

Writing a story about the benefits that you derive from your local environment

People in the Greater Toronto Area rely on the local ecosystems for much of their well-being. These benefits include food, energy, clean air and water, climate regulation, places for recreation, cultural development, and community interaction, among many others. We call these “ecosystem services”. Even though our well-being as humans depends on ecosystem services, we are often unaware of where these benefits come from, how ecosystems help produce them, how important they are to our well-being, and how our everyday activities impact them. This is especially common among city-dwellers, who may feel relatively removed from nature. Our project tries to make explicit this connection by engaging citizens into telling their stories of the benefits they derive from ecosystems.

Our main goal is to engage with citizens living in the Credit Valley Watershed about the ecosystem services that they enjoy every day by:

1. Describing through story-telling which ecosystems services from the Credit Valley Watershed residents benefit from;
2. Supporting the understanding of ecosystem services that citizens have by providing complementary scientific information and explanations.
3. Creating a sense of place within the Greater Toronto Area and the Credit Valley Watershed that incorporates our interconnections to local ecosystems.

How can you participate?

We welcome submissions from citizens who would like to write stories about the Credit Conservation Watershed area and the well-being they derive from the local ecosystems.

We are looking for stories that:

- Connect an everyday human item, location or activity in the Credit Valley Watershed area to the ecosystem(s) that help provide it;
- Focus on the links between ecosystems and our everyday well-being, especially those that are not readily apparent or commonly known of;
- Help people understand how inextricably linked their quality of life is to the ecosystems around them;
- Are compelling and with which citizens in the Credit Valley Watershed area can relate to and identify; and
- Are accessible to all audiences, as opposed to experts in a specific field.

How can you share your story?

Step 1: Identify your potential story

Think about a benefit you derived from an ecosystem within the Credit Valley Conservation area. How did that ecosystem contribute to life in your area? Take a look at our background information page on our website (cvc.juturna.ca/ecosystemservices) for examples about how ecosystems provide services to us. Identify which ecosystem service applies to the story you want to tell and what well-being benefit derives from that service in the context of your story. The stories can be written in first person, and don't worry about being too formal. Just make sure that the writing is clear.

Step 2: Write your story

- Give your story a title no longer than 7 words.
- Write down what ecosystem service (the benefit you derive from the ecosystems) you will be describing in your story.
- Explain which well-being or health benefit will be derived from the ecosystem service you identified.
- Tell a general story which can include:
 - How do you interact with the ecosystem service?
 - How might others benefit or enjoy this service?
 - What specific ecological systems, species, or processes contribute to the service?
 - What is interesting about it right now? (Is it in the news at the moment? Are there developments placed in the area that might affect the way the ecosystem provides these services?)
 - What would happen if this service disappeared?
 - What might happen with this service and our interaction with it in the future?
 - How does human activity impact this service?
- You can add fact boxes to draw attention to parts of the story that don't necessarily fit in the storyline.
- Add a photo of the area that somehow portrays the service in your story.
- Make sure that the whole story, including the photo, fits into one word page.

Step 3: Register

To post a story to the web map you need to register. The registration process is easy and it is free. Just hover over the "Login" button in the top-right corner, click on the "Register" button, and then fill out a username, email, and password.

Step 4: Post the Story



After you click on "Your Stories" in the main menu bar at the top of the screen, you can use the toolbar that appears to the left of the map window (shown at the left), to add a story to the map. Use whichever tool seems most appropriate for the feature you are describing. Use the tool to draw on the map at the location that you would like to tell a story. The sidebar will then prompt you to enter the title of your story and brief summary, as well as upload an image file and a word/pdf file with the full story. Then click "Save" and your story will be posted!