

Sept. 22, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UPEI scientist leading emerging river science powerhouse

Dr. Michael van den Heuvel, an environmental scientist based at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), is playing a lead role within the internationally acclaimed Canadian Rivers Institute (CRI), which, in the lead up to World Rivers Day on September 25th, is releasing a report today highlighting its first 15 years of achievements.

The CRI, founded at the University of New Brunswick, 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. Dr. van den Heuvel is the first institute director from outside of New Brunswick. The institute is a Canadian success story, having evolved in a short time span into a world leader in applied aquatic science that is addressing many challenges facing the world's rivers and estuaries, and in training the next generation of aquatic scientists.

van den Heuvel says the CRI is 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 is a government seeking to develop regulations, or an industry looking to develop better management processes, every one of our projects is finding a solution to a vital question that affects people and wildlife," says Dr. van den Heuvel, who is a professor of biology and past Canada Research Chair in Watershed Ecological Integrity at UPEI

PEI research teams are working on developing techniques to examine the cumulative effects of human activities such as land-based nutrients, sediments and contaminants along the estuaries of the Northumberland Strait to develop a monitoring framework for the region.

Student training and professional development is at the centre of the CRI's work. It has mentored more than 450 students in disciplines that include biology, chemical engineering, civil engineering, environmental management, geology, and policy. Twenty per cent of these students have come from around the world. Forty-three students have been based at UPEI.

To further student support, CRI science directors have secured a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) grant that provides more than \$1 million to students for unique training and professional development courses on water science and management. Six of the students taking advantage of this program are based at UPEI.

"With the changes occurring around the world and particularly the stress being put on our rivers and estuaries, it's important now more than ever to have the multi-disciplinary, collaborative approach to problem solving by the CRI," says van den Heuvel. "I'm excited to lead this ambitious and growing group of scientists into our next 15 years."



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.

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View full report on the CRI's first 15 years at: <http://canadianriversinstitute.com/cri/15-years-of-impact>

Media Contact: Stephanie Merrill, Communications Officer: (o) 506-453-4770; (m) 506-261-8317 or Stephanie.merrill_CRI@unb.ca