



Natural Resources Inventory

Create a Natural Resources inventory.

WHAT IS IT?

A Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) “collects and produces scientifically credible information on the status, condition, and trends of land, soil, water, and related resources to protect, restore, and enhance the lands and waters.” An NRI typically includes information and data on water resources, habitats and wildlife, farmlands, forest resources, unique geologic resources, cultural resources, public lands, unfragmented blocks, zoning and tax map parcels, climate conditions and projections, and regional conservation plans.

Natural Resources Inventories serve as a planning tool for local governments when making sustainability, urban planning or land-use decisions. In planning, sustainability, and land-use decision-making. Cities use NRIs to review local planning projects, allowing local governments to evaluate the potential impact of development projects on natural resources. Additionally, in sustainability efforts, cities can use NRIs to gauge the natural assets that could be utilized in pursuit of sustainability goals, related to air quality, water quality, tree cover, habitat preservation, and other goals. NRIs can be produced as stand-alone plans or can be integrated as ‘Natural Resource’ sections of a Master Plan.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Cities can assess their natural resource assets to increase land conservation and reduce the impact of development on the environment.
- By mapping natural assets locally, communities can more effectively quantify the benefits of local nature including calculations around carbon sequestration potential.

BENEFITS



Identify natural resource assets within the community



Proactive planning and informed decision-making



Inform local planning and zoning to reduce impact on natural environment



Data driven decision making

HOW CAN COMMUNITIES IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY?

Cities can utilize planning steps previously used in other communities to create their Natural Resources Inventory.

- **Establish a working group.** Cities can create a working group, either as a stand alone group or as a subgroup of a sustainability commission. The City should consider engaging nonprofits, foundations, local community organizations, regional entities, or other relevant stakeholders to participate. These organizations can include historical societies, cultural groups, environmental professionals, or other stakeholders with interest in natural resources and cultural sites.
- **Create and align goals for the Natural Resources Inventory.** The City should review relevant goals from other plans, such as water conservation, tree canopy, land conservation, or wildlife habitat preservation. After evaluating these goals, the City should identify opportunities to expand these priorities.
- **Determine opportunities for regional collaboration.** Regional agencies, including county governments, may have existing data assets or priorities that align with a local Natural Resources Inventory. Cities should coordinate with these entities to identify opportunities to collaborate on these efforts.

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- **Utilize existing online resources to craft an outline and strategy to complete the NRI that is specific to the community's needs.** Many agencies have completed NRIs across the United States and have published resources that cities can use, including:
 - [Natural Resource Inventories Documents: Prince George County, MD Planning Department](#)
 - [Creating a Natural Resources Inventory: A Guide for Communities in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed'](#) by Cornell University Department of Natural Resources and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
 - Leverage GIS or other mapping platforms to make basic data publicly available. Once the Natural Resources Inventory is complete, the City should make data available to the public. This can encourage community-based conservation projects or help local environmental organizations prioritize areas of action that align with City goals.