



# Staff Report

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## Operations – Sustainability & Solid Waste

**Report To:** COW-Operations, Planning and Development Services  
**Meeting Date:** February 21, 2023  
**Report Number:** CSOPS.23.010  
**Title:** Environmental Sustainability Fund Distribution and Recommendations  
**Prepared by:** Nicholas Cloet, Sustainability Coordinator

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### A. Recommendations

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THAT Council receive Staff Report CSOPS.23.010, entitled “Environmental Sustainability Fund Distribution and Recommendations”;

AND THAT Council approve the distribution, conducted in accordance with “The Blue Mountains Environmental Sustainability Fund” Terms of Reference, of \$4,950 in funds to Georgian Bay Forever;

AND THAT Council endorse the continuation of the Environmental Sustainability Fund with recommended updates to the Terms of Reference;

AND THAT Council endorse a potential increase in the available funds to a maximum of \$8,000 available to applicants beginning in the 2024 intake period, to be brought before Council for consideration with the 2024 budget.

### B. Overview

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A Staff Committee has reviewed and evaluated two applications made to the Town’s 2022 Environmental Sustainability Fund. The evaluation has resulted in a recommendation to distribute a total of \$4,950 to Georgian Bay Forever, for a project that will hire two student positions to support shoreline litter cleanup events and associated public education at shoreline parks in the Town. This report also meets a requirement in the Environmental Sustainability Fund’s original Terms of Reference by reviewing the successful projects and associated positive impacts over the previous five years and recommends potential next steps to improve the Environmental Sustainability Fund for future years.

### C. Background

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Council approved the creation of an Environmental Sustainability Fund in 2017 to provide financial support to projects that advance sustainability in The Blue Mountains. An annual

amount of \$5,000 is available to be distributed to local projects that enhance environmental sustainability in the Town. The Terms of Reference guide the distribution of the funds by providing guidance to prospective applicants and a mechanism by which a Staff Committee evaluates submissions resulting in a recommendation to Council. This Terms of Reference also stipulates that after the fifth year of operation, the program should be reviewed to look at issues that may include funding take-up and consistency with Town priorities.

## **D. Analysis**

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The Analysis is divided into two parts: a proposal recommendation seeking Council's approval of a recommended recipient of the 2022 Environmental Sustainability Funds; and, a review of the Environmental Sustainability Fund and associated Terms of Reference to look at past initiatives and make recommendations for Council's consideration.

### **Proposal Recommendation**

Two not-for-profit groups submitted proposals by the application deadline of November 14, 2022. These proposals were evaluated by a Staff Committee according to the selection criteria outlined in the Terms of Reference. The Staff Committee included the following members, who were chosen to participate for their range of perspectives, relevant professional experience, and knowledge to support the evaluation of Environmental Sustainability Fund applications. The following table outlines staff roles, as well as a few examples of perspectives or experience that these staff brought to the task.

<b>Name and Staff Role</b>	<b>Perspectives or Experience</b>
Amy Wilson Administrative Assistant - Water & Wastewater Services	Water efficiency and conservation
Carter Triana Planner	Prior experience with waste diversion and conservation, undergraduate degree in Biology
Jeffery Fletcher Manager of Sustainability & Solid Waste	Waste reduction & diversion, climate change, natural environment, more
Nicholas Cloet Sustainability Coordinator	Greenhouse gas mitigation, climate change adaptation, and broader sustainability issues

Based on the eligibility and evaluation criteria, the Staff Committee recommends the full amount requested by Georgian Bay Forever, a total of \$4,950, be distributed to the related proposal.

The proposal submitted by Georgian Bay Forever leverages this funding with other sources of funding to hire two summer students to have a regular presence in The Blue Mountains from May to August 2023. The summer students will enhance Georgian Bay Forever's ability to educate and engage park visitors on plastic pollution and sustainable solutions and will allow

the organization to organize more numerous shoreline clean ups to collect and identify litter at shoreline parks. Clean up locations will be in public spaces and Town parks, and specific locations will be confirmed with Town staff. As part of Georgian Bay Forever's education and public engagement work, students will also share information on a new UNSMOKE program that will be deployed in Spring 2023 to encourage people who smoke to dispose of their cigarette butts properly and safely without littering.

This proposal builds on Georgian Bay Forever's efforts to clean up shorelines across Georgian Bay, including at a number of shoreline parks within The Blue Mountains in the summer of 2022. By end of August 2022, Georgian Bay Forever had undertaken 42 shoreline clean ups supported by more than 200 resident volunteers, removing nearly 400kg of garbage from almost 50km of Georgian Bay shoreline. Focusing on shorelines within The Blue Mountains, Georgian Bay Forever hosted 8 shoreline clean ups at Little River Park, Thornbury Harbour, Peasemarsch and Delphi Point Park from July to September 2022. Georgian Bay Forever also received data from 20 volunteer-led shoreline clean ups from July through to November 2022. Altogether, Georgian Bay Forever and volunteers cleaned 28,500 metres of shoreline (including repeat visits to the same parks on different dates) and removed more than 105 kilograms of garbage. The UNSMOKE program is a new effort in response to a high number of cigarette butts recovered from the Town's shorelines and other shoreline locations this year, representing an opportunity to provide receptacles for diversion and public education. Additional detail on the impacts of shoreline cleanups is available in the Environmental Impacts section of this report.

The Staff Committee decided on the above distribution of funds based on the scoring related to the Terms of Reference criteria. The applicants were scored in the following areas:

- Project description and articulation of benefits;
- People, partnerships and performance measurement;
- Level of impact;
- Project feasibility; and,
- Planning.

Thoughtful applications were received from two groups with meaningful project proposals; however, the proposal from Georgian Bay Forever scored the highest and requested \$4,950 – almost the maximum available funding amount of \$5,000. The process of awarding requested funds to the top scoring applicant first, and any remaining funds to applications with the next-highest score(s), is the process established by the Terms of Reference. In this case, staff recommend disbursing the requested \$4,950 to the successful applicant.

The Staff Committee thanks both of our 2022 Environmental Sustainability Fund applicants. Staff will follow up with project applicants where other avenues for support or partnerships may be available, and staff look forward to engaging all applicants to the Fund in upcoming work to implement The Blue Mountains Future Story – the Town's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.

### Review of the Environmental Sustainability Fund

The Environmental Sustainability Fund began its first proposal intake in 2017 and has continued for a full five years. The following table outlines the successful recipients, funded amounts, and resultant projects since 2017.

Year	Recipient	Quick Description	Funding Provided
2017	The Blue Mountain Watershed Trust	Environmental Learning for local elementary schools including classroom and experiential ecology education	\$1,037
2017	Free Spirit Gardens	Created Thornbury Community Gardens (later adopted by Beaver Valley Outreach)	\$3,355
2018	Beaver River Watershed Initiative	Little Beaver Creek Subwatershed Health Check, resulting in a health report for this watershed informed by field research, and engagement of >500 students with ecological education	\$3,000
2018	Beaver Valley Outreach	Enhance Thornbury Community Gardens with protective fencing and student workshops	\$2,000
2019	Climate Action Now Network	Microplastic fiber diversion and capture pilot using washing machine filters distributed to volunteer residents	\$2,100
2019	Beaver River Watershed Initiative	Ecological education programming for local students	\$2,200
2019	Beaver Valley Community School	Compost liners and irrigation system to service Thornbury Community Gardens	\$700
2020	Treetrust The Blue Mountains	Creation of a native tree nursery at Tomahawk golf course with volunteer help, and providing student education on trees	\$2,398
2021	Treetrust The Blue Mountains	Community tree planting and backyard tree planting initiatives, including 600+ seedlings planted along Georgian Trail by more than 100 volunteers; more than 50 backyard trees planted; and 30 trees planted at Heritage Park and Delphi Point Park	\$5,000
Total			\$21,790

Given the positive environmental impacts to the community and value-for-money delivered by the Environmental Sustainability Fund, staff recommend Council support the continuation of the fund through the current term of Council. Another review period should be scheduled to occur after another five years of program operations.

With the continuation of the Fund, there are opportunities to revise the Terms of Reference to encourage alignment with the priorities outlined in the Town's Future Story sustainability plan. Improving alignment with the sustainability plan may also justify increasing the maximum available funds. Minor improvements to wording/clarity in the Terms of Reference have also occurred over the years to improve clarity for applicants, but more substantial updates are needed. The following table outlines several recommended improvements to the Environmental Sustainability Fund's Terms of Reference.

Each proposed amendment is numbered to facilitate Council's discussion and make it easier to select certain recommendations for alteration or removal from the final decision, as necessary.

#	Current State / Areas for Improvement	Proposed Amendments to Terms of Reference
1	In a list of priority items under the "Project Guidelines" section of the Terms of Reference, priority is given to projects that "Address the themes and goals in the Town's planning documents: The Strategic Plan and The Blue Mountains Future Story". Prior to the Town's Future Story sustainability plan becoming available, this section referenced the Sustainable Path plan developed in 2010. Several proposals over the past few years have made only passing reference to sustainability plan priorities.	A dedicated paragraph or list will be added to the "Project Guidelines" section of the Terms of Reference to emphasize that finding alignment with TBM Future Story Goals and Bold Actions should be a key priority for applicants. This new content will also provide suggestions for potential focus areas that would align with the plan's Goals and Bold Actions (e.g., circular economy and waste diversion, biodiversity, water quality, etc.), along with a hyperlink to the Town's Future Story website.
2	Funds have historically been disbursed to applicants in two installments: the first half soon after Council approves of the successful project(s) recommended by staff; and the second half once a satisfactory final project report is received (as required by the Terms of Reference). This schedule of disbursing funds is not currently described in the Terms of Reference.	An amendment may describe the schedule of fund disbursement. It is recommended to keep the schedule consistent with previous years, with one half provided after Council approval and the remainder provided after a satisfactory final progress report is received.

3	<p>Staff have allowed in-kind contributions to be included as part of total project valuation since the Environmental Sustainability Fund began (as part of the remaining 80% of matching funds required to qualify); however, the Terms of Reference does not explicitly differentiate between financial contributions and in-kind contributions. Perhaps as a result of misunderstanding the types of contributions that could be included, some proposals have not valued in-kind contributions (such as volunteer effort to manage the project, or donated meeting space), while others have. Misunderstandings about the types of allowable in-kind funding may impact the ability of some applicants to meet the requirement that funding does not exceed 20% of the total project value.</p> <p>The use of leveraged or matching funds, and the project having sound financial benefits, are included in the list of priority items under the “Project Guidelines” section.</p>	<p>An amendment may explicitly define in-kind contributions, differentiate these from financial contributions, and explain that in-kind contributions are eligible to be included in the total valuation of the proposal. In-kind contributions to the administration and delivery of the project (e.g., project management) and donations of space or materials will be eligible. In-kind contributions of anticipated community volunteers (such as hours spent by participants in a litter pickup event) will not be eligible.</p> <p>In-kind contributions will not be included on the list of priority items. Proposals must continue to justify and describe how each expense is necessary to the project’s success and will continue to be evaluated by staff committees on the basis of having reasonable and effective budgets – including through use of leveraged/matching funds or by demonstrating the project has sound financial benefits.</p>
4	<p>The Environmental Sustainability Fund focuses on environmental sustainability projects with tangible, measurable benefits. Many past projects have delivered a broad range of community benefits alongside the core benefits of environmental sustainability, such as public education, social inclusion/accessibility, and more; however, the Terms of Reference does not directly encourage applicants to identify these ancillary benefits.</p>	<p>The list of priorities can be revised to clearly identify ancillary benefits as priorities for project scoring, including social wellbeing, cultural and/or economic benefits, and other alignment with the Goals of TBM Future Story.</p>

5	<p>The Grants &amp; Donations Committee has had a broad purview and provided grants and donations to social, cultural, economic and environmental organizations and projects through the previous term of Council ending in 2022.</p> <p>The Environmental Sustainability Fund has a narrower focus on providing grants to environmental sustainability projects.</p>	<p>If the Grants &amp; Donations Committee continues, or if a different structure is used to distribute grants and donations to community organizations and local projects going forward, it is recommended that this group collaborate with sustainability staff to better differentiate/complement the Environmental Sustainability Fund.</p> <p>It is also recommended that future grants and donations distribution by the Town, regardless of future structure, refer to TBM Future Story's Goals and Bold Actions when determining evaluation criteria and when evaluating future applications for funding.</p>
6	<p>A maximum of \$5,000 is available to be divided between successful applicants or allocated to only the top applicant if the highest-scoring proposal requests all or close to the full \$5,000.</p>	<p>The maximum funds available may be increased to \$8,000, with a maximum request for any single applicant capped at \$5,000 to increase opportunities for smaller projects while still supporting larger proposals each year.</p> <p>If this increase is approved in the 2024 budget, the 2024 intake period will be able to offer the additional funds. The Terms of Reference will also require additional content updates to describe the \$8,000 available and maximum of \$5,000 for a single application.</p>

The above changes to the Environmental Sustainability Fund Terms of Reference would be made prior to the next intake of proposals in September 2023, save for the requested increase in available funding which would require an additional year of lead time to incorporate the increased amount into future budgets. If endorsed by Council, these added funds would be brought to Council for consideration in the future 2024 budget process.

## **E. Strategic Priorities**

### **1. Communication and Engagement**

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

## **2. Organizational Excellence**

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

## **3. Community**

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

## **4. Quality of Life**

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

## **F. Environmental Impacts**

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The recommended proposal from Georgian Bay Forever complements the daily waste receptacle and large litter clean ups conducted by Community Services staff and builds on Georgian Bay Forever's efforts to engage local volunteers in removing and identifying and quantifying the types of litter found along the Town's shorelines.

These findings have already supported two new collaborative efforts between the Town and Georgian Bay Forever to divert cigarette butts (the UNSMOKE program), and another initiative to install receptacles for fishing line and tackle. Data gathered by Georgian Bay Forever's clean ups in 2022 removed 3483 cigarette butts, 291 pieces of fishing line and 270 fishing lures, along with numerous other litter types such as food wrappers, containers, straws and utensils, cans, bottle caps, hair ties, foam products, and more. Community Services staff have already begun collaborating with Georgian Bay Forever to install specialized receptacles for cigarette butts along with signage and other public awareness efforts to encourage use of these diversion opportunities.

The proposed updates to the Terms of Reference and to the maximum amount of funding available will help clarify the Environmental Sustainability Fund process for future applicants, with the goal of enabling a greater variety of projects by size and type to be implemented each year in support of the Town's sustainability Goals and Bold Actions as reflected in The Blue Mountains Future Story.

## **G. Financial Impacts**

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The successful applicant will receive half the outlined funds following Council approval, with the remainder to be provided upon completion of the project. The successful applicant has one year from receipt of funds to complete the project. Completion will be defined and associated with a measurable outcome.

If Council decides to endorse the continuation of the Environmental Sustainability Fund, the Town will carry an annual budget of \$5,000 for the Fund to be distributed each year until an



increased budget of \$8,000 is approved in the 2024 budget. The Environmental Sustainability Fund is part of the Sustainability Division Budget and is funded through annual taxation.

## **H. In Consultation With**

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Amy Wilson, Administrative Assistant - Water & Wastewater Services

Carter Triana, Planner

Jeffery Fletcher, Manager of Sustainability and Solid Waste

Ryan Gibbons, Director of Community Services

Sam Dinsmore, Deputy Treasurer/Manager of Accounting and Budgets

Ruth Prince, Director of Finance and IT Services/Treasurer

## **I. Public Engagement**

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This funding opportunity is advertised on the Town's website and social media. A public notice was released through the Town email subscription system and published online. A direct email was also sent to previous applicant organizations and other local organizations that may have an interest.

The topic of this Staff Report has not been subject to a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. Comments regarding this report should be submitted to Nicholas Cloet, [sustainability@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:sustainability@thebluemountains.ca).

## **J. Attached**

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1. TBM Environmental Sustainability Fund – Terms of Reference 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Cloet  
Sustainability Coordinator

Jeffery Fletcher  
Manager of Sustainability & Solid Waste

Shawn Carey  
Director Operations

For more information, please contact:  
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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	CSOPS.23.010 Environmental Sustainability Fund Distribution and Recommendations.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 TBM Environmental Sustainability Fund -Terms of Reference 2022.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Feb 7, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Jeff Fletcher - Feb 6, 2023 - 3:13 PM**

**Shawn Carey - Feb 7, 2023 - 11:50 AM**