

**Title: URBIS and Rio +20: Developing a Global Research/Policy Agenda for Urban Sustainability and Biodiversity**

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Abstract: Join us as we report back on recent work on urban sustainability and biodiversity conservation that was presented, discussed and launched at Rio +20 in June of this past year. The goal of this ACSF funded work has been to develop an inter-disciplinary research program focusing on sustainability, biodiversity, social-ecological systems resilience, and ecosystem services in cities. Recognizing that cities are now the dominant human habitat, the project has endeavored to address a gap left by other global sustainability initiatives, such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which pay only minimal attention to urban ecosystems. This applied research and work at the science-to-policy interface has contributed significantly to the launch of the [URBIS](#) global urban biosphere policy initiative, which has been endorsed by several international agreements and was launched at the [Rio +20](#) UN Conference on Sustainable Development. Over the past 4 years, Cornell's Civic Ecology Lab has worked with UNESCO, ICLEI (the international association of over 1200 city and other local governments), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Stockholm University to develop the URBIS sustainability designation program for cities. Now up and running, URBIS provides a tiered approach for cities to develop and receive recognition for comprehensive urban sustainability and biodiversity planning. In October 2010, we participated in an URBIS workshop at the Shanghai World Expo, and then helped draft an [URBIS resolution at the COP10 meetings in Nagoya](#), which was approved by the delegates. In fall 2011, Cornell participated in URBIS workshops in NYC and Ithaca organized by Stockholm University, during which we outlined the contents for a forthcoming report: [Cities Biodiversity Outlook](#). This report, which is modeled after the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, provides a summary for international policy makers of our current state of knowledge about urbanization, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and will include chapters by Tidball and Krasny of Cornell.