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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Southwestern Ontario scientists key players in emerging river science powerhouse

Scientists based at three Southwestern Ontario universities are playing lead roles within the internationally acclaimed Canadian Rivers Institute (CRI), which, in the lead up to World Rivers Day on September 25, is releasing a report today highlighting its first 15 years of achievements.

Founded at the University of New Brunswick in 2001, the CRI has grown into a network of 22 science directors and their multi-disciplinary research teams based at 14 universities and institutions across Canada and abroad. 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.

Four CRI science directors are based at the University of Waterloo (UW), Western University (WU) and Wilfrid Laurier University (Laurier), playing a critical role in expanding the institute westward across Canada from New Brunswick where it was originally founded.

"In Southwestern Ontario, we have had more than 60 students involved in groundbreaking research projects providing solutions to real-world challenges facing the world's rivers," says CRI Science Director, Deborah MacLatchy. "These students get unique professional development and skills training as part of this pan-Canadian and international network."

MacLatchy is one of four founding members of the CRI. She is a professor of biology and the provost & vice-president: academic at Wilfrid Laurier University, where she is also a founding member of the Laurier Institute for Water Science and the Laurier Centre for Women in Science.

"As our report today demonstrates, 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," says Michael van den Heuvel, CRI director and professor of biology and past Canada Research Chair in Watershed Ecological Integrity at the University of Prince Edward Island. "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."

Southwestern Ontario CRI research teams, led by Drs. Simon Courtenay (UW), Deborah MacLatchy (Laurier), Mark Servos (UW), and Adam Yates (WU), are working on freshwater issues such as:

- 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 better assess the effects of multiple human activities in the Grand River watershed and the people and wildlife that depend on its healthy waters.

Student training and professional development is at the centre of the CRI's work. To date, the CRI science directors have mentored more than 450 students in disciplines including biology, chemical engineering, civil engineering, environmental management, geology, and policy. To further student support, CRI Science Directors have secured a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) grant that is providing more than \$1 M for stipends to students participating in further professional development programming. Twenty-one of these recipients are students studying under science directors based at University of Waterloo, Western University and Wilfrid Laurier University.

The CRI's plans for the next 15 years include:

- 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>

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