



## ASK AN EXPERT

LOWDPOA OFTEN RECEIVES ENVIRONMENT-RELATED QUESTIONS from members on a wide range of topics. As well as responding to these individual queries, we decided that it would be interesting to begin publishing them in our magazine, with the answers from our expert resources.

This one goes back to last spring, and with the season hopefully around the corner we thought it appropriate. Thanks to Ray Boivin from the Kenora office of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment for the answer.

### What is the soapy-like white froth washing up on our beach this spring?

There is a lot of scum in nature. Wind-driven currents frequently create parallel streaks of foam in open water that accumulate along windward shores and in coves. Foam is created as decomposing plants and animals release organic compounds into the water. The compounds reduce the surface tension of water, causing bubbles to form.

Soapy is generally not good, so if someone sees something and wants to make a quick determination if it is natural, then gather some in a zip-lock bag or in the palm of your hands and smell. If it smells like perfume or artificial then it may be soap, if it smells musty or organic then it is likely natural. Many people blame shoreline foam on detergents, but detergents don't create long-lasting foam since they quickly lose their sudsing ability.

We are currently seeing a lot of bud scales and May flies [remember his response was in late June of last season]. When this decays it will form a scum which when combined with wind may form froth or foam.

A lot of what we see in nature may not be pretty, but is not generally harmful. Note that it may be harmful if ingested and that some people may have allergic reactions.

If you're unsure then it is best to avoid the material and/or consult a doctor or the Northwestern Health Unit. Of course, all surface water should be treated (boiled or otherwise disinfected) before consumption. ■

## Experimental Lakes Area: under new management

THE EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA (ELA) located north of Kenora will once again be open for business—as soon as the ice goes out this spring. Transfer agreements between the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the new owners, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), have been completed after close to two years of uncertainty about the future of the ELA.

The Federal Government announced in May 2012 that it would no longer be funding the ELA, citing a change in research priorities for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the branch of the federal government that previously staffed and ran the ELA. The DFO will now be focusing their research priorities on the effects of oil sands development on freshwater ecosystems. After the announcement, the Federal Government, the Governments of Ontario and Manitoba and others worked to find an organization to take over the day-to-day operations and long-term growth of the facility, and the IISD has stepped up to take charge.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development is a non-profit, non-government organization that is based out of Winnipeg, with offices in Ottawa, New York and Geneva. The IISD “creates and communicates innovative policy research for decision makers in government, business, civil society and other sectors that are in a position to develop and implement policies to achieve sustainable development.”

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