

Town of Pelham's Natural Asset Management Plan

March 27, 2025

[Webinar Recording](#)

The Town of Pelham has completed a Municipal Natural Asset Management Plan (MNAMP) to enhance its understanding, evaluation, and management of natural assets. This project, supported by a grant from the Greenbelt Foundation and in partnership with the Natural Asset Initiative, identified and inventoried over 4,000 natural assets. The project assessed the current condition of these assets, the services they provide, and estimated their value at approximately \$600,000,000, primarily in stormwater management services. In this webinar, Michelle Molnar, Technical Director with Natural Assets Initiative, provided an overview of natural asset management. Shannon Larocque, Manager of Planning, and Samantha Witkowski, Environmental Coordinator from the Town of Pelham, discussed the development process of the MNAMP and present key recommendations for managing the Town's natural assets moving forward.

Presenters

- Shannon Larocque, Manager of Planning, Town of Pelham
- Samantha Witkowski, Environmental Coordinator, Town of Pelham
- Michelle Molnar, Technical Director, Natural Assets Initiative

Key Findings

- Town of Pelham partnered with the Greenbelt Foundation and Natural Assets Initiative to undertake the Pelham Greenbelt Natural Asset Management Project.
- Pelham's natural systems, particularly forests and wetlands, play a significant role in preventing flooding and erosion, contributing approximately \$6 million in stormwater management services. In comparison, built infrastructure had mixed effectiveness and higher long-term costs.
- Additionally, the Town's natural assets provide co-benefits such as carbon sequestration, supporting biodiversity, and offering recreational opportunities, with an estimated combined value of \$22 million to \$24.7 million annually.

Presentation Overview

- Town of Pelham is home to several unique natural heritage features, and two-thirds of the town are within the Ontario Green Belt plan and overlap with the Niagara Escarpment Plan area.
- The Town is experiencing significant growth, leading to public concern regarding Town character, tree canopy, and forests, as well as downstream erosion in 12 mile creek, road washouts, and flooding.

- Municipalities are challenged with balancing economic development, infrastructure renewal, and conservation. Rapid population growth and deteriorating infrastructure place municipalities under pressure to meet national targets, like those outlined in Canada's 2030 National Biodiversity Strategy, while addressing the impacts of climate change.
- Natural asset management helps integrate nature into decision-making, and is a key component of resilient infrastructure, helping municipalities manage services like stormwater management at lower costs.
- Natural assets can be integrated into municipal asset management strategies, alongside engineered assets, to provide essential services and co-benefits. Many of natural asset management's benefits are undervalued because they aren't recognized in markets.
- Pelham's Natural Asset Management project aimed to identify, measure, value, and provide recommendations for preserving and managing the Town's natural assets to maintain the essential services they provide.
- The project was focused on the Town of Pelham's municipal boundary and the Upper 12 Mile Creek sub-watershed, which intersects with the Ontario Greenbelt. This area includes important natural features like the headwaters of 12 Mile Creek, the only cold-water stream in the Niagara region, and habitat for brook trout and other species.
- The first step was to create an inventory of natural assets, identify their location, and assess their condition. Using existing data from the Niagara Official Plan and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, the project team identified 4,428 natural assets across over 10,000 hectares of land, including wetlands, forests, meadows, and hedgerows.
- An interactive online dashboard was developed as part of the project which allows the public to explore assets and their condition.
- Users can explore different asset types, like forests, and view condition data for specific features, making it a useful tool for public engagement and further analysis.
- Based on project findings, 11 recommendations were developed for better protecting and managing natural assets. Recommendations can be categorized into three key areas:
 - Protecting What You Can: Preserving our existing ecosystems is the most effective way to sustain the environmental and community benefits provided by natural assets.
 - Make Evidence-Based Decisions to Manage Natural Assets: The insights gained from this project, along with other existing data, will help us make informed decisions about protecting the natural assets on which the community relies.
 - Build Awareness and Partnerships: Collaborative partnerships and building awareness of the benefits of natural assets is necessary to generate support and implement effective natural asset management strategies.

Additional Resources

- [Town of Pelham Natural Asset Inventory Dashboard](#)
- [The Pelham Greenbelt Natural Asset Management Project Technical Report](#)

- [Pelham-Greenbelt Natural Asset Management Project Summary](#)

Contact Information

Please reach out to us at any time with questions, input, or for additional information.

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