public through the Water Quality Portal.

NALMS President Julie Chambers comments, “Adopting GLEON's Lake Observer will modernize uploading and analysis of Secchi Dip In data, while video tutorials will help teach a new generation of citizen scientists and water enthusiasts about the importance of preventing the degradation of our finite freshwater resources.”

Lake Observer is a mobile application developed under the leadership of Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies ecologist and GLEON co-chair Dr. Kathleen Weathers, along with Dr. Kenneth Chiu (Binghamton University), Dr. Holly Ewing (Bates College), and Lisa Borre (Cary Institute). Launched in July 2015, it has streamlined the way that research and citizen scientists record and share water quality data while working in the field. GLEON has made Lake Observer available for Android (Google) and iOS (Apple) devices, and is partnering with the U.S. Geological Survey and Esri to innovate new mapping and data-visualization features.

Weathers notes, “When the GLEON team developed Lake Observer, our goal was to create a crowdsourcing platform that would aid in the collection and sharing of lake- and water-related information. We are honored to be partnering with NALMS, and pleased that the APP will help make their water quality findings available to all citizens concerned with the management and protection of lakes.”

NALMS is developing a series of video tutorials in collaboration with graduate students across the nation. These videos will benefit those interested in the Secchi Dip-in and using Lake Observer to participate in water-quality monitoring and lake management. NALMS will post these tutorials on its website this summer.

About the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS)

NALMS is a non-profit member society aimed at lake and reservoir management. We host a conference each year and publish a magazine and a journal for our members. We also certify lake managers and professionals. Our programs include Lakes Appreciation Month, the Inland HAB program, Student Mentorship, and now the Secchi Dip-in.