

The value of the world's ecosystem services and natural capital¹

Robert Costanza^{a,b,*}, Ralph d'Arge^c, Rudolf de Groot^d, Stephen Farber^e,
Monica Grasso^b, Bruce Hannon^f, Karin Limburg^g, Shahid Naeem^h,
Robert V. O'Neillⁱ, Jose Paruelo^j, Robert G. Raskin^k, Paul Sutton^l,
Marjan van den Belt^m

^a Center for Environmental Science, Zoology Department, University of Maryland, Box 38, Solomons, MD 20688, USA

^b Institute for Ecological Economics, University of Maryland, Box 38, Solomons, MD 20688, USA

^c Economics Department (emeritus), University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82070, USA

^d Center for Environment and Climate Studies, Wageningen Agricultural University, P.O. Box 9101,
6700 HB Wageningen, The Netherlands

^e Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260, USA

^f Geography Department and NCSA, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801, USA

^g Institute of Ecosystem Studies, Millbrook, NY, USA

^h Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108, USA

ⁱ Environmental Sciences Division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, TN 37831, USA

^j Department of Ecology, Faculty of Agronomy, University of Buenos Aires, Av. San Martin 4453, 1417 Buenos Aires, Argentina

^k Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, CA 91109, USA

^l National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis, Department of Geography, University of California at Santa Barbara,
Santa Barbara, CA 93106, USA

^m Ecological Economics Research and Applications Inc., P.O. Box 1589, Solomons MD 20688, USA

Abstract

The services of ecological systems and the natural capital stocks that produce them are critical to the functioning of the Earth's life-support system. They contribute to human welfare, both directly and indirectly, and therefore represent part of the total economic value of the planet. We have estimated the current economic value of 17 ecosystem services for 16 biomes, based on published studies and a few original calculations. For the entire biosphere, the value (most of which is outside the market) is estimated to be in the range of US\$16–54 trillion (10¹²) per year, with an average of US\$33 trillion per year. Because of the nature of the uncertainties, this must be considered a minimum estimate. Global gross national product total is around US\$18 trillion per year. © 1998 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

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* Corresponding author. E-mail: costza@cbl.cees.edu

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