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Northland College's Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation Launches Buoys in Lake Namekagon to Fill Knowledge Gap

Ashland, Wis., July 13, 2023 – The Lake Namekagon system in northwestern Wisconsin is set to receive long-term, real-time data thanks to a new monitoring project by the Northland College Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation. The initiative will support scientific research, and real-time data will also be available to the public.

Research buoys equipped with high-tech sensors have been deployed on Lake Namekagon, Garden Lake, and Jackson Lake.

The data gathered by these research buoys will help paint a comprehensive picture of the lakes' health—and potentially inform new research questions. By monitoring shifts and changes over time, researchers can gain valuable insights into the lake's ecosystem dynamics and potential stressors.

Nestled in the heart of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Lake Namekagon is a signature lake that draws people to southern Bayfield County for its pristine beauty and outstanding recreation opportunities.

"Lake Namekagon is a true gem in our region, yet it has remained largely unexplored in terms of scientific research," said Peter Levi, the Burke Center's associate director for inland lakes. "We are excited to launch this initiative and provide critical insights into the lake's water quality and overall well-being, as well as inform effective conservation strategies. We look forward to learning more about this important lake and sharing that information with the public."

"The Namakagon Lake Association is excited to have the research team from the Burke Center studying our lake," added Terry Cramer, president of the association. "People care about the health of the lake, and they care about the solutions to the lake's problems. Between their science and our love and appreciation of the lake, we can collaborate to sustain and improve the health of Lake Namekagon going forward."

Looking ahead, the Burke Center has plans to establish a freshwater field station at the Forest Lodge Educational Campus on Lake Namekagon, a move that will facilitate the expansion of inland lake research. This future facility will not only support the Burke Center's ongoing efforts, but also provide a platform for other researchers to visit and leverage its resources.

"We envision the freshwater field station at Forest Lodge as a hub for interdisciplinary collaboration, where scientists from various disciplines can come together to study and conserve our precious freshwater resources," Levi shared.

The Lake Namekagon research initiative is a testament to Northland College's commitment to environmental stewardship and scientific inquiry. By investing in cutting-edge research and fostering collaboration, Northland College and the Burke Center strive to contribute to the broader understanding of ecosystems and drive positive change. The College also houses LoonWatch and the Timber Wolf Alliance, programs that educate people across the state and the country and engage citizen scientists to be a part of conservation efforts through data collection.

The Northland College Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation focuses on scientific research, communication, and thought leadership on water issues in the Great Lakes region and beyond. Aiming to increase water literacy, the center houses a robust student research program and conducts research studies and public outreach. The Burke Center also offers a professional lab and many other services for external partners.

Northland College is a private environmental liberal arts college located just blocks away from Lake Superior in Ashland, Wisconsin. Founded in 1892, the College adopted a bold new mission and made history in 1974 as the first college in the country to fully integrate an environmental focus with its liberal arts curriculum. Today, Northland College is a powerful and intimate learning community of about five hundred students from across the United States and beyond.

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