

Tracking the Big Picture

Leveraging Natural Networks in Carolinian Canada

February 2017 – Invitation to collaborate



In Ontario's far south, Carolinian Canada's network of partners is poised to reverse a centuries' old trend of habitat loss. A growing body of research and global collectives show that natural infrastructure (natural heritage systems) is critical for ecosystem health, climate resilience and community well-being. But a focused and comprehensive approach is urgently required to address landscape and climate challenges in this region. This initiative will connect diverse leaders for greater, targeted impact and develop a monitoring framework to adaptively manage informed collective action for a green future.

The Big Picture Challenge

The Big Picture Discussion Paper (Jalava 2015) shows that this ecoregion needs to double the existing natural infrastructure to meet recommended targets for healthy landscapes. The Carolinian Zone is the most biodiverse and threatened ecoregion in Canada. With over 150 species at risk, some of the best agricultural resources, and lowest levels of protected land (<3%), the challenge is large. In response, Carolinian Canada's Big Picture strategy (2001) is widely adopted as a conservation tool for complex, working landscapes. Thousands of actions and hundreds of monitoring programs occur in the region but there is no program that pulls together a clear, comprehensive overview or addresses rapid shifts in knowledge, research, technology and communication. The current bottleneck in the critical path towards a healthy ecoregion is the need for continual evaluation and adaptive management of Big Picture targets for over 5,000 allies.

Urgency

The timeline is shifting. The Big Picture was initiated with an understanding that change could come slowly over generations. Given new climate models and environmental health crises, this work needs to be accelerated. Current models predict that within 50 years, there will be significant biodiversity shifts. Yet few programs target minimal landscape health or function to mitigate or adapt to such shifts.

Ecosystem Recovery & Climate Resiliency Opportunities

Carolinian Canada's network of partners is now ideally positioned to reverse the trend of habitat loss in the ecoregion by building on the success of the Big Picture strategy. As well, research is showing that natural infrastructure such as the Big Picture is a critical climate change strategy for healthy communities. The recently completed network of Conservation Action Plans (CAPs) brings together the actions of 150 partner groups, First Nations and municipalities for priority objectives that together address ecosystem recovery across 80% of this ecoregion, centered on 16 biodiversity hotspots. This program is the largest, most comprehensive active ecosystem recovery plan in Canada and Ontario in terms of biodiversity and people.



With your participation, we can start to increase habitat in this region after centuries of loss. In doing so, we would be in a much stronger position to close the gap to healthy landscapes. Together our network can collectively deliver and monitor a locally customized, effective approach to clean air, water, soil and healthy ecosystems in the face of climate change at a feasible scale.

Big Picture Collaborative

We invite you to join the Big Picture Collaborative to map out the next critical step towards healthy landscapes in Canada's deep south. Together, we will:

- 1 Identify **collective metrics** to track habitat, biodiversity, landscape health and climate resiliency in the ecoregion, with links to provincial, federal and global programs.
- 2 Update the **Big Picture strategy** with shared targets for natural infrastructure in the face of **climate change**; growing community links to health and economy; and
- 3 Develop a **multi-stakeholder ecoregional monitoring framework** using new technology and two-way information sharing to track progress at three scales (satellite data, Miradi for CAPs, citizen science)
- 4 Use this platform to meaningfully support **diverse leaders**, public / private partnerships and landowners with accessible tools to respond to rapidly shifting challenges and opportunities on the landscape.
- 5 **Report, recognize, celebrate and share** progress towards healthy landscapes across the Zone.
- 6 Provide data for Ontario's **State of Biodiversity** reporting and other monitoring programs.
- 7 **Assist other regions** of Ontario interested in developing a similar model.
- 8 Plan a sustainable **collective coordinating hub** to provide crucial data to inform existing projects and shape new ones to achieve Big Picture goals.

Timeline

- Spring 2017 – Scoping Workshop
- Fall 2017 – Evaluation of Options
- Spring 2018 - Framework for a 5-year program
- 2018 – 2023 - Implementation

Invitation

We invite partner groups to

- Sign on in principle
- Provide feedback and input to key documents
- Participate in workshops and webinars
- Participate on steering committee
- Contribute or link to data as the program unfolds

We look forward to talking with. Contact us to start a conversation.

Find out how this collective can inform /guide /track your habitat goals.

Michelle Kanter, Executive Director 519-280-5268 mkanter@carolinian.org

Jarmo Jalava, Director of Ecosystem Recovery 519-271-7627 jjalava@carolinian.org

Don Pearson, Chair 519-354-7310 don.pearson@ltvca.ca

Join the Big Picture Collaborative

*Partners for Healthy Landscapes
in Canada's deep south*



Background

Collective goal setting works

Carolinian Canada Coalition is a multi-sector network of partners advancing a collaborative conservation strategy in the Carolinian Zone. Together, we have used a collective impact approach for over 30 years.

- 1985: Our network set a joint goal of saving biodiversity in 38 critical unprotected natural areas. Together, we protected over 15,000 hectares, and engaged 300 landowners to sign natural heritage stewardship agreements in these critical signature sites.
- 2001: Our network set a collective goal of a stewarding a connected network of over 110 natural areas. Our Big Picture strategy has since been adopted in every part of the zone by diverse stakeholders and incorporated into some municipal plans.
- 2010-2015: Our network collectively identified 130 priority ecosystem recovery objectives in Conservation Action Plans for biodiversity hotspots. 150 groups and municipalities officially committed to implementation. 80% of these objectives were in progress in 2014. Securing capacity to continue monitoring and adaptively manage the objectives is currently a priority.
- 2016: We cannot manage what we do not measure. Our network is calling for a progress report to inform existing programs and an updated strategy.

Readiness

- Our network has the plans, partners and priority objectives in place for coordinating the Big Picture and developing a large-scale monitoring program that links on-ground work to provincial and global goals.
- We are part of the international network of conservation action planning known as “Open Standards” that can provide training, resources and technology to monitor and update CAPs efficiently.
- We are the longest running ecoregional program in Ontario with 30 years of networking experience and are widely recognized as a neutral gathering place for diverse land management sectors to work on a joint agenda for healthy landscapes.
- Conservation Action Plans (CAPs), Go Wild Grow Wild, Landowner Leaders and other collaborative ecosystem recovery programs link partners and target audiences (rural, urban, trail, corporate, First Nations, municipalities, youth) to translate CAP objectives to on-ground action.
- We are aligned with the goals of the Ontario Biodiversity Council and international biodiversity goals.

**Carolinian
Canada**

Immerse yourself in nature on your doorstep and discover Canada's biodiversity hotspot. Carolinian Canada's diverse network advances a strategic '**Big Picture**' vision for healthy landscapes. Join us this year to grow some Canada by supporting local trees, wildflowers and wildlife in Canada's deep south. Explore CarolinianCanada.ca (Canadian Registered Charity 83559 4722 RR0001).

Together we green the future.