

ACES 2014 Wednesday Lunch Town Hall

December 10, 2014 | 12:15 pm - 1:20 pm | Grand Ballroom Salons F-G

Title: *An Interdisciplinary Approach to Assessing Ecosystem Service Values – Moving beyond Economics*

Description:

There has been a veritable explosion in ecosystem service valuation of late. Public and private organizations are attempting to place values on clean air and drinking water, energy, carbon sequestration, flood mitigation, wildlife habitat and the many other benefits from nature to make better decisions about ecosystem service management. However, some of the assessments lack a comprehensive accounting of all values in play, and rigor in their use of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Economics has been understandably dominant in guiding the valuation studies to date. These “first generation” approaches often follow a cost-benefit framework that neglects salient social and ecological values not susceptible to monetary valuation. Examples include social (class) equity effects, Native American cultural values and intrinsic ecological values. Their omission can cause unintended public reactions that stymie holistic long run management of ecosystems.

A “second generation” of ecosystem service values assessment, using all domains in sustainability science – economic, social and ecological, is being developed. This approach provides a richer picture of the complex human-environment relationships and can foster more sustainable management of ecosystems. The opening presentation summarizes the results of an interdisciplinary expert workshop that developed ten principles to facilitate such holistic assessments of the full set of values. The expert panel will discuss the merits and challenges to implementing a fuller accounting of nature’s benefits and engage the audience in a lively dialogue.

Key questions to be explored include:

- Why is it important to move beyond cost-benefit analysis in ES valuation studies?
- How would application of these principles change valuation assessments?
- How might these principles be incorporated into government programs?
- Do current policies and processes, e.g., NEPA, conflict or complement these principles?
- Where might these principles be applied to test their utility and identify challenges?
- What are the biggest challenges to bringing non-monetary values into ES values assessments?

Proposed Session Agenda:

- Summary of *Principles to Guide Assessments of Ecosystem Service Values* – Dave Ervin, Portland State University, and Sara Vickerman, Defenders of Wildlife? (15 minutes)
- Panel Reactions (5 minutes each)
 - David Batker, Earth Economics
 - Gretchen Greene, Environ Corp
 - Nikola Smith, U.S. Forest Service
 - Jeffrey Thomas, Puyallup Tribe

- Audience dialogue (25-30 minutes)

Organizer of Session:

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Qualifications of the Organizer:

David Ervin is a Senior Fellow in the Institute for Sustainable Solutions and Professor Emeritus of Economics and Environmental Management at Portland State University. His current research program focuses on ecosystem services and urbanizing regions, business environmental management, and the environmental effects of genetically engineered crops. During 2008-2010, he chaired a National Research Council study on "Impact of Biotechnology on Farm Sustainability in the United States." He is the Principal Investigator of a National Science Foundation funded Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program "Ecosystem Services for Urbanizing Regions" at Portland State University <http://www.pdx.edu/esur-igert/> in which 25 PhD students are enrolled. He writes and speaks to a wide range of local, national and international audiences on ecosystem service management issues, business environmental management and the sustainability implications of genetically engineered crops. Recently, he has worked closely with the Cascadia Ecosystem Services Partnership (CaESP) to improve the collaboration between science and practice in furthering ecosystem service management. The work on the *Principles to Guide Assessments of Ecosystem Service Values* with Sara Vickerman stemmed from that CaESP collaboration. He has participated in ACES conferences in the past and in sessions on ecosystem services and climate change at the recent National Council for Science and the Environment meetings.