

# RESTORE

## Federal Habitat Restoration Program

The Green Budget Coalition recommends that the federal government invest in a new and scaled-up national restoration program managed by ECCC addressing wetlands, riparian areas, native grasslands, meadows, and coastal ecosystems in cooperation with AAFC and DFO. Investments in the 2020 Fall Economic Statement provide a good start but do not address the scale of the problem.

Canada loses more critical habitat than it conserves every year. We are facing staggering losses already of over 75% of native grasslands and 70% of wetlands in settled regions. Habitat degradation and loss, including in aquatic ecosystems, continue to put species at risk of extirpation, with hundreds already listed under the *Species at Risk Act*. Habitat loss also causes the loss of critical climate resilience services, while increasing GHG emissions through the release of ecosystem emissions and reductions in landscape carbon storage capacity. Through habitat restoration, Canada has an important opportunity to bolster our economy and meet our biodiversity and climate goals.

Similarly, despite progress on public and privately protected and conserved areas, including protected areas previously restored, inadequate natural asset infrastructure



Photo: James Wheeler

funding jeopardizes the climate and biodiversity benefits that existing natural assets provide. A new habitat project renewal fund is required to upgrade and extend the lifespan and functionality of existing conservation assets on public and private lands across Canada.

The Green Budget Coalition recommends investing **\$565 million over five years** in a new match-funded **Federal Habitat Restoration Program**, which would restore wetlands, native grasslands, meadowland habitat, and coastal areas and thereby improve conditions for biodiversity enhancement and recovery and carbon storage. Components would include:

- **\$250 million over five years** to support the deployment of new wetland restoration activities in targeted areas identified by science-based conservation plans, such as the Joint Venture Implementation plans of NAWMP designed to drive increased biodiversity and economic stimulus outcomes [ECCC];
- **\$125 million over five years**, matched by \$25 million per year in non-federal government sources of funding to support efforts of ranching and farming communities to manage their grasslands sustainably [AAFC, ECCC];
- **\$50 million over five years** to support jointly funded programs for conservation and restoration measures on federally and provincially managed grasslands [ECCC];
- **\$10 million over five years** to develop a national native seed strategy to ensure that regionally-sourced seeds (native grass, wildflowers) are available for restoration projects across Canada [ECCC];
- **\$10 million over five years**, along with matching funding from provincial governments, to develop native seed supply and provide native seed and technical expertise to restore meadow habitat along rights-of-way in municipalities across Canada [ECCC]; and
- **\$120 million over five years** for a new habitat project renewal fund to address the ongoing and increasing costs associated with restoring and renewing previously restored habitats in order to protect their viability and functionality in Canada. [ECCC]

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