



Ecosystem Services: Charting a Path to Sustainability

Interdisciplinary Research Team Summaries, Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center, Irvine, California, November 10-11, 2011 Conference, The National Academies Keck Futures Initiative

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Natural environments provide enormously valuable, but largely unappreciated, services that aid humans and other earthlings. It is becoming clear that these life-support systems are faltering and failing worldwide due to human actions that disrupt nature's ability to do its beneficial work.

Ecosystem Services: Charting a Path to Sustainability documents the National Academies' Keck Futures Initiative Conference on Ecosystem Services. At this conference, participants were divided into 14 interdisciplinary research teams to explore diverse challenges at the interface of science, engineering, and medicine. The teams needed to address the challenge of communicating and working together from a diversity of expertise and perspectives as they attempted to solve a complicated, interdisciplinary problem in a relatively short time. *Ecosystem Services: Charting a Path to Sustainability* describes how ecosystem services scientists work to document the direct and indirect links between humanity's well-being and the many benefits provided by the natural systems we occupy.

This report explains the specific topics the interdisciplinary research teams addressed at the conference, including the following:

- how ecosystem services affect infectious and chronic diseases
- how to identify what resources can be produced renewably or recovered by developing intense technologies that can be applied on a massive scale
- how to develop social and technical capabilities to respond to abrupt changes in ecosystem services
- how to design agricultural and aquacultural systems that provide food security while maintaining the full set of ecosystem services needed from landscapes and seascapes
- how to design production systems for ecosystem services that improve human outcomes related to food and nutrition
- how to develop appropriate methods to accurately value natural capital and ecosystem services
- how to design a federal policy to maintain or improve natural capital and ecosystem services within the United States, including measuring and documenting the effectiveness of the policy
- how to design a system for international trade that accounts for impacts on ecosystem services
- how to develop a program that increases the American public's appreciation of the basic principles of ecosystem services

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