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NEWS RELEASE

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Watershed Research Laboratory receives excellent rating from audit

The George J. Mitchell Center's Watershed Research Laboratory recently received an excellent and a satisfactory performance rating from two separate, independent audit programs.

The lab received a rating of excellent by the U.S. Geological Survey's Standard Reference Sample project — putting the lab in the top 15% of those participating. This audit is by invitation only. A rating of satisfactory was received from Environment Canada's Proficiency Testing Program, which is distributed to several hundred environmental laboratories in Canada and around the world.

The audits consist of unlabeled, unidentified water samples that are sent to the lab. Watershed Research Laboratory staff and graduate students analyze the samples for a range of ions, nutrients, and trace elements, and the results are sent back to the auditors, who evaluate the data for performance in chemical analysis of lake and river water and precipitation. Participation in audit programs encourages labs to improve measurement processes, help detect possible analytical deficiencies and problems, and provide assurance that laboratory equipment and personnel are generating quality data. The audit results also allow the participating laboratories to compare their performance with other similar labs and allow independent verification of performance by state and federal agencies working with the Mitchell Center.

"We did well. The audits tell us we are heading in the right direction, and assure principal investigators that we are producing the same high-quality data they have come to expect from the Mitchell Center," says laboratory coordinator Tanya Hyssong. The audits also help laboratory personnel keep pace with the many new analyses that have been added to the lab in recent months.

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