DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

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System of Environmental-Economic Accounting 2012 – Experimental Ecosystem Accounting Revision

First Global Consultation on:

Chapter 3: Spatial units for Ecosystem Accounting

Chapter 4: Accounting for Ecosystem Extent

Chapter 5: Accounting for Ecosystem Condition

Comments Form

Deadline for responses: 30 April 2020
Send responses to: seea@un.org

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The comment form has been designed to facilitate the analysis of comments. There are nine guiding questions in the form, please respond to the questions in the indicated boxes below. To submit responses please save this document and send it as an attachment to the following e-mail address: seea@un.org.

All documents can be also found on the SEEA EEA Revision website at: https://seea.un.org/content/seea-experimental-ecosystem-accounting-revision

In case you have any questions or have issues with accessing the documents, please contact us at seea@un.org

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the definition and description of ecosystem assets and ecosystem accounting areas and the associated measurement boundaries and treatments?

The description and concept of ecosystem assets and ecosystem accounting areas are defined very clearly and understandably and it is very important that the spatial characteristic of ecosystem assets is expressed. Although at the beginning of your work with ecosystem accounting the definition of ecosystem assets and ecosystems itself might be seen as one and the same and might be mixed and confused a little.
In regards to ecosystem accounting areas measurement boundaries they are also defined clearly and are easily understandable.
In terms of treatment of specific ecosystems and features the treatment of marine ecosystems might be more difficult due to its vertical nature (depth) and the lack of certain information in example the information about the boundaries of different ecosystem types associated with sea bed and so on.

Question 2. Do you have any comments on the use of the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology as the SEEA Ecosystem Type Reference Classification?

IUCN Global Ecosystem typology seems appropriate and comprehensive enough as the SEEA Ecosystem Type Reference Classification.
Maybe there could be a little more elaboration on the use of different EFGs in the EAA, mostly in regards to the sufficient number of EFG used in that particular EAA based on its size, composition etc.

Question 3. Do you have any comments on the recording of changes in ecosystem extent and ecosystem condition, including the recording of ecosystem conversions, as described in chapters 4 and 5?

The recording in ecosystem extent and condition is explained clearly ant there aren't much comments concerning this topic. The biggest problem in recording ecosystem extent and condition might be faced when we are talking about recording changes over long periods of time because of the lack of data needed in order to make an objective assessment.

Question 4. Do you have any comments on the three-stage approach to accounting for ecosystem condition, including the aggregation of condition variables and indicators?

Some practical examples of three-stage approach usage would be a good addition to the information provided in the handbook. It would be much easier to grasp the process of implementing this approach into accounting.

Question 5. Do you have any comments on the description and application of the concept of reference condition and the use of both natural and anthropogenic reference conditions in accounting for ecosystem condition?

The concept of reference condition and the use of natural and anthropogenic reference conditions are defined clearly and thoroughly and the main problems are stated obviously. Maybe the description of reference condition would be stated even more clearly if right away after the paragraph 5.30 some examples of it would be set or even the paragraph 5.35 would be moved to 5.31.
It might also be a real challenge to define the natural condition of some of the ecosystems, especially when in many cases there aren't enough sufficient data and most of the existing ecosystems is more or less affected by the actions of humans. So in many cases the assessment of reference condition might become a subject of interpretations and might not be assessed fully correct.

Question 6. Do you have any comments on Ecosystem Condition Typology for organising characteristics, data and indicators about ecosystem condition?

The whole idea and description of ECT is stated quite clearly, although when it comes to practical implementation certain problems might arise, for example, some countries might not have sufficient information about chemical state characteristics or some indicators, for example, presence / abundance of certain species in the ecosystems, the diversity of specific species groups at a given location and time and etc. might be very hard or nearly impossible to monitor.

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Question 7. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 3?

Chapter 3 provides a great summary for the spatial element of ecosystem accounting which is one of the most important aspects to grasp. Different types of spatial units and the delineation and classification of ecosystem assets is presented understandably and in enough detail.

Question 8. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 4?

The accounting for ecosystem extent in chapter 4 is presented briefly and informatively. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 makes a good addition in understanding how to record the changes in ecosystem extent and it is really important that the concept of ecosystem conversion is pointed out.

Question 9. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 5?

This chapter contains much information and some of it might be quite hard to understand, the implementation of ecosystem reference level might be difficult in some cases, considering the lack of informative data needed and might become a bit subjective, also some ECT classes indicators might be hard to implement due to the lack of data on it.

The provided annexes to this chapter are very useful, especially annex table 5.5, which is a good help for establishing natural reference condition for ecosystems.

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