

How to Use Ecological Economics to Quantify the Benefits of Healthy Ecosystems

On June 8, 2017, Earth Economics will present a two-hour webinar on Ecosystem Services Valuation (ESV). The first hour will cover basic concepts, and the second hour will be for discussion and questions.

Ecosystem Services is an emerging field of research – new methods are being developed to assign dollar values to fresh air and clean water, among many other benefits provided to people by nature. Work is being done to give natural systems, such as rivers and forests, the same importance and critical economic value as human-built systems, such as roads and dams. When policy and decision makers understand the value of the services provided by a healthy ecosystem, they can justify spending the money and resources needed to keep the ecosystem functioning for future generations.

This presentation will explore and explain the relationship between human economies and natural systems, and will provide participants with an understanding of the historic disconnect between the environment and the economy. It will introduce participants to new tools and principles that recognize the economic benefits of natural systems, and provide mechanisms to effect change.

The presentation will cover the following topics.

Categories of Ecosystem Services

- The four categories

- The 21 sub-categories

Local Context

- Examples of nature providing economic benefits

- Examples of benefits lost due to ecosystem degradation

- Consequences of lost benefits, and who loses the most

Valuation Techniques

How to value an ecosystem: methods

Natural Capital Accounting

Why it's important to invest in ecosystem services: long-term benefits

Municipal accounting

Water utilities example

Creative funding mechanisms to support ecosystem services and land conservation

Bonds, easements, and nutrient load

Outreach and Communications

How to message the results to drive change

Puget Sound Watershed Characterization Project

Metro Parks Tacoma

WA State RCO

Mat Su Borough

How to ask the right questions