TESTIMONY

Joint Legislative Hearing of the

ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

&

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

On

Executive Budget Proposals for the Environment

SFY 2018-2019

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Good afternoon, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Young, Assemblymember Englebright, Senator O'Mara and your honorable colleagues. My name is Jed Dukett and I am the program manager for the Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation (ALSC).

The ALSC was established in1983 "to monitor changes to natural ecosystems of the Adirondack Mountains with a focus on water quality, atmospheric deposition, fish surveys, and other biological and chemical studies for the benefit of regulatory agencies and the general public." ALSC's primary goal is to undertake comprehensive surveys of Adirondack waters related to water quality and the effects of acid rain.

In 1984, the ALSC launched what has become widely known as its flagship project, the Adirondack Lakes Survey (ALS). The ALS surveyed 1469 lakes, including examples of every hydrological class; gathered enough physical and chemical data to classify every lake it studied; and did a semi-quantitative fishery survey of each lake. It is the only Adirondack survey, before or since, that has surveyed this many lakes and characterized them this thoroughly, and one of the only surveys anywhere to do parallel biological, physical, and chemical surveys on about half the lakes in a region of six-million acres.

Data collected and analyzed by the ALSC has been, and continues to be, crucially important for the development of both State and Federal policies on emission control and air transport regulations. ALSC research on acid rain and transboundary air pollution has been cited repeatedly in federal and state legislation, regulatory actions, testimony to the U.S. Supreme Court, and numerous scholarly journals, articles and books.

The ALSC is a 501(c)(3) and its efforts have been financially supported by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation DEC and the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority. The future work of the ALSC is now at great risk.

The Work of the ALSC:

The Adirondacks are located directly downwind from major Midwest coal-burning power generators, which emit sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, the major precursors of acid rain having caused harm to many Adirondack lakes and ponds for decades. Several decades ago, the impact of acid rain and cross-state air pollution on the Adirondacks caused significant harm to New York's lakes, resulting in the loss of trout and loon populations and severely harming forest health. Following the enactment of the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990, the ALSC initiated work on:

• Monitoring of Adirondack Lakes, Ponds And Streams;	• Wet Deposition Monitoring;
• Fish Surveys;	• Cloud Monitoring on Whiteface Mountain;
• Soil Monitoring;	• Additional Chemical Analysis of NYS Fisheries Waters.

ALSC's monitoring and testing program has worked to ensure that the CAAA requirements for the mitigation of acid rain impacts are successful. ALSC has safeguarded the work on the Adirondack lakes now recovering from acid deposition – resulting in new opportunities to restore trout and loons to Adirondack waters.

ALSC's work has informed environmental policy decisions, utilizing independently researched scientific data benefitting all New Yorkers. The long-term monitoring efforts of the ALSC has served as a watchdog over polluters and has provided necessary oversight for enforcement. Because of the ALSC's research, emission impacts have been greatly reduced. Recovery, while not yet complete, has made measurable gains.

Status of the ALSC:

In 2017, the operating budget for the ALSC was approximately $700,000, with NYSERDA being the primary funding source (over $450,000). NYSDEC also provides in-kind support totaling approximately $350,000 annually. Recent funding reductions place the organization's work and legacy in peril. Fortunately, ALSC did obtain an award from NYSERDA, albeit significantly reduced to conduct future long-term monitoring, but at a much-reduced level. All eight full-time employees of the ALSC were notified in early November of their termination, effective December 29, 2017. The frequency of Adirondack lake monitoring would be cut by nearly two-thirds, from 800 samplings each year to only 300.

The careers and employment of the eight uniquely experienced ALSC staff in Ray Brook, and the sampling and research they conducted, are now in jeopardy. Without any immediate intervention by New York State stakeholders, the ongoing work of ALSC and its long term monitoring effort is imperiled.

The timing couldn't be worse, as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to repeal the federal Clean Power Plan and the U.S. Department of Energy is reviewing plans to subsidize coal plants to make them more competitive in the market place. This is an enormous setback for the U.S. CAAA and would have

negative impacts on the Adirondacks, as progress on significant reductions in acid rain over the past 20 years may be lost.

21st Century Adirondack Lakes Survey

ALSC is now working to secure more stable funding to continue and expand the important work in reducing the impacts of Acid Rain, protecting our slowly recovering fisheries, native loons and forest health.

We request your support to establish the "21st Century Adirondack Lakes Survey," plan for a new survey to commence in 2019 and provide policymakers with over 40 years of data. In partnership with local colleges, ALSC anticipates including additional chemical and invasive species measurements as well as wildlife observations.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.