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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 20, 2017

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**CHICAGO TEAMS COMPETE TO IMPROVE LAKE ERIE'S WATER QUALITY**

*Two Chicago teams pitch innovative solutions in 2017 AquaHacking Challenge semi-finals*

CHICAGO, Illinois (June 21, 2017) – Today, two teams of Chicago-based innovators, data scientists, and designers are competing in the semi-finals of the 2017 AquaHacking Challenge – an annual event focused on using technology to improve Great Lakes water quality. The two teams are the only U.S. representatives advancing to the semi-finals on June 21 and will face 16 other teams from Canada and the Netherlands.

“We have a shared responsibility to do what we can to protect the Great Lakes. And the AquaHacking Challenge is a great way to engage top minds in finding solutions to address the issues facing our waterways,” said Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “I want to commend our local teams for the work they have done and will be cheering them on as they compete in the semi-finals.”

The AquaHacking competition, presented by the Canadian de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation, focuses on a different Great Lake each year. This year's event aims to reduce threats to Lake Erie from urban areas, agriculture and industry.

“We are thrilled to see teams from Chicago participate in this year's AquaHacking Challenge.” Said de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation Executive Director Claude Perras. “A partner like the City of Chicago is key to our mission of championing emerging clean-tech innovation and entrepreneurship while creating opportunities for the rising generation to engage in dialogue across sectors, jurisdictions and generations to develop integrated strategies for water policy and governance which will benefit both Canada and the US.”

Chicago's teams are working to combat toxic algae, a major threat to the lake's ecosystem, and engage citizens in monitoring water quality. Toxic algal blooms are caused when warm water combines with high concentrations of phosphorus from urban wastewater and fertilizer that runs off from farmland. These harmful algal blooms can produce toxins that threaten drinking water supplies and aquatic habitats.

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One of the teams, comprised of data science students from Illinois Tech, is creating a “Boaters Tracking Blooms Data Collection Program” that works with boaters to collect images and sensor data on algal blooms. They will use the data to improve models for predicting when and where algal blooms grow. The other team, Team “Data Drops,” created an open-source database that collects water quality data to map the Great Lakes watershed and share information with the public and other organizations.

Current, Chicago’s accelerator of innovative water research and technology development, is coordinating Chicago’s AquaHacking teams.

“Harnessing innovation to solve Lake Erie’s challenges is of great value to the Great Lakes Basin,” said Steve Frenkel, Current’s executive director. “Current is excited to support the AquaHacking Challenge because it provides a platform for Chicago’s talented scientists, programmers, and students to leverage their skills to protect critical water resources.”

After the semi-finals, five teams will advance to the finals on September 13. There is \$75,000 CAD in prizes available for winning teams, as well as access to consultation and mentorship.

“Win or lose, this is a step forward for Chicago’s innovation community toward building the skills and community to participate in future AquaHacking Challenges,” Frenkel said.

Current is working in partnership with Microsoft, Illinois Institute of Design, the Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship, Uptake, and West Monroe Partners on this effort.

In Chicago, the recently extended 1.25 mile Riverwalk and the completion of a fourth boat house along the Chicago River demonstrates the Mayor's commitment to increase access to and recreational opportunities on the river, as outlined in both his Building on Burnham plan and Our Great Rivers, a forward looking action agenda for Chicago's three rivers.

#### About Current:

Current propels Chicago’s water economy to solve global water challenges. Current connects the city’s world-class public water utilities, private industry, research institutions, and entrepreneurs to promote innovation for greater sustainability and economic growth. Through Current, Chicagoland will become a global leader in the development and deployment of next-generation water technology. Through its robust tech-to-market innovation pipeline, Current is validating market-responsive technologies to attract investment capital, meet the real-world needs of utility, commercial and industrial customers and grow Chicago’s water economy.

For more information on Current, visit [CurrentWater.org](http://CurrentWater.org).

For more information on AquaHacking, visit <https://2017.aquahacking.com/en/challenge/>.

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