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Possibility grows here.

"Grindstone Creek" Project Backgrounder

Announcement Date: April 28th, 2020

Project Overview

In the spring of 2018, the Greenbelt Foundation began working with Municipal Natural Assets Initiatives (MNAI) on a 3 year-project, geared to mainstreaming natural asset management at the municipal level across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Grindstone Creek is a flagship project within this initiative. In June 2019, a draft Memorandum of Understanding was submitted to MNAI and the Greenbelt Foundation on behalf of project partners. The project underwent a soft launch in fall of 2019 and was formally announced on May 5th, 2020.

The Grindstone Creek watershed, located within the Cities of Burlington and Hamilton, originates in wetland areas above the Niagara Escarpment and drains an area of 91 km2. Grindstone Creek passes through significant residential, as well as recreational areas (Cootes to Escarpment) and drains into Hamilton Harbour. The Grindstone Creek project is a site-specific evaluation of how through formal natural asset management, the health of the watershed can be improved, localized flooding can be minimized, phosphorous loading in Hamilton Harbour can be mitigated and the Creek can provide high-quality recreational benefits to the region. There is also the added benefit that through proper maintenance and stewardship of the creek, the watershed can provide important habitat for local species-at-risk.

Partner Quotes

- City of Burlington

  Burlington is ranked as Canada's best community and best place to raise a family. It is a city where people, nature and businesses thrive. Sign up to learn more about Burlington at Burlington.ca/Enews and download the free City of Burlington app.

  "Natural infrastructure like Grindstone Creek must be preserved and maintained to help protect the surrounding environment against flooding," says Burlington Mayor, Marianne Meed Ward. "Our efforts also enhance the livability of the area for residents and ensure critical habitat for local biodiversity. We are pleased to partner with area municipalities and agencies like Conservation Halton and the Greenbelt Foundation on the planned restorative work that will benefit Burlington's residents and wildlife."

- City of Hamilton

  "This project will improve one of our region's most important watersheds—Grindstone Creek," says Hamilton Mayor, Fred Eisenberger. "In doing so, we will help to prevent localized flooding, significantly reduce pollution in Hamilton Harbour and create important new jobs for Hamiltonians."

- Conservation Halton

  Conservation Halton is the community based environmental agency that protects, restores and manages the natural resources in its watershed. The organization has staff that includes ecologists, land use planners, engineers, foresters and educators, along with a network of volunteers, who are guided by a Board of Directors comprised of municipally elected and appointed citizens. Conservation Halton is recognized for its stewardship of creeks, forests and Niagara Escarpment lands through science based programs and services.

  "Investing in ecosystem restoration is ultimately an investment in public health and wellbeing," says Hassaan Basit, Chief Administrative Officer of Conservation Halton. "It is anticipated that the MNAI project for Grindstone Creek will support this statement and provide additional rationale for the funding and implementation of more ecosystem restoration projects, which are carried out by conservation authorities at the watershed scale in partnership with our municipalities at the local scale."

  "Conservation Halton is pleased to be a partner in the Grindstone Creek Project," says Barb Veale, Director of Planning and Watershed Management for Conservation Halton. "This collaborative initiative will quantify the value of wetlands, natural areas, and creek valleys in moderating the impacts of severe rainfall and snowmelt events, including flooding, erosion and sedimentation in the Grindstone Creek watershed. This in turn, will assist partners in promoting, developing, and implementing more sustainable, cost-effective and climate-resilient strategies for flood and natural hazard management, as well as municipal stormwater management infrastructure, at both the watershed and municipal scales."

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- Royal Botanical Gardens

  Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) is the largest botanical garden in Canada, a National Historic Site, and registered charitable organization with a mandate to bring together people, plants and place.

  "Royal Botanical Gardens looks forward to this collaboration," said Tÿs Theijsmeijer, head of natural areas for Royal Botanical Gardens. "This new, forward-thinking approach to watershed planning and management will identify important steps in restoring the ecological benefits to Grindstone Marsh, located at the creek mouth within RBG's nature reserves."

- Municipal Natural Assets Initiative ("MNAI")

  The MNAI team provides scientific, economic and municipal expertise to support and guide local governments to identify, value and account for natural assets in their financial planning and asset management programs, and to develop leading-edge, sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure. For more information, visit mnai.ca.

  "There is growing evidence that healthy natural assets provide local governments with core infrastructure services such as stormwater management—sometimes at lower capital, operating, maintenance, and renewal costs—than engineered alternatives, and often with numerous other benefits," says Roy Brooke, Executive Director for MNAI. "Understanding, valuing and better-managing nature's role in providing infrastructure services could play an important part in helping local governments recover from the pandemic."

- Greenbelt Foundation

  Greenbelt Foundation is a charitable organization, solely dedicated to ensuring the Greenbelt remains permanent, protected and prosperous. We make the right investments in its interconnected natural, agricultural and economic systems, to ensure a working, thriving Greenbelt for all. Ontario's Greenbelt is the world's largest, with over 2 million acres of farmland, forests, wetlands and rivers working together to provide clean air, fresh water and a reliable, local food source.

  "Given the strain COVID-19 is putting on Ontario's economy and workers, it is more important now than ever to find cost-effective solutions to the impacts climate change is having on our communities," says Edward McDonnell, CEO of the Greenbelt Foundation. "When managed properly, natural assets like Grindstone Creek can play a critical role in protecting residents and their property, saving municipalities money and providing much-needed jobs in planning, design and construction for local workers."

Municipalities can no longer afford to disregard the essential contributions natural assets make to their carrying capacity. Natural assets like wetlands, forests and river valleys, provide increasingly important infrastructural services, particularly as extreme weather becomes more common and volatile. In order to ensure the ongoing protection and efficacy of these assets, we must include them in municipal planning and management.

The emerging practice of municipal natural asset management allows municipalities to put a value next to the infrastructural and other ecosystem services that their natural assets provide (i.e. stormwater conveyance, water purification, moderating extreme temperatures, etc.). By doing this, municipalities can manage their natural assets as part of their government's broader asset management and infrastructure program.

With Greenbelt Foundation support, MNAI offers training on stormwater management services for up to seven local governments in the Greenbelt, favouring municipal partnerships within individual watersheds. Managing nature to provide key services can reduce infrastructure costs and vulnerabilities (i.e. flooding) for municipalities and increase the protection and enhancement of natural systems in the Greenbelt and surrounding area.

Overview: Natural Infrastructure and Ontario's Economy

The new "Economic Impact Assessment of the Green Infrastructure Sector in Ontario"—a first-ever assessment of the full scope of the green infrastructure sector, commissioned by the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition (GIO) and funded by the Greenbelt Foundation, with additional financial support from Landscape Ontario, highlights to what degree green infrastructure is an important contributor to Ontario's economy.

The green infrastructure sector includes six key sub-sectors:

- Landscape horticulture and open spaces
- Natural heritage
- Parks
- Urban forests
- Green stormwater management
- Green roofs and walls.

Some additional facts on Ontario's green infrastructure sector:

- 28% larger than the pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing sector ($3.4 billion in GDP)
- 31% larger than the computer and electronic product manufacturing sector ($3.5 billion GDP).
- Created 84,400 direct jobs in 2018 (more than 120,000 jobs if including indirect impacts)
- Directly employed approximately 84,400 people in 2018
- Employs 5 times more people than the pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing sector (16,335 jobs)
- Employs 3 times more people than the computer and electronic-product manufacturing sector (26,600 jobs)
- Generates $8.6 billion in gross output (revenues)

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- Generates $4.64 billion in direct GDP ($8.33 billion in 2018 if including indirect impacts).