

CVC?working to bring back lost wetlands in watershed

A shocking 68 per cent of southern Ontario's wetlands have been altered or destroyed, according to Credit Valley Conservation (CVC).

The wetlands that remain are often negatively impacted by urban development and agriculture.

CVC has spearheaded a number of programs aimed at restoring wetlands in the Credit River watershed and the Greenbelt, and has developed a tool to help conservation practitioners measure the environmental and social benefits of restoring wetlands, known as the Wetland Restoration Environmental Benefit Index (EBI).

Wetland restoration can be costly. This tool allows conservation practitioners to prioritize potential projects and invest in projects with the maximum benefit to the environment and nearby communities.

Wetlands contribute to quality of life and survival, according to CVC. They are the most biologically diverse ecosystems. They provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife and act as giant sponges by soaking up water and releasing it slowly over time to limit flooding.

The EBI is a calculator that measures three components: biological, hydrological and social. Within each of these components are nine sub-components and 28 attributes that are individually measured to achieve the total benefit score of a proposed wetland restoration project. Funding for the tool was provided by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation.

?We are pleased to launch the Wetland Restoration EBI to the conservation community,? CVC Agricultural Specialist Mark Eastman said. ?This tool will help measure the numerous benefits provided by wetlands, which are often overlooked or undervalued.?

Many of the Greenbelt's remaining wetlands need to be restored. With basic understanding of Microsoft Excel, the EBI tool can be modified to suit the needs of conservation practitioners working across the diverse landscape of the Greenbelt region.

?The Greenbelt has more than 15,000 provincially significant wetlands, providing benefits worth hundreds of millions of dollars, from canoeing and birdwatching, to protecting properties and crops from flood damage,? Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation CEO Burkhard Mausberg observed. ?A little investment goes a long way when it comes to wetlands and this is why we are pleased to support this innovative tool for Greenbelt landowners.?

Visit www.creditvalleyca.ca/egs to download the Wetland Restoration EBI user manual and calculator tool.