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Research into Action to Benefit Canadians

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Environment Canada's
National Water Research Institute



Water Research to Benefit Canadians

Canadians pay for federal government research. Tax-payers foot the bill when Environment Canada scientists in red parkas gather samples from lakes high in the Arctic, or when research technicians in hip-waders collect sediments from urban ponds close to major highways to analyze for contaminants.

The Canadian public funds research to find out which substances are entering their lakes, rivers and wetlands, and what effects these might be having on aquatic organisms, or on drinking water. Canadian citizens pay to know if the water quality of the Great Lakes is improving and if climate change will affect how much water Canada will have. Enough for the future? Enough to support a competitive Canadian economy?

The Government of Canada has made a strong commitment to Science and Technology. Freshwater is a priority area and applied and relevant freshwater science ultimately helps ensure clean, safe and secure water for people and ecosystems. A key federal role is to provide scientific knowledge upon which decisions and sound policies and regulations can be based.

For more than 30 years, Environment Canada's National Water Research Institute (NWRI) has conducted water research to benefit Canadians. The Institute has led influential, multi-partner, national assessments of current and emerging threats to water quality, water quantity, and aquatic ecosystem health, producing the scientific knowledge now used by water policy-and decision-makers at all levels of government. Recognizing that water is essential to human health, key to the health of the environment, and vital to the economic strength and competitiveness of Canadian agriculture and industry, NWRI has become a world leader in freshwater issues.

As Canada's largest freshwater research institution, with more than 300 staff including aquatic ecologists, hydrologists, toxicologists, physical geographers, modellers, limnologists, environmental chemists and technicians working across Canada, NWRI has made major contributions to restoration of the Great Lakes, reductions in acid rain, regulation of toxic substances, creation of international atmospheric conventions, and has helped shape environmental management of Canadian freshwater resources, from the smallest stream to the largest watershed in Canada.

This series of fact sheets presents 11 stories of past successes and work in progress - and there are many more yet to tell. The stories describe research that is giving Canadians what they pay for: greater knowledge about threats to their water; practical, applied science that has supported and continues to support development of regulations, guidelines, policies and international agreements; and the tangible economic and health benefits that stem from sound stewardship of our aquatic resources.