

## NEWS RELEASE

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### River science powerhouse emerges in Canada

Fredericton - The Canadian Rivers Institute is releasing a report today highlighting its first 15 years of achievements since its founding in 2001, in anticipation of World Rivers Day on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

Founded at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) in 2001, the CRI has grown into a network of 22 science directors and their multi-disciplinary research teams housed at 14 universities and institutions across Canada and abroad. A Canadian success story, the CRI has become an international leader in developing solutions to the growing challenges facing the world's rivers and estuaries, and in training the next generation of aquatic scientists.

"As our report today demonstrates, at the CRI we are breaking new ground in applied science across disciplines to find answers to the important questions being asked today about the world's rivers. Whether it's a government seeking to develop regulations, or industry looking to develop better management processes, every one of our projects is seeking a solution to a vital question that affects people and wildlife," says Director Dr. Michael van den Heuvel, Professor of Biology and past Canada Research Chair in Watershed Ecological Integrity at the University of Prince Edward Island.

Among the thorny issues related to the health of the world's rivers that CRI researchers are tackling:

- How to plan for replacement or removal of aging hydro-electric dams – of which more than 100,000 exist worldwide;
- How to improve treatment of pulp and paper mill effluent discharges – one of Canada's major industries;
- How Arctic freshwater ecosystems are responding to climate change;
- How to recover iconic at-risk fish populations such as wild Atlantic salmon; and
- How multiple human activities are affecting watersheds and all life that depends on them.

"Co-locating ECCC scientists and technical staff at the Canadian Rivers Institute at UNB-Fredericton has significantly benefited Canadians. The resulting network of government and academic researchers .... as well as community and industrial partners, has improved aquatic environmental monitoring and the application of environmental regulations nationally and internationally. **The partnership remains an important part of our ongoing strategy to address pressing environmental and climate change concerns of Canadians,**" writes the **Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change**, in the report.

Student training and professional development are at the centre of the CRI's work.

To date, the CRI science directors and associates -- leaders in their fields -- have mentored more than 450 students in disciplines including biology, chemical engineering, civil engineering, environmental management, geology, and policy. CRI's science directors have also secured a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council grant of more than \$1 M for stipends to students participating in professional development programming. Ranging from undergraduates to post-doctoral fellows, trainees come from every province and territory in Canada. After their time with CRI, students and post-doctoral fellows are moving into jobs in industry, academia and government across the country.

**The CRI is also attracting intellectual capital to Canada from around the world**, with 20% of the Institute's students coming from countries as diverse as Bhutan, Chile, China, Finland, Italy, New Zealand, Romania and Senegal. About 40 percent of CRI's international alumni continue to study or work in Canada.

Additionally, CRI is providing water monitoring and management skills training to large numbers of professionals from industries, governments, and First Nations communities from across Canada and abroad. More than 3,000 registrants have completed these specialized courses to date, with plans for expansion in the future.

**The CRI is also attracting millions of dollars for applied aquatic research and science facilities.** At the University of New Brunswick alone, CRI-developed projects and lab facilities have secured investments of almost \$50 million from federal and provincial sources.

Among the CRI's plans for the next 15 years:

- Addressing the **pressing issue of dam renewals** by transferring expertise and knowledge to systems around the globe;
- Ensuring the protection and conservation of **wild Atlantic salmon**;
- Continued global leadership in biodiversity research and monitoring in the **circumpolar Arctic**;
- **State-of-the-art training** of at least 1,500 more aquatic science experts to meet growing global demands for water professionals;
- Developing further **cutting-edge biomonitoring tools** and incorporating them into assessments of river health.

-30-

View full report at: <http://canadianriversinstitute.com/cri/15-years-of-impact>

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