**Media Release**

# Ontario Trillium Foundation Supports Local Research into Algae and Aquatic Plant Growth

Mississippi and Rideau Valley Watersheds, Friday, May 30, 2014 —

Thanks to a generous grant of $149,500 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), community groups, scientists and watershed agencies are teaming up to learn about what is impacting the health of lakes in Eastern Ontario and to look for new ways to make changes in order to protect our lakes and rivers.

Carleton University, Friends of the Tay Watershed, Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority and Rideau Valley Conservation Authority want to better understand what is causing green algae blooms and profuse aquatic plant growth in local lakes and rivers. OTF funding is making this special project possible.

Over the next two years, the partners will conduct research and offer community outreach tools including workshops, fact sheets and best management practice guidance for waterfront stewards and property owners to better understand the ecological changes that are occurring in Eastern Ontario lakes.

The common perception throughout the Mississippi and Rideau watersheds is that aquatic algae growth is increasing. Algae blooms are becoming bigger — despite little observed change in nutrient concentrations in the lakes. Working with partners, the collaborative will examine why this is happening, and together we can move towards solutions.

"We want to understand the historic and current health of our Eastern Ontario lakes and rivers," says Mike Yee, RVCA Biology and Water Quality Manager. "If there's a unique cause of excessive algae and plant growth, we want to know what it is. From there, we want to educate watershed residents and provide best management practices on how we can work together to reduce the problem."

Yee acknowledges that aquatic algae and plants are part of the natural ecosystem. They are the first vital links in a natural food chain that all other water creatures rely on including insects, frogs, minnows and small fish right up to top predators like bass, muskie and lake trout.

"Abundant growth occurs when things are out of balance and we start to see cause for concern," says Yee. "When we have too many plants and algae decomposing in our water, it uses up too much oxygen and degrades the aquatic ecosystems. Reduced oxygen can cause fish kills and excessive blooms that are unappealing to water users. The good news is there are things we can all do to help maintain the balance and keep our lakes and rivers healthy and thriving natural environments."

"Our local watersheds are well known for their lakes and river systems," says Yee. "Our continued enjoyment of these features depends on our careful stewardship."

For more information about this project, contact Kaitlin Brady, RVCA Junior Resource Technician at 613-692-3571 ext. 1154 or kaitlin.brady@rvca.ca or Mike Yee, RVCA Biology and Water Quality Manager at 613-692-3571 ext. 1176 or michael.yee@rvca.ca.

A leading grant-maker in Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation strengthens the capacity of the voluntary sector through investments in community-based initiatives. An agency of the Government of Ontario, OTF builds healthy and vibrant communities.

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For more information about the Ontario Trillium Foundation please visit: www.otf.ca.