

The Hon. John Roberts, Canada's minister of the environment, opened the June 14 conference in Quebec City on Acid Rain and Forestry with the statement that 4,600 Canadian lakes now are dead; another 12,000 are moving toward the same condition; 18 percent of the lakes and 21 percent of the stream miles in the U.S. east of the Mississippi show acid rain damage. (This last statistic comes from the U.S. Congressional Office of Technological Assessment.) "Some of the best-documented acid rain losses to sportfishing stocks are American losses," Roberts said. "These include elimination of all fish in 180 lakes in the Adirondack vacation area of upstate New York."

Roberts compared the acid rain situation to the early 1970s threat to Lakes Erie and Ontario, when the process involved dealing with an escalating environmental problem on the basis of "managing risk — of taking decisions with necessarily limited scientific understanding — limited in the sense that at the time the decision must be made, scientific knowledge was not yet complete and would undoubtedly produce further useful data later.

"In my opinion," said Roberts, "we are now in the same position with regard to acid rain. We are ready to deal with acid rain on the basis of managing risk, using the knowledge we have so far."