

# Get your hands dirty for health

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Billions of people using the Earth's resources and changing or destroying ecosystems are not only creating the global environmental and climate crisis, but also compromising human health and long-term survival of our species, experts warn in an open letter to world leaders.

The #HealthyRecovery initiative, signed by more than 4500 [health](#)

[professionals](#) from 90 countries, urges G20 Presidents and Prime Ministers to legislate and fund projects to enable [ecological restoration](#) for better human health as part of their stimulus packages in the aftermath of COVID-19.

One of the co-signatories, the Adelaide-based Healthy Urban Microbiome Initiative (HUMI) research group, is conducting a rearguard of research to support these vital initiatives.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic shows, global health systems are struggling to cope with the burden of disease, with scientists and health experts connecting public health interventions with ecological [restoration](#), including for improved air quality and soil health," says HUMI member, Flinders University scientist Dr. Martin Breed in a new paper in *EcoHealth*.

"An action plan to restore ecosystems for human health is imperative, and the COVID-19 pandemic presents a great opportunity to kickstart a real paradigm shift in global efforts," says Flinders ecology lecturer Dr. Breed, who is also an expert observer for the WHO Interagency Liaison Group on Biodiversity and Health.



Dr Martin Breed, Flinders University. Credit: Flinders University

"We now mostly live in biologically-impooverished cities, and our demand for [environmental resources](#) has led to this global environmental crisis," he says.

"Ecological restoration is a clearly identifiable pathway to tackle some of our most critical challenges, as it becomes increasingly clear that the human and ecological health crises are intimately interwoven.

"Improved understanding of the links between ecological restoration and human health will catalyze important investments into this most



fundamental of [public health interventions](#), which will likely result in environmental and health gains that pay generational dividends."

HUMI was established in 2016, and is a UN-backed initiative that seeks to restore the immune-restorative power of biodiverse green spaces in cities to maximize [human health](#) gains.

**More information:** Martin F. Breed et al, Ecosystem Restoration: A Public Health Intervention, *EcoHealth* (2020). [DOI: 10.1007/s10393-020-01480-1](#)

Provided by Flinders University

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