

McGill Biodiversity Plan 2030

The McGill Biodiversity Plan 2030 is an action-oriented framework that was created to protect biodiversity and its contributions to people at McGill University from now to 2030. It was launched in September 2023 during the first edition of a cross-campus Biodiversity Festival and BioBlitz.

The Biodiversity Plan responds to existing commitments at McGill to protect biodiversity. In its Climate & Sustainability Strategy 2020–2025, McGill committed to increasing biodiversity by 2025 and creating a plan for campus biodiversity that emphasizes native, adaptive, and edible species. Ahead of the UN Biodiversity Conference in December 2022, McGill joined hundreds of higher education institutions around the world to sign the Nature Positive Pledge. The pledge states that universities will assess their biodiversity baseline, adopt targets for biodiversity, set actions to achieve those targets, and report annually on progress. To help guide these efforts, the Office of Sustainability led the creation of a Biodiversity Plan for McGill in collaboration with faculty, staff, and students from 15 academic and administrative units.

This group was central in establishing McGill's vision to monitor, protect, and enhance biodiversity via its research, teaching, and operations while raising awareness and engaging community members both on and beyond McGill's campuses. The Biodiversity Plan identifies six objectives and corresponding activities to achieve this vision: (1) Create and maintain inventories of biodiversity across McGill's properties; (2) Analyze and report on McGill's biodiversity impacts; (3) Increase McGillians' engagement in biodiversity-focused educational and research activities; (4) Embed biodiversity best practices in University operations; (5) Increase the quality and quantity of green spaces on McGill's campuses; and (6) Develop strategic partnerships to help meet biodiversity targets. The



plan and its implementation are founded on the principles of being evidence-based, collaborative, climate-relevant, and socially significant.

Process

The McGill Biodiversity Plan was developed from June 2022 to July 2023 through a participatory process led by the Office of Sustainability. This was done in collaboration with a leading expert in biodiversity science based at McGill, Professor Andy Gonzalez, Liber Ero Chair in Conservation Biology and Founding Director of the Quebec Centre for Biodiversity Science.



Stakeholder consultations, including workshops, one-on-one discussions, presentations, and collaborative drafting and revisions, were held with staff, faculty, and students from operational and administrative units, academic departments, and a student club. Based on their areas of expertise, which ranged from biodiversity science to landscape architecture to student outreach, these stakeholders determined the key objectives and goals to orient McGill's biodiversity actions through to 2030 and will be closely involved in implementing the plan.

The project team secured initial funding for two years from the McGill Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF), the largest fund of its kind in Canada. The SPF's goal is to support initiatives, such as the Biodiversity Plan, that create a culture of sustainability at the university.

Reflection

The following factors enabled a successful launch of the Biodiversity Plan and are expected to help lay the foundation for its effective implementation.

Building on research: Developing the plan with faculty, researchers, and students with expertise in biodiversity science allowed the creation of a scientifically robust framework that builds on the rich academic work being carried out at McGill. As a result, the plan not only includes actions to incorporate biodiversity in operations, such as creating sustainable landscaping policies, but also allows for a more ambitious vision to integrate biodiversity actions in research and teaching, data collection, and biodiversity monitoring.

Fostering a participatory process: While the Office of Sustainability convened the development of the plan and will facilitate its implementation, collaborative drafting allowed units across McGill to take ownership of actions in the plan. As such, traditional silos isolating academic and administrative departments were bridged so that biodiversity actions could be aligned between students, staff, and faculty in a shared vision.

Harnessing seed funding: Funding from the McGill Sustainability Projects Fund enabled the team to rapidly kickstart actions in the plan at a moment when there was enthusiasm from consulted stakeholders. These funds will be used to conduct research on McGill's biodiversity footprint, create a public-facing database of biodiversity at McGill, host engagement and awareness activities, and develop a landscape initiative promoting biodiversity on campus, among other actions.

Contact

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