



Secretariat
300 State Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21403 USA
Telephone: +1 (410) 268-5155
Fax: +1 (410) 268-8788
www.worldlakes.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS:

Lisa Borre, LakeNet
(410) 268-5155
lborre@worldlakes.org

Buff Lindau
Saint Michael's College
(802) 654-2536
blindau@smcvt.edu

**INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON WORLD LAKES
BRINGS REPS FROM 24 COUNTRIES TO U.S.
Environmental Leaders from Europe, Cental Asia and the Americas
Map Strategy at Meeting Organized by LakeNet and Saint Michael's in Vermont**

BURLINGTON, VT (June 22, 2003) - More than 80 international leaders in lake basin management gathered for an intense four-day workshop at Saint Michael's College in Burlington, Vermont from June 18-21. Representing 24 countries and a dozen lake regions in Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, the delegates presented case studies of successful – and not-so-successful – projects designed to preserve, protect and rescue endangered lakes and their watersheds.

“The meeting brought together scientists, environmentalists, university professors, and government officials for a rare opportunity to overcome national barriers and map a strategy for saving endangered lakes all over the world,” said LakeNet Director Lisa Borre. “It was very inspirational to be part of open and candid communication among individuals from many different countries and cultures – all sharing a passionate love of lakes and their importance to the health of the global environment and its economy.”

Borre said that many common concerns were shared by participants, specifically the challenge of reconciling economic development and environmental protection, balancing scientific and social concerns, cooperation among countries sharing lake boundaries, and educating the public about the critical importance and benefits of lake preservation.

“Oil spills and the often-disastrous consequences of introducing exotic species to local waters are problems that easily capture the attention of the general public, but we need the help

of the media to educate the general public about the importance of sustaining and preserving the health of the world's lakes," said Juan Skinner of Guatemala. "We are involved in a journey made more challenging because most decision makers are not yet aware of the issues," said Skinner, a member of LakeNet's Steering Committee and the executive director of the Lake Atitlan Sustainable Management Authority.

David Barker, LakeNet President, said that the opportunity for open dialogue among people from so many parts of the world was an invaluable component of the workshop. "The internet is no substitute for the interpersonal relations developed during these meetings," he said. "The individuals in this global network are important allies in the effort to conserve lakes and improve livelihoods in lake regions all over the world."

Sponsored in part by a \$500,000 grant from the United States Agency for International Development and a grant from the Global Environment Facility, the Vermont conference brought together presenters from Albania, Armenia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Peru, Russia, the United States as well as observers from Denmark, Guatemala, Kenya, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico and the Philippines. Russian and Spanish translators were available throughout the event.

Vermont Governor James Douglas, Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle, St. Michael's President Marc vanderHeyden, Robert Paquin of U.S. Senator from Vermont Patrick Leahy's Washington staff and Buzz Hoerr, chair of the Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee for the Lake Champlain Basin Program welcomed the group. Hoerr, a graduate of St. Michael's, is a LakeNet trustee.

LakeNet is a network of people and organizations in more than 90 countries dedicated to the conservation and sustainable development of lake ecosystems. It is guided by an international steering committee with regional representatives in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. The LakeNet Secretariat, based in Annapolis, Maryland, is a nonprofit organization governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees.

Workshop documents will be made available at www.worldlakes.org. Borre and many of the people who attended the conference will attend the 10th annual World Lakes Conference at DePaul University in Chicago June 22-26, where Barker will present a report on the Vermont workshop results.

###