

## Summary Report 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009

### **Creating a New Prosperity: Fresh Approaches to Ecosystem Services and Human Well-being**

Research Symposium 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009, Royal Geographical Society, London

The research symposium is the culmination of a series of research projects exploring different aspects of Ecosystem Services (ES). The series of events was titled Framing of Ecosystem Services and Human Well-being (FRESH) and further information can be found at [www.nottingham.ac.uk/fresh](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/fresh).

Starting back in the 1970's the idea of economically valuing the functioning of ecosystems was first developed. Since then the idea has matured into current thinking regarding ES. Background information as taken from the Defra website ([www.ecosystems-services.org.uk](http://www.ecosystems-services.org.uk)) is:

The concept of ecosystem services has been developed to aid our understanding of the human use and management of natural resources.

Our health and wellbeing depends upon the services provided by ecosystems and their components: water, soil, nutrients and organisms. Therefore, ecosystem services are the processes by which the environment produces resources utilised by humans such as clean air, water, food and materials. Ecosystem services can be defined in various ways. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provided the most comprehensive assessment of the state of the global environment to date; it classified ecosystem services as follows:

- **Supporting services:** The services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services including soil formation, photosynthesis, primary production, nutrient cycling and water cycling.
- **Provisioning services:** The products obtained from ecosystems, including food, fibre, fuel, genetic resources, biochemicals, natural medicines, pharmaceuticals, ornamental resources and fresh water;
- **Regulating services:** The benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes, including air quality regulation, climate regulation, water regulation, erosion regulation, water purification, disease regulation, pest regulation, pollination, natural hazard regulation;
- **Cultural services:** The non-material benefits people obtain from ecosystems through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation and aesthetic experiences – thereby taking account of landscape values;

The UK is experiencing a general loss of biodiversity. With climate change and human activity our landscape and habitats are under serious pressure. By economically valuing these habitats and landscape it is hoped that decisions regarding development can be undertaken in a more sustainable way. The concept of ES is being discussed within policy-making circles, and pilot bench-marking projects are underway.

General points from the day included:

- Humans do not value their landscape and their habitat
- Lack of land use planning is a threat to society
- Lack of knowledge over the 'critical' levels of natural capital
- Lack of cross-thinking between different development disciplines

- Economy should be viewed as a sub-system of the Earth's biosphere
- Marine ES are a more developed research area
- Understanding of ES should be expanded through local community organisations
- Local Authorities could have difficulty implementing due to silo budget working
- Multi-functional landscapes need to become the norm
- Risk of placing an economic value on landscape by becoming a trade-off opportunity
- ES include cultural and aesthetic services but difficult to value

By the end of the day the general view was that valuing landscape through ES provides a whole cost to a habitat. This can help bolster arguments for preservation due to the many services provided by a landscape. However the risk is that in any economic value could then become a trade-off situation if job creation etc. are balanced against ES.

For landscape managers and other related disciplines ES can be used to explain and promote the true value of landscapes, from pocket parks to ancient woodland or wetland habitats.

Further information

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/fresh/index.htm> - FRESH seminars and presentations

<http://www.ecosystemservices.org.uk/index.htm> - Defra research

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/postpn281.pdf> - Government briefing note published March 2007 which gives a useful overview

[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/ecosystempolicy\\_tcm6-10930.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/ecosystempolicy_tcm6-10930.pdf) - Natural England's draft policy published April 2009

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