



Reference conditions

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Definitions

- **Reference condition** is a state of the ecosystem against which to compare past, present and future ecosystem condition for use as a standard.
- **Reference levels:** Upper limit of an indicator measured at reference condition; Lower limit or zero value of an indicator (e.g., no pollution; absence of a species)

Main principle for selecting a reference condition

Reference condition of an ecosystem is the **natural state** unless the natural state is no longer a meaningful reference. Then an anthropogenic reference condition can be chosen.

Discussion:

- Do you agree with this principle? What are the strengths or weaknesses?
- How do we decide what is natural and what not?
- Do we need a global reference condition to ensure comparability of condition accounts?