

# 2021 Ontario Biodiversity Summit



## Investing in natural infrastructure for biodiversity and climate resilient communities

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Thursday October 14, 2021 - 1pm – 3pm EST

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**1:00pm**      **Welcome and introduction** *Kathryn Bakos, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation*  
**Opening message** *Steve Hounsell, Ontario Biodiversity Council & Dorothy Taylor, Curve Lake First Nation*

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**1:15pm**      **Presentation 1: Sage Melcer, Finance for Biodiversity**  
**Setting the stage: The growing integration of nature in financial decision making**  
*As the global communities of public and private finance engage across numerous facets of climate disclosure and reducing carbon footprints, nature and biodiversity are often overshadowed and therefore not adequately incorporated into financing decisions. However, there is increased recognition of the importance of utilizing the materiality of nature to better align global financial markets and biodiversity conservation. How this alignment manifests across global markets and governments is quite diverse, and ranges from supply chain management to market efficiencies and legal liability frameworks. Yet there are exciting opportunities for alignment at the nexus of materiality for nature. In this presentation, we will review different methods of integrating nature in financial decision making from both the public and private sector.*

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**1:25pm**      **Presentation 2: Joanna Equyem, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation**  
**Integrating Natural Assets into Municipal Planning and Finances - Proactive Action in Canada**  
*Natural infrastructure (including wetlands, forest, rivers) is essential to providing public services to our communities. This importance is increasingly recognised in Canada, as exemplified by the intent to include natural infrastructure in the National Infrastructure Assessment and announcement in June 2021 of the Natural Infrastructure Fund. In Ontario, specifically, municipalities are obliged to include "green infrastructure assets" in their asset management plans by July 1, 2023. However, some municipalities have already gone further. This presentation will briefly describe how selected municipalities are already accounting for and valuing their natural assets as an integral part of asset management planning, and are now looking for the ability to include these assets on their financial statements.*

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**1:35pm**      **Presentation 3: Bridget Carle, Swiss Re**  
*This presentation will discuss the role of natural assets in reducing extreme weather exposures and how revenue can be added to communities, while innovative insurance solutions can make natural assets more financially resilient. It will be important to highlight how governments and public entities can use insurance as an incentive for better behaviours around risk/climate concerns. Case studies will be presented as examples of the above for Ottawa, Quintana Roo and the Netherlands.*

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**1:45pm**      **Presentation 4: Jennifer Court, Green Infrastructure Ontario**  
*GIO envisions a future in which communities and governments understand the value of green & natural infrastructure, and invest in their protection and enhancement — a future in which green infrastructure is viewed as an essential component of a healthy and sustainable Ontario. From individual lots to regional networks, all components of green infrastructure systems are vital assets to our communities, but these assets lack*

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*sustained funding and policy support from higher levels of government. GIO wants to change that. Jennifer will talk about the importance of using infrastructure language and recognizing green infrastructure as assets, and GIO's work to support municipalities in Ontario to incorporate green infrastructure assets into their municipal asset management plans. She will also share high-level results from GIO's first of its kind "Economic Impact Assessment of the Green Infrastructure Sector in Ontario" (funded by the Greenbelt Foundation), a report that helps make the business case for investment in green infrastructure.*

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**1:55pm**      **Presentation 5: Sean Rootham, Ducks Unlimited Canada**  
*This presentation will focus on the state of wetlands in Ontario and will build the case for wetlands as natural infrastructure, specifically focusing on municipal conservation of wetlands for flood resiliency. This presentation will all highlight the Ducks Unlimited Canada wetland targeting tool that is currently being developed.*

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**2:05pm**      **Presentation 6 - Chitra Gowda, Conservation Halton, Conservation Ontario**  
*Watershed-based management of our natural resources, collaboratively undertaken by Ontario's Conservation Authorities, supports climate change resiliency. The Grindstone Creek Watershed partnership project in Ontario provides an opportunity to examine how natural asset management helps achieves benefits such as wildlife habitat and biodiversity, stormwater management and carbon sequestration. One of the goals of the project is to explore how to include natural assets in a watershed context into routine asset management planning.*

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**2:15pm**      **Panel Discussion - Questions and Round Table**  
**Moderator:** Kathryn Bakos  
**Panelists:**  
*Bridget Carle, Swiss Re*  
*Jenn Court, Green Infrastructure Ontario*  
*Joanna Equyem, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation*  
*Chitra Gowda, Conservation Halton, Conservation Ontario*  
*Sage Melcer, Finance for Biodiversity (F4B)*  
*Sean Rootham, Ducks Unlimited Canada*

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**2:45pm**      **Audience Questions**

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## Speaker biographies

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**Kathryn Bakos** is Director, Climate Finance and Science, at the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation. Kathryn assesses the impact of climate change on specific industry sectors and the broader capital markets, while developing guidance to help investment professionals integrate climate change and extreme weather risk into forward-looking portfolio analysis to minimize associated risk. By extension, her research influences companies to adapt to climate change in an effort to minimize risk/exposure. Kathryn holds an Honours B.Sc in Biological Science, University of Toronto, specializing in Environmental Science and is a candidate for the Master of Environment and Business program at the University of Waterloo.



**Bridget Carle** is a Vice President on **Swiss Re's** Public Sector Solutions team, forging partnerships with public entities and designing risk transfer solutions to alleviate financial exposures related to extreme weather, health risks, and natural catastrophes. She works across North America at the federal, state/provincial, and municipal level. She's passionate about using financial instruments to incentivize healthier and safer societies and helping governments build financial resilience. Throughout her time at Swiss Re, Bridget worked on the creation and execution of more than a dozen government solutions, including the world's first pandemic bond and extreme weather coverages for more than 15 Caribbean countries. Bridget holds a B.S. in Financial Management from Clemson University and an M.S. in Food Policy and Nutrition Science from the Friedman School at Tufts University



**Jenn Court** is the executive director of the **Green Infrastructure Ontario** Coalition. As an experienced leader with a demonstrated history of success in the environmental sector, Jennifer brings a breadth of experience in government relations, stakeholder engagement, partnership development and innovation design to her role at GIO. Prior to joining GIO, Jennifer helped to create and launch Scout Environmental, and then led its not-for-profit arm, growing the business, overseeing the team, and designing award-winning environmental programs. She has over 10 years' experience in the environmental space, working with diverse clients and partners across Canada, including Health Canada, Environment Canada, Department of Indigenous Services Canada, the City of Toronto, the Automotive Recyclers of Canada, the Canadian Plastics Industry Association, Efficiency Nova Scotia, the Kativik Regional Government, the Naut'sa mawt Tribal Council and many more. This experience is complemented by her interdisciplinary background in sustainability, research, design and education. Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Design from the Ontario College of Art & Design, as well as a Master of Environmental Studies and a Graduate Diploma in Business & Sustainability from York University. Ultimately, Jennifer is a problem solver who is driven to make positive change in the world. She is an avid reader, cyclist and crafter; she currently lives in Leslieville with too many books, but just the right number of cats (two).



**Joanna Equyem** is Director of Climate Programs for the **Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation (University of Waterloo)**. Natural infrastructure is at the heart of her career, having worked as a Professional Geoscientist over the last 20 years, in Canada and the UK, specializing in climate adaptation, river restoration and flood and erosion management. Before joining the Centre, Joanna was the National Lead for Climate Change at AECOM Canada. Her focus areas at the Intact Centre include preservation, restoration, and effective management of natural infrastructure to reduce climate risk.



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**Chitra Gowda** is the Senior Manager, Watershed Planning and Source Protection at **Conservation Halton**. Her experience includes strategic planning, multi-stakeholder collaborations, and policy development. Her work over two decades involves collaborative watershed management including watershed science and monitoring, source water protection, watershed planning, climate change assessments, Great Lakes health, and more. She holds bachelor and master's degrees in environmental engineering. Chitra has worked with public and private sectors, Indigenous peoples, and all levels of government. In 2020, she was awarded the Water's Next Leader award for significant contributions to the Canadian water industry. Chitra is a certified Environmental Professional.



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**Sage Melcer** works at **Finance for Biodiversity (F4B)**, a research and funding platform focusing on the materiality of nature in global financial decision-making. There, she manages content delivery and development across the F4B portfolio. Previously, she worked at Ocean Conservancy building financing and policy tools for issues that ranged from marine debris to international fisheries management. She then pursued her master's degree at the Yale School of the Environment, where she focused on financial risk categorization and mitigation tools that incentivize adaptive public and private sector behavior concerning natural capital. Sage engaged on projects ranging from the low-carbon economy transition, to machine learning in FinTech and structuring parametric insurance frameworks for insurers.



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**Sean Rootham** has been with **Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC)** for 7 years. The first 3 years were as a Conservation Programs Specialist delivering a wetland program in the Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay watershed. For the last 4 years Sean has shifted to DUC's Industry and Government Relations program. His main role has been reviewing and commenting on public policy related to wetlands as well as researching and communicating the value of natural infrastructure to municipalities and the provincial government.



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To learn more about the **Ontario Biodiversity Council** please visit: [www.ontariobiodiversitycouncil.ca](http://www.ontariobiodiversitycouncil.ca)