

The Value of Nature to Our Quality of Life

Ecological Goods & Services Fact Sheet



The Credit River flows through one of the most densely populated areas in southern Ontario, providing an essential corridor of natural green space. There is increasing concern that with urban growth, local residents could have less access to nature.

Natural areas provide many benefits or ecosystem services such as water and air purification. They also provide other less tangible benefits. Having access to natural areas has been linked to improved mental and physical health in studies conducted around the world.

Credit Valley Conservation launched a survey of its residents in the watershed to determine exactly how natural areas contribute to their well-being.

In a survey of over 1000 residents in the watershed, nearly 70 percent of people rated natural areas as an important part of their health and quality of life. People value the ability of trees to remove pollutants from the air and the ability of wetlands to regulate water flow.

The study confirms that people find contact with nature to be important for health-related reasons, such as relieving stress or improving physical fitness. The survey found that people living within walking distance of a natural area (more than 75% of respondents) were more likely to feel that natural areas matter for their quality of life.

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they gained a sense of well-being by protecting the environment for future generations. One third noted that they would be willing to take action, such as volunteering or donating money, to support conservation activities that might improve the local environment.

Respondents identified enhancing water quality and reducing air pollution as contributing the most to improving their well-being.

Survey findings will help CVC to design conservation programs targeted to maximize both ecological and human benefits.

For more information visit www.creditvalleyca.ca/egs-wellbeing.

Key Survey Findings

Ecosystem services most strongly linked to well-being:

- Trees for cleaning the air (91.2%)
- The provision of clean water (89.4%)
- The scenic beauty of natural areas (84.7%)
- Wetlands and treed areas for regulating water flow (81.5%)

Health-related reasons for visiting natural areas:

- 21.2% visit natural areas at least once per week to improve physical fitness
- 19.1% visit to relieve stress
- 11.3% visit to restore concentration and productivity

Recreational uses of natural areas:

- Enjoying scenic beauty (20.3%)
- Hiking (13.3%)
- Photography or birdwatching (7.6%)

Willingness to take action in order to improve natural areas in their communities:

- 36.6% would volunteer time to help with community restoration projects
- 34.0% would be willing to restore natural area on their property
- 23.7% would donate money to conservation organizations