

WHAT ARE ECOSYSTEMS DOING FOR YOU?

Mainstreaming Ecosystem Services Initiative

RESTORING NATURE FOR PEOPLE'S SAKE



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Forests in the Catskill Mountains are a natural water purification system for New York City.



Coral reefs are natural sea walls, protecting coastlines in the tropics.



The rosy periwinkle and other plants of the world's ecosystems provide lifesaving medicines.





The world's **ecosystems provide people with numerous benefits** or “ecosystem services.” Forests supply timber, purify water, absorb carbon dioxide, and provide genetic resources for medicines. Coral reefs provide recreation and protect coastlines from storm surges. Wetlands absorb waste, provide for wild game, and mitigate floods.

However, **human activities are rapidly degrading ecosystems**. While these activities have increased some services such as food, they have come at the expense of nature's ability to provide many other benefits.

In fact, a recent study by 1,300 experts from 95 countries found that ecosystems have declined more rapidly and extensively over the past 50 years than at any other time in history. Left unchecked, this degradation will jeopardize the future economic well-being of people, business, and communities.



WRI seeks to reduce ecosystem degradation by helping governments, businesses, and multilateral development banks integrate ecosystem services into their decisionmaking. Our *Mainstreaming Ecosystem Services Initiative*:

- ▮ Provides **information** and tools that connect healthy ecosystems and the attainment of economic and social goals.
- ▮ Creates economic and policy **incentives** for restoring and sustaining ecosystems.

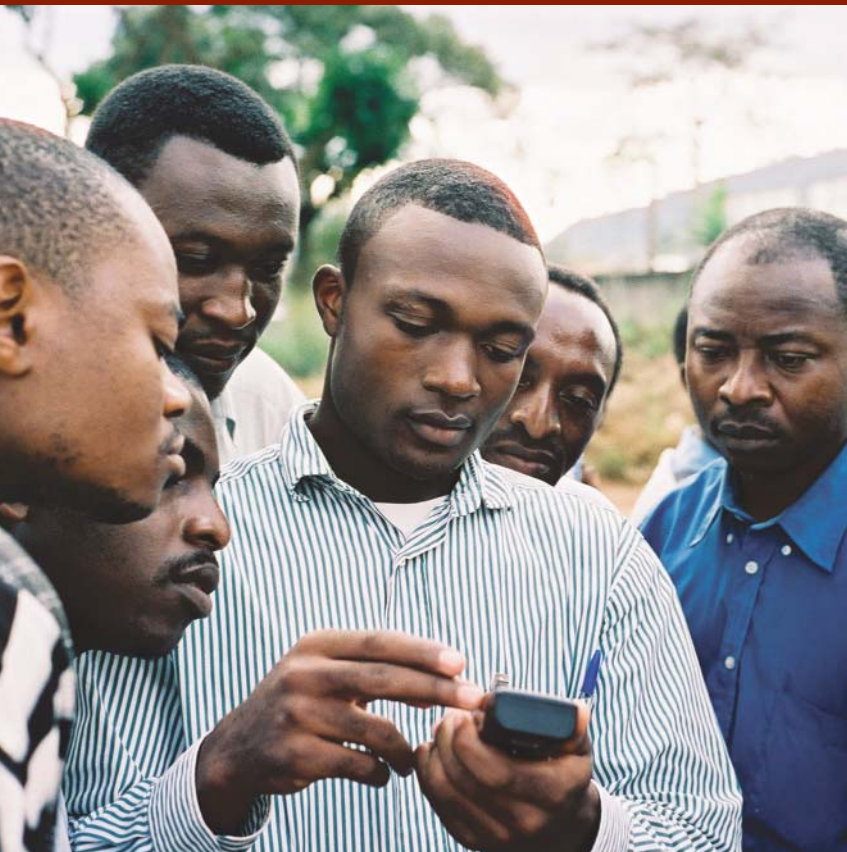
Types of real-world impact we envision:

- ▮ National poverty reduction strategies invest in ecosystem restoration to improve livelihoods of the poor.
- ▮ Leading Fortune 500 companies launch new business strategies that reduce impacts on ecosystems and restore critical ecosystem services while improving the bottom line.
- ▮ New water quality trading markets and tax incentives reduce coastal pollution worldwide.
- ▮ Businesses and governments incorporate ecosystem service considerations into their strategies for responding to climate change.

Our Activities

INFORMATION

- ▶ Develop tools to help business managers identify **risks and opportunities** posed by ecosystem degradation.
- ▶ Use spatial analysis to map the relationship between **poverty and ecosystem services**.
- ▶ Develop methods for assessing the **economic value** of coral reefs and mangrove forests.
- ▶ Engage **multilateral development banks** to integrate ecosystem services into their operations and lending policies.
- ▶ Evaluate implications of **biofuel** production for ecosystem services.
- ▶ Develop **indicators** for measuring conditions and trends of ecosystem services.



INCENTIVES

- ▶ Establish **markets and incentives** to protect water quality.
- ▶ Develop and implement **payment for ecosystem services** programs.
- ▶ Incorporate risk of ecosystem service degradation into **financial valuations, investment decisions, and lending policies**.
- ▶ Design innovative **public policies** to protect ecosystem services.
- ▶ Promote **subsidy and tax reforms** to support ecosystem restoration.

Mainstreaming Ecosystem Services Initiative

For more information, please contact:

Craig Hanson

Initiative Director

+1 202 729 7624

chanson@wri.org

Janet Ranganathan

People and Ecosystems Program Director

+1 202 729 7656

janetr@wri.org

Paul Mackie

WRI Media Relations

+1 202 729 7684

pmackie@wri.org



For a complete description of our projects and experts, visit www.wri.org/ecosystems/services

The **World Resources Institute** (www.wri.org) is a global, non-profit environmental think tank that goes beyond research to find practical ways to protect the Earth and improve people's lives. WRI focuses its work on four goals:

- Reverse rapid degradation of ecosystems and assure their capacity to provide humans with needed goods and services;
- Protect the global climate system from further harm due to emissions of greenhouse gases;
- Harness markets and enterprise to expand economic opportunity and protect the environment; and
- Guarantee public access to information and decisions regarding natural resources and the environment.



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10 G Street, NE
Suite 800
Washington DC 20002
United States of America
+1 202 729 7600
www.wri.org



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