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Greenbelt Foundation

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## Nine Ontario Municipalities Part of National Cohort Undertaking Natural Asset Inventories and Building Climate Resilience

*A \$50K Grant from Neptis and Greenbelt Foundation Will Also Support Next Step Implementation in Ontario and beyond*

**TORONTO, June 23, 2021:** With \$550K invested since 2020, the Greenbelt Foundation—a leading Canadian investor in municipal natural asset management—is supporting nine municipalities in Ontario, part of a cohort of 30 municipalities across Canada who are taking part in a major Natural Asset Inventory project. This project, led by Municipal Natural Assets Initiative (MNAI), helps municipalities take the critical first steps to more effectively manage their natural areas or “assets,” like municipally owned forests or wetlands, as tools to help address climate change and infrastructure needs.

MNAI and Greenbelt Foundation began working together in 2018 to help municipalities across Canada, and especially in the rapidly developing Greater Golden Horseshoe, learn how to define, account for, and manage their natural assets and vital infrastructure. By doing so, they are in a better position to protect, enhance, and manage natural assets for the long-term. In return, these assets provide communities with essential services, like stormwater management, flood control, and source water protection—all of which are important elements of climate resilience. They can also often provide a wide range of other benefits such as recreational greenspace that are important to communities.

This current program represents the largest cluster of municipal natural asset inventories in the country. Participating municipalities include Markham, Peterborough, and Dufferin County in southern Ontario, though the project enables shared learning across the country. As a next step, Neptis Foundation and Greenbelt Foundation have invested an additional \$50,000 grant to enable MNAI to identify implementation challenges, develop two to three implementation tools with interested local governments, and distribute guidance materials to participating municipalities. These next steps will help municipalities move from the inventory phase to a complete natural asset management plan.

“Natural assets often have lower associated costs, higher durability, and many more co-benefits than traditional built infrastructure, enabling municipalities to build sustainable service models and climate-resilient communities,” says Edward McDonnell, CEO, Greenbelt Foundation. “Natural asset management strategies motivate municipalities to protect, enhance, and restore nature and are recognized as an important step forward in municipal climate adaptation plans.”

While addressing Canada’s pressing infrastructure needs, natural asset management also creates much-needed local jobs, in fields such as planning, construction, stewardship, and monitoring. According to a US figure, the job creation resulting from investments in natural assets could be as high as 33 jobs per \$1 million US invested. These jobs typically stay within the community.

“Developing inventories is the first, critical step in the natural asset management process. MNAI is very pleased to accelerate the uptake of natural asset management by working with so many local governments in a relatively short period of time,” says Roy Brooke, Executive Director, MNAI. “The results from this first group provide strong impetus for local governments to adopt natural assets into their overall asset management planning and budgeting process. We look forward to the results of the remaining 21 and then taking the next step with many of them and other local governments in adopting full natural asset management projects.”

#### **Additional Quotes from Partners:**

*“A changing climate in Dufferin County poses risks to municipal natural assets, which provide critical and cost-effective services like stormwater management, water filtration, or flood and erosion protection for our communities. This inventory will serve as a valuable tool in further understanding our municipal natural assets and enhancing management strategies to increase community resilience to the impacts of climate change and reduce local greenhouse gas emissions.”*

—Sara Wicks, Manager of Climate and Energy, County of Dufferin, Ontario

*“I am pleased to see the progress that West Kelowna has made and the ongoing effort to become a more climate-conscious community. The completion of West Kelowna’s Natural Asset Inventory informs us of the many important assets we have and prepares us to take the next step in completing a Natural Asset Management Plan.”*

—Mark Koch, Director of Development Services for West Kelowna, BC

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#### **About 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 two million acres of farmland, forests, wetlands and rivers working together to provide clean air, fresh water, and a reliable local food source.

#### **About Municipal Natural Assets Initiative (MNAI):**

The Municipal Natural Assets Initiative (MNAI) is changing the way municipalities deliver everyday services - increasing the quality and resilience of infrastructure at lower costs and reduced risk. MNAI provides scientific, economic and municipal expertise to support and guide local governments in identifying, valuing and accounting for natural assets in their financial planning and asset management programs and developing leading-edge, sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure.

MNAI is also developing guidance and tools that will eventually become norms, to ensure inventories are undertaken in ways that are comparable, effective and replicable, and ensuring the emergence of related curriculum and certifications.

#### **Greenbelt Foundation Media Contact:**



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