

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES IN ECOSYSTEM VALUATION: EXPLORING THE PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL USERS

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Abstract:

Economic valuation of ecosystems, based on estimation of willingness to pay, usually overlooks the importance that local resource users allocate to ecosystems and services they provide. In this study, using the scoring approach (pebble distribution method) we propose a participative valuation (PV) on landscape social-ecological units (LSEU) in the hydrological complex of Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta (CGSM). Both, selection of LSEU and their valuation were carried out by participants from five communities in the region. The PV approach is useful to know the relative value that communities assign to different land uses and to identify differences among communities. Water bodies are highly valued by communities given their relevance in providing food and fresh water; the CGSM plays an important role in terms of cultural identity; agricultural areas received different values depending on the community. With this study, we also propose an exploratory approach to the analysis of inter temporal preferences and discount rates for the value of LSEUs.