



System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

SEEA EEA Revision: Outstanding issues in Accounting for ecosystem services

Presentation for the SEEA EEA Virtual Expert Forum

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United Nations

Issue #1: Climate regulation service

- The role of ecosystems in supporting the regulation of global climate, primarily through the sequestration and storage of carbon, is widely accepted.
- Accounting for this ecosystem service has raised a range of issues. In recent months, an approach based on the concept carbon retention has been developed.
- Questions:
 - > Does the carbon retention approach provide a meaningful pathway for accounting for the global climate regulation service?
 - > What measurement boundaries should be adopted for ecosystem accounting purposes?

Issue #2: Spatial disaggregation

- Statistical data may be highly useful for ecosystem accounting, though because it is typically collected and reported by administrative units, it must be spatially disaggregated to provide grid-based results needed for ecosystem accounting.
- An important step will be for account compilers to know when and where disaggregation may be a more useful approach than, for example, biophysical modelling.
- Questions:
 - > What are some examples (i.e., countries and ecosystem services) of where disaggregation has been useful for ecosystem accounting?
 - > Which statistical data and ancillary data have been most useful to assist in spatial disaggregation?
 - > How can we better guide compilers on how best to use spatial disaggregation, based on past successful examples

Issue #3: Recreation related services

- An important use of ecosystems occurs when people undertake recreation in them. The contexts may vary from a local park to wildlife watching in remote locations. In many cases the activity is supported by businesses providing access, material support (food, equipment, guidance) and transport services.
- Where payments are made to these businesses by people undertaking recreation the precise set of accounting entries needs to be determined such that the links between the ecosystem, the people undertaking the recreation and the businesses involved are appropriately recorded
- Questions:
 - > Is it appropriate for households, as the sector undertaking the recreation, to be considered the sole user of the recreation related ecosystem services?
 - > If so, how should the connection between ecosystems and local businesses be recorded?

Issue #4: Amenity services

- There are benefits obtained by people from the biophysical characteristics and qualities of ecosystems reflected in visual aesthetics and lower levels of air and noise pollution and which can be summarised in terms of amenity services.
- They are generally considered to be supplied in relation to the places in which people reside and hence in the associated property and rental prices.
- Questions:
 - > What methods can be used to measure these services in physical and monetary terms?
 - > What measurement boundaries or conventions should be established to distinguish these services from related services such as concerning recreation?

Issue #5: Ecosystem service capacity

- A key motivation for ecosystem accounting is understanding the connection between ecosystem assets and ecosystem services. Thus, the concept of ecosystem capacity is key.
- However, the precise definition and framing of this concept in an accounting context is yet to be established although some key features are emerging.
- Questions:
 - > Is the proposed focus on measuring the capacity of individual ecosystem services appropriate? What definition should be adopted?
 - > How can the link to more systemic concepts related to capacity, such as resilience, be best presented?



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Thank you



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