

Measuring the economic value of ecosystem services – key stage for ecosystem management

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary society has as barometer the market as ideal institutional structure for securing an optimal use of resources. Nevertheless there a number of things that are valuable for us but that are not distributed through the market. Among these ecosystem services occupy a priority position. The value of ecosystem services was interpreted differently along time, the presentation and analysis of the most relevant approaches being the focus of the paper. Economists and decision makers perceived the value of biological resources in accordance with their direct use – raw material for the production of goods. By demonstrating the total economic value of ecosystems we will illustrate the benefits associated with the conservation and preservation of nature and will highlight the large size of groups that depend on these ecosystems. The measurement of the economic value of ecosystem services could also show the high costs associated with biodiversity loss or ecosystem degradation, including the loss of means of subsistence, jobs, and incomes and could estimate the expenditure needed for replacement of ecosystems. It also turns out that ecosystem services are more than a biological reserve, being a capital that if it is properly managed could provide continuously direct and indirect economic benefits for the population.