

## Supporting evidence-based decision making: improving environmental science & data

Use of accurate geospatial information and supporting science to meet Canada's climate and biodiversity commitments is urgent and fundamental to our understanding of ecosystem function and services as well as our ability to assess landscape-based conservation policy and programs. This includes reliable baseline information and evidence-based decision-making. Public investments in science and evaluation have lagged far behind investments in direct habitat programs. Coordinated efforts to harness and fund partnership-based research between government and external organizations have also lagged. For example, much of the data within Canada's open Federal Geospatial Data Platform is either incomplete, outdated, or not publicly accessible. In instances where the data is made publicly available, they are often fragmented and spread across multiple data platforms and governments.

It is vital for the Government of Canada to take meaningful steps to resource completing and updating its baseline geospatial data layers, and to implement a coordinated ongoing habitat conversion monitoring effort across the Canadian landscape to effectively address Canada's biodiversity crisis. Building on new federal efforts to expand the use of restored habitats to mitigate the impacts of climate change, species and habitat loss, the Green Budget Coalition recommends that the federal government make targeted investments across the following geospatial data enhancement streams:

- a. Conduct an audit and inventory of existing geospatial datasets and identify gaps across the core federal departments, including AAFC, NRCan, ECCC, PS, StatCan, and DFO, as well as provincial and other relevant levels of government, to determine what geospatial data is available for aggregated use and publication.
- b. Update geographic and landscape feature data to establish national inventories for Canada's wetlands (ECCC), grasslands (AAFC), critical habitat (ECCC, DFO) and forests (NRCan). Major investments are needed to complete and dramatically accelerate the pace of activity in

support of the Canadian National Wetland Inventory. Currently, only 25% of the Canadian Territory has been mapped. Other national inventories also require major investments. Data from these inventories are critical to make informed investments in habitat, including species at risk recovery, to measure biodiversity enhancement and increases in carbon sequestration.

### **Recommended Investment: \$250 million over five years for the following inventories:**

- **\$100 million** for the Canadian National Wetland Inventory [ECCC]
- **\$50 million** for the National Grasslands Inventory [AAFC]
- **\$75 million** for National Critical Habitat Inventory [ECCC, DFO]
- **\$25 million** for National Forest Inventory [NRCan]

*See also Establishing a Canadian centre for decision-useful climate information, earlier in this document.*

### **Contact**

Gia Paola – g\_paola@ducks.ca