

Sustainable Markets Initiative

26.09.2024 – 13:01 Uhr

AI TOOL LAUNCHED TO PROTECT NATURE DURING INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

New York (ots/PRNewswire) -

- SMI Nature Risk Tool uses data and AI to inform infrastructure projects, promoting sustainable development and environmental protection.
- Can analyse land anywhere in the world, offering expert-reviewed descriptions of habitats and biomes.
- Identifies protected species early in the site selection phase, allowing for protective measures to be integrated into development plans.
- Successfully trialled by organisations including the World Bank, BP, KPMG, WWF, Barclays, HSBC, and the Blue Dot Network.

The Sustainable Markets Initiative and AECOM launch a groundbreaking AI tool designed to protect nature during infrastructure development. The Nature Risk Tool analyses any piece of land globally providing detailed insights into habitats and biomes to help planners and policymakers create sustainable infrastructure that safeguards the natural environment.

With infrastructure development set to surge, driven by population and economic growth, the Nature Risk Tool will combat a reality that infrastructure development often leads to habitat loss, biodiversity decline, pollution, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. Over the past 50 years, wildlife populations have decreased by an average of 60%^[1], with infrastructure development being a significant factor.

Powered by AECOM, and using datasets from the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), the SMI Nature Risk Tool enables infrastructure investors and promoters to analyse any piece of land globally (at a scale of metres), providing expert-reviewed descriptions of the location's habitat and biomes early in the site selection process.

The Nature Risk Tool then evaluates a project's impact on the environment and suggests mitigation strategies, offering potential solutions or environmental protection measures. This information can be used to inform planner and policymaker decisions on creating infrastructure that promotes sustainable development and protects the natural environment. Importantly, the tool also aligns with the TNFD framework, enabling users to utilise the data for the TNFD LEAP process.

For example, if a protected species is found by the tool on the proposed site, early identification during the site selection phase allows for either ruling out that site or integrating protective measures into the development process to ensure the species' continued protection. The tool also aligns with the TNFD framework, enabling users to utilise the data for the TNFD LEAP process.

Jennifer Jordan Saifi, CEO, Sustainable Markets Initiative, said: "Nature is the engine of our economy, which is why it lies at the heart of our mandate, the Terra Carta. It is central to providing us with solutions for a sustainable future.

"Partnering with AECOM, we have been able to demonstrate the significant impact that infrastructure development can have on global biodiversity.

"This is why I am proud to be launching the SMI Nature Risk Tool, something we hope will have many use cases and that will act as a powerful resource for developers and policymakers worldwide as we work collectively to protect and restore harmony with Nature."

Troy Rudd, Chief Executive Officer and Head of the Measurement and Transparency Task Force, AECOM, added: "We are incredibly excited about this partnership with the Sustainable Market Initiative. By combining our expertise in infrastructure consulting with SMI's commitment to sustainability, we are setting a new standard for how projects can be planned and executed with nature and biodiversity at the forefront.

"This collaboration not only enhances our ability to deliver innovative solutions but also underscores our shared vision for a more sustainable and resilient future."

The tool will be employed at the project initiation stage to support site selection and feasibility studies, enhance decision-making and efficiency, and significantly minimise impacts on nature and biodiversity.

By bringing the tool in at an early stage, it will provide critical insights into project risks at key decision-making milestones, allowing leaders and planners to pivot and mitigate risks before a project is underway.

About The Sustainable Markets Initiative

Founded by His Majesty King Charles III in 2020, then the Prince of Wales, the Sustainable Markets Initiative has become the world's 'go-to' private sector organisation on transition. Launched in 2021, the [Terra Carta](https://www.terra-carta.com) serves as the Sustainable Markets Initiative's mandate with a focus on accelerating positive results for Nature, People and Planet through real economy action. Read more: www.sustainable-markets.org

About AECOM

AECOM is the world's trusted infrastructure consulting firm, delivering professional services throughout the project lifecycle – from advisory, planning, design and engineering to program and construction management. On projects spanning transportation, buildings, water, new energy and the environment, our public- and private-sector clients trust us to solve their most complex challenges. Our teams are driven by a common purpose to deliver a better world through our unrivalled technical and digital expertise, a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion, and a commitment to environmental, social and governance priorities. AECOM is a Fortune 500 firm and its Professional Services business had revenue of \$13.1 billion in fiscal year 2022. See how we are delivering sustainable legacies for generations to come at [aecom.com](https://www.aecom.com) and @AECOM.

[1] [With over USD 60 trillion of new infrastructure in the next 20 years, how can nature thrive amongst the concrete? | IUCN](#)

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