

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:

Madisson Heint

200 Seminary Drive

Winona Lake, IN 46590

574-372-5100, ext. 6446

heinlmm@grace.edu

Study Addresses *E. coli* in Center and Pike Lakes

WINONA LAKE, Ind. (August 7, 2014) – The Center for Lakes & Streams, with funding from the K21 Health Foundation, private donors and Grace College, released the results of a study investigating the causes of elevated *E. coli* levels at the public swimming beaches at Center and Pike lakes.

A previous study by the center from 2012 showed that the public swimming beaches at Center and Pike lakes had unsafe *E. coli* levels in 41 percent and 32 percent of samples collected, respectively, over 15 years of sampling by the Kosciusko County Health Department. This prompted the center to establish a study to determine the cause of the elevated *E. coli* levels.

“One of the priorities of the K21 Health Foundation is to protect human health and one way we can do that is minimizing lake-related health threats,” said foundation president and CEO Rich Haddad.

The study revealed that rain events led to higher *E. coli* levels, indicating *E. coli* was washing in from outside of the lakes. This was particularly noticeable where the storm drain flows into Center Lake.

In addition to examining when levels were highest, the center also investigated where levels were highest. The water in the area where the pier meets the beach contained higher levels of *E. coli*, indicating that stagnant water trapped there acts as a collecting area for *E. coli*.

Samples were collected to determine which animal species were the likely sources of the *E. coli*. Gulls were revealed to be the main culprit, particularly at Center Lake.

“While the results are specific to Center and Pike lakes, they have broad implications for protecting other lakes in the region,” said center director Nate Bosch.

The results led the center to recommend some changes at the beaches. For both lakes, it was recommended that piers be improved to allow water to circulate through the piers and prevent *E. coli* from collecting near them. Both lakes could also benefit from exploring alternative beach raking methods to remove waterfowl waste.

At Center Lake specifically, the center recommended improving the stormwater flowing into the lake, or diverting the drain altogether, and exploring gull population control measures.

“The city appreciates the center getting to the bottom of these issues and giving us specific recommendations that we are now planning to implement,” said Warsaw Mayor Joe Thallemer.

For more information on the study contact the center at lakes@grace.edu or 547-372-5100, ext. 6445. The full report is available online at lakes.grace.edu.

The K21 Health Foundation is a private foundation that focuses on opportunities to improve health and wellness for the citizens of Kosciusko County. Its mission is to ensure health care services are provided and to advance prevention and healthy lifestyles.

The Center for Lakes & Streams at Grace College conducts research, provides resources, engages and educates residents, and collaborates with local organizations in efforts to make the lakes and streams of Kosciusko County cleaner.

###