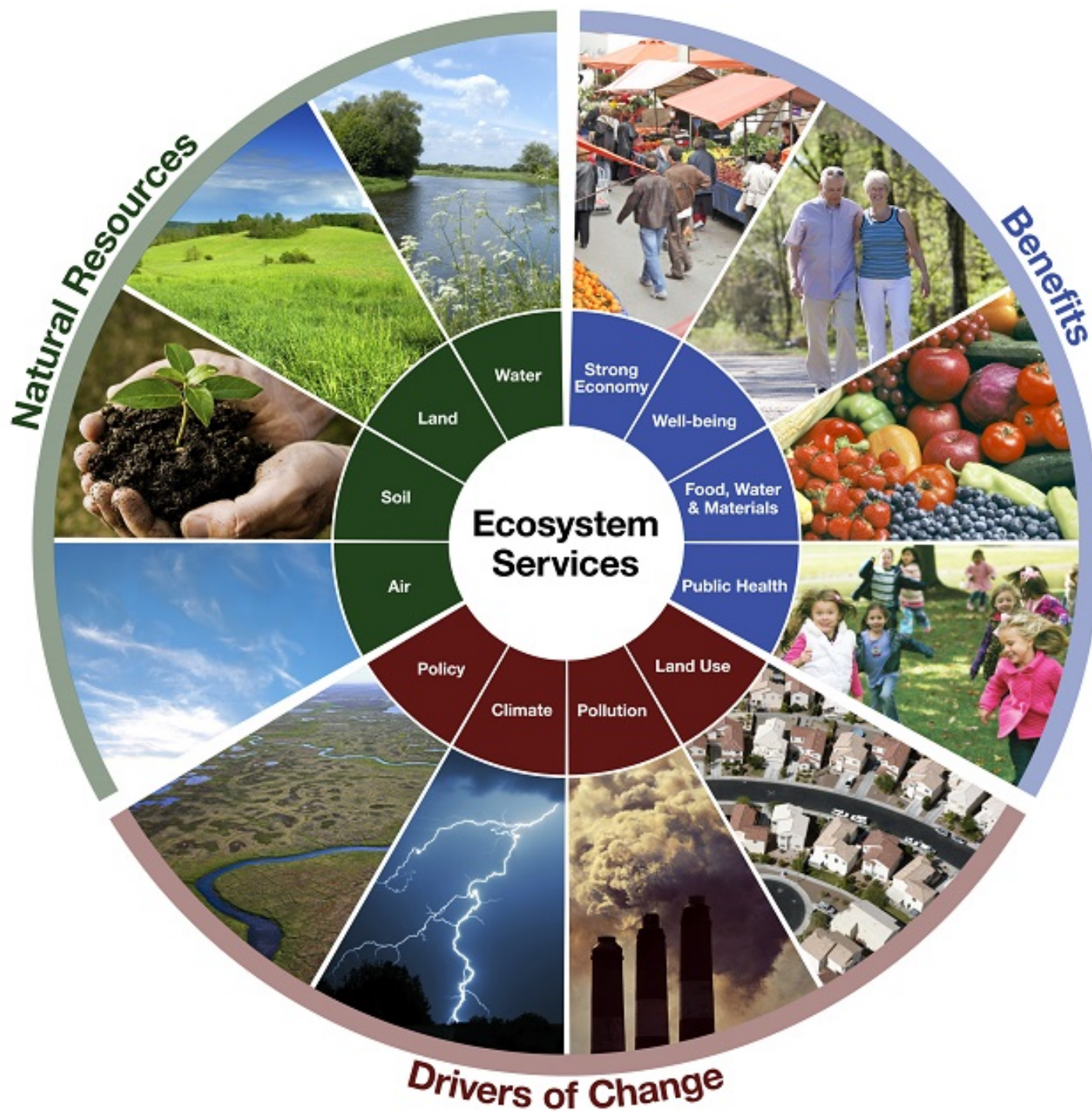


# Ecosystem Services

What are Ecosystem Services?



The [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#) defined Ecosystem Services as “the benefits people derive from ecosystems”. Besides provisioning services or goods like food, wood and other raw materials, plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms provide essential regulating services such as pollination of crops, prevention of soil erosion and water purification, and a vast array of cultural services, like recreation and a sense of place..

In spite of the ecological, cultural and economic importance of these services, ecosystems and the biodiversity that underpins them are still being degraded and lost at an unprecedented scale. One major reason for this is that the value (importance) of ecosystems to human welfare is still underestimated and not fully recognized in every day planning and decision-making, in other words, the benefits of their services are not, or only partly, captured in conventional market economics. Furthermore, the costs of externalities of economic development (e.g. pollution, deforestation) are usually not accounted for, while inappropriate tax and subsidy (incentive) systems encourage the over-exploitation and unsustainable use of natural resources and other ecosystem services at the expense of the poor and future generations.

### **Objective of the CEM Thematic Group on Ecosystem Services**

The overall objective of this Thematic Group is to improve the knowledge base on ecosystem services and their values, and stimulate the integration of this knowledge in planning and decision making for sustainable ecosystem management.

#### **Specific Objectives**

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Stimulate research on the capacity and resilience of ecosystems to provide goods and services in a sustainable manner, and develop tools and guidelines for practical applications and integrated ecosystem services assessments.

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Highlight the importance (value) of ecosystem services for governments, communities and corporations; identify the users/beneficiaries (stakeholders) of ecosystem services; and stimulate partnerships and other incentive mechanisms to conserve and restore ecosystems

and their services.

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Communicate the knowledge and applications of ecosystem services and values to decision makers at all scales and the general public, thus building local and political support and convincing (potential) donors that benefits of conservation, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems usually outweigh the costs.□

### **Planned Activities**

To achieve these objectives, the CEM Ecosystem Service Thematic Group aims to create a global network of knowledge bases and case studies in order to develop best practice guidelines for the sustainable management of ecosystems, with the further aim of demonstrating real life applications of the 'ecosystem services concept' and that investing in nature conservation and restoration 'pays'!

### **IUCN Linkages**

Due to the wide range of disciplines involved with the Ecosystem Services theme, the CEM-ES Thematic Group (TG) will be working together closely with other CEM thematic groups, on cross-cutting issues, including the Ecosystem Red List TG; Ecosystem Restoration TG; Ecosystem and the Private Sector TG and Ecosystem Approach TG.

In addition, collaboration will be explored with other IUCN commissions, partnerships and regional offices including the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR).

### **Global Partnerships**

The CEM Ecosystem Services theme will work together closely with the main international organizations, among others:

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The [Ecosystem Services Partnership](#) (ESP): a platform that aims to enhance communication,

coordination and cooperation, and to build a strong network of individuals and organizations. The ESP is chaired by Rudolf de Groot, former Lead and current Special Advisor of the Ecosystem Services Thematic Group.

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The [Sub-Global Assessment \(SGA\) Network](#), coordinated by UNEP-WCMC, seeks to create a common platform for practitioners involved in ecosystem assessment at regional, sub-regional, national and sub-national levels. The intention is to promote and facilitate improved capacity in undertaking and using assessments.

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The [IPBES](#) (the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) is a new mechanism that focuses on strengthening the interface between the scientific community and policymakers, that aims at building capacity for and strengthen the use of science in policymaking. The IPBES is proposed as a broadly similar mechanism to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

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The [TEEB](#) -follow-up network of National Assessments.

### Workshops and Meetings 2016

22-28 February - [Fourth Session of the IPBES Plenary](#) (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

25 April-7 May - [CBD 20th Meeting of SBSTTA](#) (Montreal, Canada)

1-10 September - [IUCN World Conservation Congress](#) (Honolulu, Hawaii)

4-17 December - [CBD Conference of the Parties 13](#) (Cancun, Mexico)

### Thematic Group Leads

Emmanuelle Cohen-Shacham, Tel-Aviv University. Based in New York, United States ( [minacs@gmail.com](mailto:minacs@gmail.com) )

Sasha Alexander, University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia ( [sashaalexander108@gmail.com](mailto:sashaalexander108@gmail.com) )

### Special Advisor

Rudolf de Groot, Wageningen University, The Netherlands ( [dolf.degroot@wur.nl](mailto:dolf.degroot@wur.nl) )

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