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## Science and Economics Mix With Water in New Wetlands Research Project

EDMONTON, AB – Water will soon return to selected drained wetlands in Alberta, thanks to an innovative research project supported in part by a \$390,000 investment by Alberta Innovates Bio Solutions. Today, the Alberta Land Institute launched the “Alberta’s Living Laboratory – Wetlands Project”, which will work in partnership with private land owners to better understand wetland restoration.

“At AI-Bio, one of our focus areas is integrating land and environmental management,” said Steve Price, CEO of Alberta Innovates Bio Solutions. “We are delighted to join with the Alberta Land Institute and its private and public partners in launching this research project that helps to address priorities in the Provincial wetlands policy and advances ecosystem services approaches to land management.”

Leading the project will be three researchers from across Canada: resource economist Dr. Peter Boxall and scientist Dr. Shari Clare from the University of Alberta, and scientist Dr. Irena Creed, based at Western University, in London, Ontario. This multi-disciplinary team will work to improve the scientific understanding of what wetlands contribute to their watersheds, while also examining the practical economic costs of their restoration.

“The Alberta Land Institute relies on an innovative, multi-disciplinary process to connect research with policy for better land management,” explains Dr. Vic Adamowicz, the Institute’s Research Director. “By bringing together leading experts, and conducting research in the field, this project will expand our understanding of wetlands, and wetlands policy, from the perspective of both natural sciences and social sciences.”

The consideration of both social and natural scientific perspectives makes this project unique. Instead of focusing exclusively on a better understanding of the ‘functional values’ of wetlands — benefits such as flood mitigation and water purification — the study will also address the practical question of compensation for land owners who agree to restore wetlands on their land.

“Until we know how much it costs to compensate land owners, we don’t know what it truly costs to restore wetlands,” Dr. Boxall explains. “We’re going to test a market-based system for restoring wetlands, so that land owners can set the price, and we can make the most of our restoration budget.”

In addition to these immediate scientific and economic findings, this project will offer lasting benefits to wetlands research in Alberta. Because they will be designed and installed in a scientific manner, the restored wetlands will become living laboratories, allowing a wide array of research for years to come.

Funded by the Government of Alberta, Alberta Innovates Bio Solutions is a research agency that collaborates with partners to invest in science and innovation. The agency's objective is to grow prosperity in Alberta's agriculture, food and forest sectors through new technologies, products, services or industry practices, and its areas of focus are sustainable production, bioindustrial innovation, food innovation, prion diseases and ecosystem services.

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**Note to editors:** Read more in project backgrounder at  
<http://bio.albertainnovates.ca/media/72101/ali-allwetlands-backgrounder-17feb2015-2.pdf>

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