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Greenbelt Foundation
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Greenbelt Foundation Backgrounder

Greenbelt Foundation announces three new grants to support near-urban nature projects in southern Ontario

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Prepared For: Various Media

Prepared By: Greenbelt Foundation

Overview

The Greenbelt Foundation is providing funding for three new projects to address recommendations from the Southern Ontario Nature Coalition (SONC), of which the Greenbelt Foundation is a member organization. In July 2021, the coalition published [Near-Urban Nature Network: A Solution to Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss - Final Report](#), a report which highlights opportunities to protect critical near-urban natural areas and systems.

The Southern Ontario Nature Coalition is a partnership of experienced provincial, regional, Indigenous, agricultural, community- based organizations, and land-based policy experts committed to addressing the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in southern Ontario.

The coalition is committed to engaging Indigenous communities in accordance with community protocols and the development of ethical space for all to contribute meaningfully. To do this, SONC member organization Cambium Indigenous Professional Services (CIPS) will develop a matrix of Urban Indigenous Organizations, First Nations, and Indigenous Communities in the SONC Near-Urban Nature Network region. Additionally, the CIPS team, with SONC, will be developing a statement on the inclusion of Indigenous harvesting rights within the Near-Urban Nature Network.

Background

Key recommendations from last year's SONC Near-Urban Nature Network report detailed next steps for the coalition and all levels of government to protect and improve biodiversity in southern Ontario. Among the recommendations were to continue to engage with interested local Indigenous communities, identify area of importance for protecting and key biodiversity areas, identify planning opportunities to improve access to greenspaces, and lead in ecosystem restoration projects like tree planting. The three grants being announced today will help the coalition continue to move ahead with key recommendations.

The three projects being funded by the Greenbelt Foundation are from **Ontario Nature**, **Wildlands League**, and **Carolinian Canada Coalition**. Planning is also underway to advance SONC's [54 Million Trees](#) recommendation from the 2021 report.

The recommendation is to achieve 30 per cent healthy forest cover in the Greenbelt and Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) area by 2051 – something which will require *54 million* new native trees. The three



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new projects being announced will lay the foundation for the *54 Million trees* goal by identifying priority areas for conservation and restoration, and develop capacity for native plant seedlings in southern Ontario.

The details of each project are:

Carolinian Canada Coalition: Southern Ontario Seed Strategy

Carolinian Canada Coalition (CC) has received \$85,000 to help develop a draft southern Ontario native plant seed strategy in coordination with Indigenous, conservation, agricultural and native plant nursery industry leaders. In addition to developing a seed strategy, with this funding Carolinian Canada will be able to establish two to four model climate-adaptive seed orchards in the Greenbelt in partnership with private landowners and develop an online training and tracking module for seed orchards. Upon completion, the seed strategy will be a framework that will help guide growth of the native plant industry in southern Ontario and consider factors critical to success such as local adaptation, gene diversity, availability, and affordability.

Ontario Nature: Assessing Lands towards Canada’s 2025 Protected Areas Target

Ontario Nature has received \$72,000 to advance assessments of environmentally significant lands of municipalities and conservation authorities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) region. The assessments will confirm the status of lands to be counted to federal biodiversity and climate targets. Ontario Nature will work with six to eight municipalities and conservation authorities to conduct assessments of conservation lands. Ontario Nature will also host several webinars in 2022 with planners, environmental staff, conservation authority staff, and other key community groups to raise awareness for the assessments.

Wildlands League: A Connected and Resilient Greenbelt

Wildlands League has received a grant of \$113,500 for their project, A Connected and Resilient Greenbelt. This project will identify lands that are important for ecological connectivity in Rouge National Urban Park’s greater ecosystem and adjacent Greenbelt lands. Wildlands League will collaborate with Parks Canada and the Federal Working Group on Connectivity to identify critical corridors for protection and restoration in the region. As part of this project, Wildlands League plans to engage with over 1.5 million residents about the importance of ecological connectivity, host relevant ecology workshops in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region, and identify policy needs to protect ecosystem connectivity in the region.

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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,



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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 SONC:

SONC is a coalition of experienced provincial, regional, and community-based conservation organizations, land-based policy experts, and Indigenous consultants. SONC includes:

[Cambium Indigenous Professional Services](#)

[Carolinian Canada](#)

[Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System](#)

[Greenbelt Foundation](#)

[Ontario Farmland Trust](#)

[Ontario Land Trust Alliance](#)

[Ontario Nature](#)

[Wildlands League](#)

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