



Ecosystem Services in Action:

Lessons learned from 20+ engagements around the world

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Media Contact: Anne Guerry, Lead Scientist, Natural Capital Project, Anne.Guerry@Stanford.edu, 206.713.4163

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Session: From Promise to Proof: How Ecosystem Service Science Is Transforming Real Decisions

Date & Time: Saturday, February 16th, 2013: 8:30 -11:30am

BOSTON, MA - Ecosystem services, the benefits people get from nature, sustain and fulfill human life. Many have suggested that an explicit focus on ecosystem services can lead to management choices with better outcomes for people and the ecosystems on which they depend. But compelling evidence of the science of modeling, mapping, and valuing ecosystem services informing real decisions has, to date, been scarce. Dr. Guerry presented that evidence today, in a symposium session at the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* (AAAS), by showcasing how the Natural Capital Project's use of ecosystem service approaches and tools have been used to inform decisions in diverse contexts worldwide. These contexts include spatial planning, payment for ecosystem services, climate adaptation planning, permitting and mitigation, restoration planning, and corporate risk management.

Advocating for the broad inclusion of ecosystem services into decision-making, Dr. Guerry states that "Incorporating ecosystem services into decisions can inform planning processes, mediate stakeholder differences, help establish new policy and finance mechanisms, and improve ecosystem service delivery."

Dr. Guerry offered 5 lessons learned from 20+ engagements in decisions around the world and illustrated those lessons with stories from applied work—focusing on marine planning in Belize and Canada and the targeting of restoration efforts in the US. The 5 lessons are: 1) ecosystem service approaches and tools can indeed make a difference in diverse decisions around the world, 2) iterative science-policy processes are critical to taking ecosystem service science from promise to proof, 3) accessible tools and trained partners are critical to realizing the potential of this approach, 4) ecosystem services are about much more than dollars, with a wide variety of metrics resonating with different people, and 5) what is most needed to advance the field is to better connect changes in ecosystem services to changes in human wellbeing.

One of the most important things we can take away from this body of evidence is that "we can map *and value* the goods and services people get from nature," says Dr. Guerry. Furthermore, "Ecosystem service information can make – and has made – a difference in diverse decision contexts around the world."

Reflecting on the past 6 years of applying ecosystem service approaches and tools in real decisions, ecosystem service information has indeed made a difference. Across the Natural Capital Project's engagements, there have been a range of successful outcomes including: stakeholders and decision-makers are newly aware of nature's benefits and the connections among them, stakeholders have new tools to mediate differences, plans and policies that consider impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services are in place, new policy and finance mechanisms have been established, and perhaps most importantly (and elusively), the delivery of ecosystem services has been enhanced.

Media Resources:

AAAS Session Information: <http://aaas.confex.com/aaas/2013/webprogram/Session6052.html>

Natural Capital Project: www.naturalcapitalproject.org

Image: www.naturalcapitalproject.org/images/lessonslearned.jpg

