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Greenbelt Foundation

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Greenbelt Foundation Backgrounder

Spring 2021 Grant Announcement

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Overview

The Greenbelt Foundation is announcing five new grant projects that will protect and enhance the Greenbelt's natural systems and in doing so, improve regional resilience to climate change. The organizations will use these grants to enhance the Greenbelt's natural systems.

Background

The Greenbelt Foundation is committed to investing in projects that enhance the health of the region's natural systems, address climate resilience, support local agriculture, and restore natural areas within the Greenbelt.

The five projects being supported by the Greenbelt Foundation are:

1. Building the Case for Natural Assets – Credit Valley Conservation Foundation (CVC)
2. Accelerating Implementation of Municipal Natural Asset Management – Municipal Natural Assets Initiative (MNAI)
3. Beyond Soil Class: The True Value of Farmland – Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT)
4. Key Biodiversity Areas – Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (WCS)
5. Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System Ecosystem Services Valuation – Royal Botanical Gardens of Hamilton (RBG)

Project Details

Additional details that outline each project are below:

1. Building the Case for Natural Assets – CVC

Credit Valley Conservation is an important regional partner that helps the Greenbelt Foundation advance municipal asset management and natural infrastructure projects within the Greenbelt.

"The number of Canadians directly impacted by flooding will grow from about 200,000 in 2010, to more than 350,000 in 2030 if adaptation measures aren't taken. Natural and green infrastructure offer cost-effective ways to help mitigate financial losses that would otherwise result from flooding. Moreover, natural assets provide many other community services like recreation, water and air purification, and aesthetic appreciation. CVC is proposing to build both municipal and community awareness of the benefits of natural assets by delivering targeted municipal training on latest natural

asset tools produced by CVC and tailored neighborhood communications materials to support the protection of natural features within our communities.”

—Christine Zimmer, Chief Specialist, Watershed Projects Division, Credit Valley Conservation

Key project activities for this grant include:

- Webinars and workshops for municipalities and conservation authorities to introduce natural infrastructure planning tools, and support understanding for identifying projects.
- Natural infrastructure model for flood resilience: CVC will be identifying natural infrastructure projects to protect major bridges and culverts along the Credit River.
- Increase awareness and support for investments in natural infrastructure and engage residents, community groups and businesses in two flood-vulnerable neighbourhoods to improve the protection and management of local natural assets.

2. Accelerating Implementation of Municipal Natural Asset Management – MNAI

MNAI is a leading organization that develops methodologies and tools to help municipalities incorporate natural assets and services into their asset management programs.

“Thanks to the generous funding from The Greenbelt Foundation and an anonymous donor, MNAI is already completing its work with 10 local governments from across Canada on their natural asset inventories,” said Roy Brooke, Executive Director for Municipal Natural Assets Initiative (MNAI). “We’ve also started work with the remaining 21 local governments under this project. This means that in a few months, a significant number of local governments will have accelerated their approach to reducing costs and adapting to climate change while continuing to deliver core services to their communities.”

Key project activities for this grant include:

- Engage existing municipal partners in the Greenbelt and across Canada to identify priority implementation challenges.
- Develop implementation tools with interested local governments.
- Host a series of webinars with municipalities that will share the results of municipal action on natural asset management across Canada, explore implementation challenges, identify tools, and test the implementation with interested partners.

3. Beyond Soil Class: The True Value of Farmland – OFT

Ontario has lost 18 per cent of its farmland in the past 35 years due to urbanization, aggregate mining, and other land conversions. The greatest pressures are felt in southern Ontario and specifically, the Greater Golden Horseshoe region. Ontario Farmland Trust will work with the Greenbelt Foundation to increase awareness of farmland loss and uncover specific challenges that lead to farmland loss.



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“Ontario Farmland Trust is grateful for The Greenbelt Foundation’s generous support of our Beyond Soil Classes project,” said Kathryn Enders, Executive Director for Ontario Farmland Trust. “This project will address the value of *all* soil classes, highlighting the importance of protecting a contiguous base of agricultural land in order to ensure a resilient local food system in Ontario.”

Key project activities for this grant include:

- OFT will conduct research on land suitability for agriculture.
- Host webinars on current and relevant topics on farmland protection in Ontario.
- Develop social media video series to educate on soil health, soil classes, and farmland protection.
- Advocate for the benefits of creating larger contiguous agricultural land by protecting lower classes of agricultural land.

4. Key Biodiversity Areas – WCS

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are a new, internationally-recognized tool used to protect biodiversity in critical hotspots around the world. Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) leads implementation of the KBA initiative in Canada in collaboration with multiple partners, including species and ecosystem experts.

“WCS Canada is grateful to the Greenbelt Foundation for supporting our work to identify Key Biodiversity Areas in southern Ontario--sites that are nationally and internationally recognized as being crucial to the persistence of biodiversity,” said Ciara Raudsepp-Hearne, Key Biodiversity Areas National Program Lead at Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Canada. “This work will directly inform the stewardship of Ontario’s rare and threatened species and ecosystems across all types of landscapes.”

Key project activities for this grant include:

- Research to identify KBAs across the Greenbelt region.
- Research and identify KBAs across southern Ontario, more broadly.
- Complete research to identify all potential KBA trigger species (species of special concern whose presence can trigger a KBA designation) and ecosystems, combining data from multiple sources and soliciting expert input on interpreting the data and delineating sites.
- Map distribution of rare and threatened species.

6. Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System Ecosystem Services Valuation – RBG



The Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System is a critical ecological corridor between the Greenbelt and Lake Ontario and is a leading example of a voluntary community model of nature protection. This new grant will help to increase protection of the EcoPark System's ecological corridor.

"We are excited by the generous grant from the Greenbelt Foundation to undertake the project to estimate the value of ecosystem services provided by the protected lands within the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System. Economic valuation of ecosystem services will provide us with new tools to express what these lands contribute to society in a wide variety of ways that are difficult to evaluate qualitatively," says Dr. David A. Galbraith, Head of Science, Royal Botanical Gardens. "Each of the nine participating agencies in the EcoPark System are looking forward to having this data, and also to using it to help forecast how we may increase that value through improvements in management and planning for the effects of climate change, the protection of biological diversity, sustainable recreation, and other functions of this protected landscape."

Key project activities for this grant include:

- Completion of a natural asset inventory and assessment of natural features in the EcoPark.
- Conduct a baseline assessment of the ecosystem services.
- Develop a communication strategy to deepen awareness and support for the EcoPark and the Greenbelt.