



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS



System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

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 revision of SEEA-EAA ought to acknowledge the contested area occupied by notions of ecosystem services and value (see, for example, “Ecosystem services as a contested concept: a synthesis of critique and counter-arguments” by Matthias Schrote and others) Figure 3.1b is not readily self explanatory. It might be replaced with something simpler and more accessible to a wide audience, or, it might be dropped.

3.11 This paragraph needs to be clearer about what is considered within the scope of ecosystems. In its current format, the wording is confusing and unclear. ‘Atmospheric Boundary Layer’ has not been defined. Perhaps it is done so in a glossary or in an earlier chapter?

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

3.40 IUCN should be explained (as it is in 3.42)

3.42 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

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?

Chapter 4 would benefit from more detail and examples. Degradation or restoration through sequestration are examples of important change in ecosystem condition. These need more explicit discussion and example by way of illustrative national level examples. Paragraph 4.19 is not clear

“Significant analytical benefits are likely to arise from developing maps of ecosystem extent which show the configuration of EAs by different ET across an EAA. Analysis of a time series of extent maps will also enable analysis of the location of changes in ET. Mapping ecosystem extent can also reveal patterns of changing fragmentation of EAs which will not be evident in an ecosystem extent account presented for ET.”

Table 4.2 is given by way of illustration. It would be easier to understand if it were populated with numbers and a short explanatory text was added at the bottom of this table.

The paragraph and section numbering in the existing draft of chapter 5 is confusing. The reader moves from 5.9 to 5.2, for example.

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?

5.8 ‘...are described in detail in section 5.3.’ Did the authors mean to write Annex 5.3 or section 5.3 below? Numbering of paragraphs is confusing (point made above).
Stage 1 ECT condition accounts is pitched at a very abstract and conceptual level. Some examples of how this might be applied should be provided in an annex.

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?

Discussion of reference conditions is broad and unavoidably vague. Ultimately, each country will do their own thing. Data availability will dictate how references are calibrated. At best, this revision of EEA can only lay out broad principles. ‘The perfect is the enemy of the good’.

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

Discussion of the structure of condition accounts (paragraphs 5.39-5.47) is somewhat abstract and vague. A few examples would be in order.
Some repetition between 5.80 and 5.81.

Annex 5.2 page 21 3rd paragraph down and last line
Substitute ‘exclusive’ for ‘exhaustive’
Some of the annex material is opaque (see for example the bottom of page 23 and the top of page 24 of chapter 5).

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

3.12 missing word 'with' after 'direct interaction'

3.14 Is 'Ecosystem Accounting Units' (EAU) to be replaced by 'Ecosystem Accounting Area'. This change needs to be rationalised.

3.18 EEZ not explained from within chapter 3.

3.23 CBD ?

3.25 Would it not be possible to allow for flexibility here so that a single EA crossing a national boundary can be classified in two ways at the same time: one single ET crossing a boundary as well as two separate ETs that sum, in each case, within an EAA unit (a national territory in this case).

3.36 & 3.37 Seems reasonable.

3.62 This is a key conclusion and an important one calling for cross-agency and inter-disciplinary collaboration

Page 16: typo in 'One of more of these' (use 'or')

Annex 3.2 Where are peatlands in IUCN?

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

Click here and start typing (The length of your response is not limited by this text box.)

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

An acronym and terminology buster would be helpful. For example, 'nephelometric turbidity unit'.

Drafting is very opaque in places. Take this example from page 27:

"Species population phenology (seasonality): The phenological phase of species populations can be challenging to be integrated across *temporal* grain units, and lacks *normativity*. Timing (of the events) is not necessarily considered as 'state', as a 'phase shift' by itself does not influence functioning. In the cases when asynchronous timing shifts create a relevant net impact on functioning (e.g. an earlier greening and a later leaf-fall creates a longer vegetation period) than it is this net effect which should be captured by a state indicator (e.g. more biomass, different species)"