

BUSINESS & ECOSYSTEMS LEADERSHIP GROUP



*An innovative partnership between WRI and leading companies
dedicated to advancing business strategies, markets, and policies
that align corporate performance and ecosystem stewardship*



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The Global Challenge

Global warming dominates headlines today. Ecosystem degradation will do so tomorrow.

Ecosystems provide businesses with numerous benefits or “ecosystem services.” Forests supply timber and wood fiber, purify water, regulate climate, and yield genetic resources. River systems provide freshwater, power, and recreation. Coastal wetlands filter waste, mitigate floods, and serve as nurseries for commercial fisheries.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment—the first global audit of the world’s forests, wetlands, coral reefs, and other ecosystems—found that ecosystems have declined more rapidly and extensively over the past 50 years than at any other comparable time in human history. In fact, 15 of the 24 ecosystem services evaluated have degraded over the past half century. Left unchecked, this decline will jeopardize the world’s biodiversity and alter the landscape in which businesses operate.

Ecosystems and Corporate Performance

Ecosystem degradation is highly relevant to business because companies not only *impact* ecosystems and the services they provide but also *depend* on them. Ecosystem degradation, therefore, can pose a number of *risks* to corporate performance as well as create new business *opportunities*. Examples include:

● OPERATIONAL

- Risks: Freshwater scarcity increases costs for water use, siltation reduces energy output of dams, and floods disrupt coastal businesses
- Opportunities: Increase water-use efficiency or build on-site wetlands to circumvent new water treatment systems

● REGULATORY AND LEGAL

- Risks: New fines, regulations, or lawsuits
- Opportunities: Engage governments to develop policies and incentives to protect needed ecosystem services

● REPUTATIONAL

- Risks: Brand damage due to campaigns
- Opportunities: Implement and communicate sustainable purchasing, operational, or investment practices

● MARKET AND PRODUCT

- Risks: Customers switch to other suppliers that offer products with lower ecosystem impacts
- Opportunities: Launch new products and services that reduce customer impacts on ecosystems, participate in emerging markets for carbon sequestration and watershed protection, capture new revenue streams from company-owned natural assets, and offer eco-labeled products

● FINANCING

- Risks: Banks implement more rigorous lending requirements
- Opportunities: Banks offer more favorable loan terms or invest in companies supplying products that reduce pressure on ecosystems

The Group

Convened by the World Resources Institute (WRI), the Business & Ecosystems Leadership Group is an innovative partnership dedicated to advancing business strategies, markets, and public policies that align corporate performance and ecosystem stewardship.



Activities

WRI and Group members meet three times annually to:

- Share “on-the-ground” business strategies, analytical approaches, and lessons learned in managing ecosystem service-related risks and opportunities
- Hear from guest companies and industry experts about new strategies, approaches, and research
- Learn about emerging markets for ecosystem services from WRI and market pioneers
- Meet policy experts to discuss incentives and policy reforms relevant to business and ecosystems
- Articulate business cases for developing ecosystem service-based strategies

Between meetings, WRI will work with members one-on-one or in issue-specific working groups to:

- Conduct assessments and develop strategies to manage emerging risk and opportunities
- Identify operational changes, products, or services that improve efficiency of using ecosystem services or reduce ecosystem impacts
- Participate in markets for ecosystem services such as carbon, water, wetlands, and biodiversity
- Perform economic valuations of ecosystem services on corporate landholdings
- Engage peers and stakeholders in implementing specific ecosystem service-based strategies
- Assess impacts of climate change on ecosystem services that affect the bottom line
- Engage state/federal policymakers to align private sector incentives with ecosystem stewardship

Members

Member companies represent a range of industry sectors. They have operations or value chains that significantly impact or depend on ecosystem services within the United States.

Benefits

- Accelerated learning about ecosystem service markets, policies, and business strategies
- Technical assistance in analyzing business risks and opportunities arising from ecosystem degradation and developing strategies to respond
- Access to WRI and other experts in ecosystem trends, environmental valuation, policy, and best management practices
- Access to a peer group of like-minded managers willing to share experiences and strategies
- Opportunities to collaborate on business strategies, emerging ecosystem service markets, and policymaker engagement
- Timely updates on ecosystem service science, market, and policy developments
- Public recognition for innovative sustainable business strategies

Contacts

For more information about the Group and how to join, contact:

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About WRI

The World Resources Institute (www.wri.org) is a non-profit environmental think tank that goes beyond research to find practical ways to protect the Earth and improve people's lives. Our mission is to move human society to live in ways that protect Earth's environment and its capacity to provide for the needs and aspirations of current and future generations.



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WRI and Corporate Partnerships

WRI has more than a decade of experience convening corporate partnerships to address environmental issues affecting business performance. Examples include:

- **Green Power Markets Development Group**, the largest corporate renewable energy "buyers group" in the United States and Europe (www.thegreenpowergroup.org)
- **US Climate Action Partnership**, a group of businesses and environmental organizations calling on the federal government to require significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions (www.us-cap.org)
- **Climate Northeast**, a partnership that builds strategies for companies to thrive in a carbon-constrained economy (www.climate-northeast.org)
- **New Ventures**, an initiative accelerating the transfer of capital to businesses that deliver social and environmental benefits at the base of the economic pyramid (www.new-ventures.org)

WRI has 10 years of experience developing methodologies for assessing corporate environmental performance. Examples include:

- **Corporate Ecosystem Services Review**, a structured methodology that helps managers proactively develop strategies to manage business risks and opportunities arising from their company's dependence and impact on ecosystems (www.wri.org/ecosystems/esr)
- **Greenhouse Gas Protocol**, the most widely used international accounting tool for government and business leaders to understand, quantify, and manage greenhouse gas emissions (www.ghgprotocol.org)
- **Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry Guidance for GHG Project Accounting**, a methodology for quantifying and reporting GHG reductions from land use, land-use change, and forestry project activities (www.ghgprotocol.org)