



SUPPLIERS PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

**Guidance Document:
Nature-Related Terms & Definitions**

April 2024

As members of the Suppliers Partnership for the Environment (SP), we share a common vision to strive toward an automotive industry with positive environmental impact. While environmental sustainability encompasses many important issues, one key component of this vision is advancing conservation programs across our operations and through the automotive value chain to create positive outcomes for the environment, the industry, and the communities in which we operate.

As with many industries, the automotive industry relies on nature for essential raw materials such as leather, rubber, steel, aluminum, and a wide range of other metals and minerals. The industry both depends on, and has the opportunity to impact, nature at every stage throughout the value chain, from the design, sourcing, manufacturing, use, and disposal of automotive products and components.

Nature and biodiversity conservation are critical to not only our individual sustainability goals, but to the long-term competitiveness and resilience of our industry as a whole. As leaders within our industry, we are working to support a nature-positive future by striving to operate in harmony with the environment, preserve biodiversity, and restore natural ecosystems at our facilities and in surrounding communities.

Sustainability and nature-related goals are meant to grow both the organization and the people who are striving to meet them. Goals should be achievable, implementable, time-bound, and measurable so that positive impacts can be seen at the local, community, and regional scale.

Each of us strive to ensure that future generations have clean water, healthy air, and biodiverse landscapes by improving our ecological impacts. To do so, we actively look for:

- assessment of impacts on nature in our operations and value chains to prioritize actionable environmental improvements,
- methods to preserve and regenerate land systems,
- inclusion of habitats that improve over time and give back to nature,
- the return of clean water into a watershed,
- and outreach that exemplifies a dedication to minimize our environmental footprint.

The purpose of this document is to provide general industry-supported guidance to raise awareness of key nature-related terms and enhance consistency in communications on this topic across the automotive value chain.

The definitions provided are meant to be supportive and informational for conversations about sustainability. They are a starting point to help put structure to many of the words we use regarding nature, sustainability, and environmental awareness. Each company will have their own mission statement, but quite often at the heart of each statement is an evolving relationship with the environment and the biotic and abiotic elements that make up the world in which we live. The definitions should help formulate further discussions and provide sustainability leaders with additional background for the work they are doing.

Glossary of Nature-Related Definitions

Adaptive Management	A structured, iterative process using monitoring and future climatic, ecological, and social projections to change or “adapt” project designs or operations.
Beneficial Reuse	Reusing waste, dredge material, or fill materials, which would otherwise be sent to a landfill, for onsite operations, typically elevation.
Bioactivated Media (BAM)	A material used in stormwater infrastructure that uses bacteria and other biologically active molecules to break down pollutants in the water, most commonly nitrogen and phosphorous.
Biodiversity	The variety of life on Earth and the natural patterns it forms.
Biophilic Design	The concept of creating connections between people and the natural environment.
Conversion	Change of a natural ecosystem to another land use or profound change in a natural ecosystem’s species composition, structure, or function.
Conversion-Free	Commodity production, sourcing, or financial investments do not cause or contribute to the deforestation of natural ecosystems.
Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)	The discharge from a combined sewer system caused by snowmelt or stormwater runoff, typically a combination of stormwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater.
Deforestation	Loss of natural forest as a result of: i) conversion to agriculture or other non-forest land use; ii) conversion to a tree plantation; or iii) severe and sustained degradation.
Deforestation-Free	Commodity production, sourcing, or financial investments do not cause or contribute to the deforestation of natural forests.
Ecological Corridors	Linear features connecting at least two significant habitat areas, with the primary wildlife function to connect habitats.
Ecological/habitat connectivity	The degree to which the landscape facilitates the movement of organisms (animals, plant reproductive structures, pollen, pollinators, spores, etc.) and other environmentally important resources, such as nutrients and moisture, between similar habitats. Connectivity is hampered by fragmentation.

Ecological Restoration	Ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Most disturbances are man-made environmental changes that alter ecosystem structure and function from logging, damming rivers, intense grazing, development, and agriculture. Natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and fires may require ecosystems to be restored. In ecological terms, restoration often goes back to Pre-Settlement times when written records, photographs, and land surveys portrayed the condition of the landscape.
Ecosystem Services	The contributions of ecosystems to the benefits that are used in economic and other human activity.
Edge Composition	The combination of natural edges, nature-based features, and engineered structures that make up the edge of a site or resilience strategy.
Edge Resiliency Strategies	Restoration and reinforcement measures used to promote, protect, and stabilize terrestrial and aquatic landscapes from the forces of erosion, drainage, and climate change.
Environmental Justice	The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.
Ephemeral Stream	A stream that only flows as a direct result of recent precipitation and may not have a clearly defined channel.
Evapotranspiration	The process by which stormwater evaporates from soil and other surfaces into the atmosphere and is transpired from plants.
Floodable Area	The outdoor area of a site designed to withstand flooding with minimal damage, often providing increased flood storage capacity for riverine environments.
Green Infrastructure	Design practices that use or mimic natural systems to manage stormwater runoff or reduce hazards.
Greenway	A strip of undeveloped land near an urban area, set aside for recreational use or environmental protection.
Greywater	Wastewater without any contributions from toilet water.

Greywater Footprint	The volume of freshwater that is required to assimilate the load of pollutants based on natural background concentrations and existing ambient freshwater quality standards. It is calculated as the volume of water that is required to dilute pollutants to such an extent that the quality of the water remains above agreed freshwater quality standards.
Habitat	The area, characterized by its abiotic and biotic properties, that is habitable by a particular species.
Habitat Buffer	Protected zones established around sensitive or critical areas, such as streams and wetlands to lessen the impacts of human activity and land disturbance.
Habitat Fragmentation	Fragmentation that involves alteration of habitat resulting in spatial separation of habitat units from a previous state of greater continuity.
Habitat Patch	An area of distinct habitat type, often surrounded by a non-similar landscape type but may be connected to other patches by ecological corridors.
High-Albedo Pavement	The ability of materials to reflect the visible, infrared, and ultraviolet wavelengths of sunlight. Increased surface reflectance of pavement materials may be the most straightforward heat island reduction strategy, reducing absorption and reradiation of solar heat.
High-Impact Commodities (HICs)	Raw and value-added materials used in economic activities that are known to have material links to the key drivers of biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and ecosystem degradation. Activities associated with high impact commodities include: extraction of these commodities (e.g. mining, farming), clearing of lands for extraction, processing of commodities (into refined or value-added forms), manufacturing commodities into complex products (with additional inputs), distribution of commodities, and the procurement of commodities (in their raw, value added, or final form).
Hydrologic Analysis	Analysis that quantifies the flow rate of water in a watershed or drainage area over time.
Impacts (on nature)	Changes in the state of nature (quality or quantity), which may result in changes to the capacity of nature to provide social and economic functions. Impacts can be positive or negative.
Impervious Cover	Surfaces that cannot effectively infiltrate rainfall, such as rooftops, pavement, sidewalks, and driveways.

Infiltration	The process by which water flows from above ground into the subsurface, soaking into subsurface soils and moving into substrates.
Lacustrine	Relating to or associated with lake ecosystems or flooding.
Land Ethic	A philosophy that states the relationships between people and land are intertwined; care for people cannot be separated from care for the land. Thus, a land ethic can be seen as a moral code of conduct that stems from these interconnected caring relationships. The term was coined by Aldo Leopold in his book A Sand County Almanac.
Land Health	Land health can be envisioned as the capacity of land, relative to its potential, to sustain and deliver essential ecosystem services or, the benefits people obtain from ecosystems.
Light Pollution	An unwanted consequence of outdoor lighting that includes such effects as sky glow, light trespass, and glare.
Native Plant	Indigenous terrestrial and aquatic plant species that have evolved and occur naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, and habitat.
Natural Ecosystem Habitat	A natural ecosystem habitat is an ecosystem that substantially resembles – in terms of species composition, structure, and ecological function – one that is or would be found in a given area in the absence of major human impacts. This includes human-managed ecosystems where much of the natural species composition, structure, and ecological function is present.
Nature	All non-human living entities and their interaction with other living or non-living physical entities and processes. This definition recognizes that interactions bind humans to nature, and its subcomponents (e.g., species, soils, rivers, nutrients), to one another. This definition also recognizes that air pollution, climate regulation, and carbon are part of “nature” more broadly—therefore, when we talk about acting for nature, we are talking about acting on issues related to climate change as well.
Nature-Positive	A high-level goal and concept describing a future state of nature (e.g., biodiversity, ecosystem services and natural capital) that is greater than the current state.

Nature Based Features	Engineered components of a project designed to mimic characteristics or performance of natural features for coastal risk reduction, habitat and ecosystem complexity, or other benefits. These often include real natural processes or plants but have an engineered or human-made component. Nature-Based Features mimic characteristics of natural features, but are created by human design, engineering, and construction to provide specific services for natural systems.
Palustrine	Relating to a system of inland, nontidal wetlands characterized by the presence of trees, shrubs, and emergent vegetation.
Pollinator	An animal that helps carry pollen from the male part of the flower (stamen) to the female part of the same or another flower (stigma).
Pollutants of Concern	Pollutants in stormwater designated by relevant regulatory agencies that can have potentially significant negative impacts on water quality in a given region.
Rainwater Harvesting	The harvesting, cleaning, and reuse of surface water runoff from roofs, landscapes, and other hard surfaces in urban environments for secondary uses such as landscape irrigation. Typically, runoff from a road or parking lot is not reused due to pollutant loads.
Regenerate	Actions designed within existing land uses to increase the biophysical function and/or ecological productivity of an ecosystem or its components.
Riverine	Relating to river ecosystems.
Sedimentation or Sediment Transport	The process of settling or depositing of rock fragments, soil, organic matter, or dissolved material that has been eroded or transported by water, wind, ice or gravity.
Soil Health	Soil health is the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans.
Wetland	Lands transitioning between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. Wetlands must have one or more of the following three attributes: at least periodically, the land supports predominantly hydrophytic vegetation; the substrate is predominately undrained hydric soil; and the substrate is non-soil and is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year.

References for More Information

For additional information it is recommended that companies consult the guidance issued by the following third-party organizations, as well as existing guidance published by SP related to carbon neutrality and water stewardship.

- [Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures \(TNFD\) Glossary](#)
- [Science Based Targets Network \(SBTN\) Glossary](#)
- [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\) Glossary](#)
- [Waterfront Alliance, WEDG Manual](#)
- [Accountability Framework Initiative \(Afi\) Definitions](#)
- [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\), Convention on Biological Diversity](#)
- [Wildlife Habitat Council \(WHC\) & Suppliers Partnership for the Environment \(SP\) White Paper: Nature-based Solutions to Prevent Pollution and Support Biodiversity](#)
- [Wildlife Habitat Council \(WHC\) & Suppliers Partnership for the Environment \(SP\) Pollinator Project Toolkit](#)
- [Suppliers Partnership for the Environment \(SP\) Carbon Neutrality KPIs, Terms & Definitions Guidance Document](#)
- [Suppliers Partnership for the Environment \(SP\) Water Stewardship Strategy Framework Guidance Document](#)
- [Wildlife Habitat Council \(WHC\) Project Guidances](#)

Acknowledgements: This guidance document was produced through a collaborative process by the Suppliers Partnership for the Environment (SP) Nature Based Solutions Work Group, co-chaired by Navi Uppal of American Honda Motor Company, Inc. and, Barry Stuedemann and Jay Womack of GZA. The document included input and review from work group members representing automakers and tiered suppliers.

Disclaimer: This document sets forth various findings based on information available to working group members at the time of issuance. These findings are not intended to set forth any industry rule, requirement or standard. Each Member should independently determine its own processes and practices, including, without limitation, levels, measurements, vendors, materials, equipment, energy sources, energy use, emissions, and recyclability.

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