

The million-dollar forest

We know forests help us fight climate change by drawing down carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. But did you know they're also one of our best tools to protect people from one of climate change's biggest impacts — flooding?

Unfortunately, many private landowners aren't aware of the role forests can play in reducing the annual, and costly, flooding that their communities experience. So instead of preserving their forests, they cut them down and sell them for timber.

Community Forests International, one of our Adaptation Action Grant partners, saw an opportunity to make a difference. To help develop the business case for investing in maintaining and restoring forests, they decided to put a dollar figure on the role forests play in reducing flooding in New Brunswick's Saint John River Valley.

Their research found the forest can store up to 25,900 cubic metres of water — as much as 10 Olympic-sized swimming pools. It then releases the water slowly into streams and rivers, reducing flooding in nearby communities.

It would cost more than \$1 million to build a catchment pond that could handle the same amount of water. Conversely, the value of the timber in that same forest is just \$285,715.

"The work of Community Forests International demonstrates that forests are critical infrastructure — acting as sponges to absorb and slowly release snowmelt and rainfall," says Diane Flanagan, Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Communications at Intact, and Chair of the Intact Foundation. "We're thankful for Community Forests International's leadership in accelerating the business case of natural infrastructure in protecting communities from climate change."

As part of their project, Community Forests also permanently conserved the 143-hectare in the Canaan-Washademoak watershed and planted more than 250,000 trees to restore an additional 123 hectares of degraded land.

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