



MATCHMAKERS, EVALUATORS, LIBRARIES, AND NETWORKS: ONLINE RESOURCES FOR LANDOWNERS AND PRACTITIONERS

FACT SHEET ELEVEN • SPRING 2013

This fact sheet series highlights innovative ways that family forest and ranch owners are prospering from protecting and enhancing ecosystem services on their land. Ecosystem services are the benefits people receive from nature such as water quality, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration.

As the concepts of ecosystem services and payments for ecosystem services (PES) have evolved, numerous web-based resources have been created to 1) provide and exchange information about ecosystem services, and 2) facilitate transactions between those who provide ecosystem services and those who wish to compensate those providers, also commonly referred to as “buyers and sellers” of ecosystem services.

Online resources fall into four broad categories: matchmakers, evaluators, libraries, and networks. This factsheet highlights useful examples in each category, excerpted from the accompanying catalog of resources that was created between 2011 and 2013. While examples are classified in the category they fit best, many provide resources relevant to each category. For many more online resources, see the full catalog on the project website.

MATCHMAKERS

Matchmakers, as the name implies, help “buyers” and “sellers” of ecosystem services find each other in the multi-faceted ecosystem service “market.” Landowners with ecosystem services to sell can use a matchmaker website to identify organizations that may be interested in purchasing or leasing those services, or funding programs that support conservation activities. Intermediary organizations – non-governmental organizations, government agencies, businesses, and others who connect landowners with programs – also rely on matchmakers for information. Matchmakers can also provide the web-based infrastructure that facilitates ecosystem service transactions. Three matchmaker sites are highlighted as examples here.

Directory of Watershed Resources

- Created/maintained by: Boise State University, Idaho –Environmental Finance Center
- Geographic scope: National
- Target audience: Primarily intermediary organizations but also landowners
- Website: <http://efc.boisestate.edu/watershed/Home/tabid/178/Default.aspx>

The Directory of Watershed Resources (DWR), the most comprehensive online catalog of conservation funding



options currently available, directs users to federal, state, and private funding programs. The “targeted search” function allows searches by type of sponsor, type of assistance (e.g., grants, incentives, technical assistance), broad and specific topic areas (e.g., natural resources and management, economic development), and geographic region. Registered users can also upload new funding sources that are not currently in the database.

Private Landowner Network

- Created/maintained by: Resources First Foundation
- Geographic scope: National
- Target audience: Landowners and intermediary organizations
- Website: <http://www.privatelandownernetwork.org/>

The Private Landowner Network (PLN) is a searchable database of resources that assist with: tax planning and estate management; accessing conservation grant and assistance programs; connecting with conservation organizations and professionals; and learning more about conservation opportunities. The conservation grant and assistance programs database within PLN allows users to find national and state resources by clicking on their state. Each link within the portal includes a description of the program and contact information. Other aspects of the PLN compile information sources and act as more of a “library” than a “matchmaker.”

Both the DWR and PLN are impressive in scope. Their only limitation is that they focus primarily on traditional funding mechanisms (e.g., Federal and state funded conservation incentive programs) and do not yet include more innovative ecosystem service market mechanisms (e.g., water quality trading opportunities) or local, community-based programs. While it is unclear how frequently these databases are updated, they will continue to be valuable resources if maintained.

Bay Bank: The Chesapeake’s Conservation Marketplace

- Created/maintained by: The Pinchot Institute for Conservation
- Geographic scope: Regional
- Target audience: Landowners, intermediaries and buyers
- Website: <http://www.thebaybank.org/>

The Bay Bank represents what matchmakers may look like in the future. It offers three separate portals for landowners, intermediaries, and buyers. LandServer enables landowners to assess whether their land could be eligible for payments based on conservation actions; it also includes a registry where landowners can search for and connect with service providers who work on conservation projects. The Marketplace enables direct communication between buyers and landowners, to discuss projects and negotiate

prices for ecosystem service credits. Finally, Bay Bank is integrated with Markit Registry, which enables any entity to easily track ecosystem service credits over time.

Currently, the Bay Bank is only active in one region—the six-state area surrounding the Chesapeake Bay—so it is not directly useful to landowners and intermediaries elsewhere. It does, however, provide a model for other regions. The Bay Bank is unique in that it enables landowners and intermediaries to identify traditional funding mechanisms in addition to newly established ecosystem service markets. As an active marketplace, it is also frequently updated.



EVALUATORS

Evaluators provide tools, standards, protocols and methodologies to measure the value of specific ecosystem services. This information is essential for sellers and buyers who wish to identify the value of ecosystem services generated by specific conservation actions, as well as intermediary organizations that facilitate PES programs. Evaluation tools can also be useful for measuring and monitoring the flow of ecosystem services over time at a site level, such as an individual farm, or at a landscape level.

The evaluator resources highlighted here are primarily designed for intermediaries, but are useful for landowners as well.

Ecosystem Credit and Accounting System

- Created and maintained by: Willamette Partnership and key partners
- Geographic scope: Regional (primarily in Oregon, but expanding to other geographies)
- Target audience: Primarily intermediaries
- Website: <http://willamettepartnership.org/ecosystem-credit-accounting>

The Willamette Partnership describes the Ecosystem Credit and Accounting System (ECAS) as a “package of protocols, tools, and resources that allow buyers and

sellers to trade in multiple types of ecosystem credits.” As a regional leader in payments for ecosystem services programs, Willamette Partnership developed this package in consultation with 25 key partners, government agencies, landowners, independent scientists, and conservation organizations. The accounting system includes metrics to measure and monitor various types of habitat including wetlands, streams, prairie, oak, and sagebrush as well as water quality parameters.

One of the fundamental motivations behind the ECAS is to integrate the web-based infrastructure necessary to facilitate and track ecosystem market transactions. To this end, ECAS is integrated with two other tools created by the Partnership: the Ecosystem Crediting Platform, which enables users to map prospective project areas, track project progress, and standardize the credit generation process, and Markit Registry, which tracks the purchase, sale and retirement of ecosystem credits. The three tools combined allow the Partnership also to act as a de facto matchmaker between buyers and sellers of ecosystem credits. At present, ECAS is most active in Oregon, but the tools and resources are being adapted to other areas in the Interior Northwest.



Conservation Gateway

- Created and maintained by: The Nature Conservancy
- Geographic scope: National
- Target audience: Primarily intermediaries
- Website: <http://www.conservationgateway.org/Files/Pages/ecosystem-services-databa.aspx>

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has compiled a comprehensive, online Access database that outlines most of the currently available tools that can be used to map, assess and value ecosystem services. For each tool, the database includes information about the type of ecosystem service it addresses, whether or not the tool is spatial in nature, the data needs for populating the tool, and links to more information. While the TNC database is not a valuation tool in and of itself, it provides useful information about most of the valuation tools available.

For the database to remain relevant, TNC must continually update it with valuation and assessment resources as they are created or modified. The last update was in 2010, which could mean that some of the information is dated.

Ecosystem Valuation Toolkit

- Created/maintained by: Earth Economics
- Geographic scope: National
- Target audience: Primarily intermediaries and academic researchers
- Website: <http://www.esvaluation.org/>

Earth Economics, a nonprofit ecological economics organization based in Washington State, is in the process of developing The Ecosystem Valuation Toolkit (a demo is available now). The Toolkit will be a hub for online tools and resources “for planners, watershed managers, forest owners, natural resource agencies, scholars and businesses to research and communicate the value of nature’s capital assets.” The Toolkit will have five elements:

1. SERVES (Simple and Effective Resource for Valuing Ecosystem Services), a subscription-based tool for appraising natural capital;
2. The Researcher’s Library, which provides a network for researchers studying valuation methods;
3. The Repository, which houses a database of published valuation data;
4. A resource library, with other information relevant to ecosystem services research and policy; and,
5. A matchmaking service that will help to connect valuation practitioners with projects that need them.

Although we classify the Toolkit as an evaluator, it also aims to be a library and a network. When the Toolkit is complete, it will be a valuable go-to resource for information and tools related to valuation.



LIBRARIES

Libraries are websites that compile and organize information about ecosystem services and payment for ecosystem services programs. Libraries include published reports, academic studies, news stories, blog posts, and case studies. Libraries can also act as “think tanks,” commissioning articles and other original content. Libraries are primarily information repositories but may also function as networks, connecting ecosystem researchers, landowners, non-governmental organizations, policymakers and government agencies, and other practitioners with one another. Libraries ensure the free flow and exchange of information and seek to improve understanding of ecosystem services, both conceptually and in practice.



Ecosystem Marketplace

- Created/maintained by: Forest Trends
- Geographic scope: International
- Target audience: Anyone interested in ecosystem services
- Website: <http://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/>

Ecosystem Marketplace is “a leading source of news, data, and analytics on markets and payments for ecosystem services.” Forest Trends created this site to provide reliable, transparent information that will facilitate the further development of markets for ecosystem services. Information resources include blog entries, news and articles, original content commissioned by the Marketplace, and a searchable directory of ecosystem services organizations and professionals. The Marketplace focuses primarily on carbon, water and biodiversity markets at multiple scales (local, regional, national and international). Resources are organized by market (the current markets are water, carbon, biodiversity), geographic region, and area of special interest (e.g., science, policy, etc). The site includes both basic and advanced information, making it useful for audiences with different experience and familiarity with ecosystem services.

Ecosystem Marketplace, while primarily a library, maintains a network of other related websites that serve as matchmakers and networks. MarketWatch provides a snapshot of market activity occurring in each active market and lists

potential ecosystem services “buyers.” Watershed Connect, the Forest Carbon Portal, and SpeciesBanking.com feature resources particular to those markets; inventories of projects; and tools to connect users with practitioners, policy-makers, and stakeholders.

Marketplace for Nature

- Created and maintained by: Defenders of Wildlife
- Geographic scope: National
- Target audience: Anyone interested in tracking conservation projects with an ecosystem services component
- Website: http://marketplace.conservationregistry.org/about/marketplace_for_nature

The Marketplace for Nature “highlights conservation projects designed to conserve ecosystem services by quantifying and reporting their values or marketing these benefits to regulated or voluntary buyers.” It is affiliated with the Conservation Registry, a free online database that maps conservation and restoration efforts across the country. The Conservation Registry features a dynamic map that organizes projects by geography, project type, and outcomes. Clicking on a project provides project details. Registered users may add their own projects to the Registry and may group and monitor their projects according to specific queries or interests (e.g., geographic region, habitat type, etc.).

The Marketplace for Nature also functions as a matchmaker and evaluator. Users can look for projects with ecosystem services for sale or projects where ecosystem services have been sold. The site also offers habitat metrics that have been developed to measure and monitor habitat quality. The Marketplace for Nature is well supported by numerous project partners, and new information is continually uploaded by new and veteran users.



NETWORKS

Networks are websites that facilitate collaboration and information exchange between ecosystem services researchers and practitioners. Networks often actively encourage the development of resources, tools, programs, and policies that promote ecosystem services and payments for ecosystem services, both in concept and practice. Each site profiled here is open to anyone interested in ecosystem services, encouraging participation from both relative newcomers and established experts.

Katoomba Group

- Created/maintained by: Katoomba Group and Forest Trends
- Geographic scope: International
- Target audience: Ecosystem services practitioners
- Website: <http://www.katoombagroup.org/>

The Katoomba Group is an international network of individuals and organizations “working to promote and improve capacity related to markets and payments for ecosystem services (PES).” The website, which is affiliated with Ecosystem Marketplace, serves as a forum for exchanging ideas and research as well as a collaboration platform for practitioners working on specific projects and programs. In addition to facilitating regional groups in the Tropical Americas, East and Southern Africa, North America, and China, the Katoomba Group organizes meetings and workshops across the globe. The Katoomba Group website also contains a database of other networks actively involved in PES issues. Individuals can sign up as partners or fellows, depending on their intended level of commitment, and can add other PES networks to the database.

National Ecosystem Services Partnership

- Created/maintained by: The Nicholas Institute at Duke University
- Geographic scope: National
- Target audience: Ecosystem services practitioners
- Website: <http://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/initiatives/national-ecosystem-services-partnership>

The National Ecosystem Services Partnership (NESP) “engages both public and private individuals and organizations to enhance collaboration within the ecosystem services community and to strengthen coordination of policy and market implementation and research at the national level.” NESP communicates with its members via email digests and occasional conference calls and has assisted with the development of Ecosystem Commons (see below). NESP facilitates collaboration, especially within and between government agencies, and convenes working groups to develop ecosystem services guidance. NESP has also played a significant role in organizing and contributing to national ecosystem services meetings, includ-

ing those of Ecosystem Services Partnership, Ecosystem Service Markets, and A Community on Ecosystem Services (commonly referred to as ACES).

Ecosystem Commons

- Created/maintained by: Institute for Natural Resources, Oregon State University
- Geographic scope: National
- Target audience: Ecosystem services practitioners
- Website: <http://ecosystemcommons.org/>

Ecosystem Commons is an interactive “virtual community” that allows individuals and organizations to create a social profile, share information and case studies with other users, engage in virtual discussions, locate other ecosystem services practitioners and resources, and work collaboratively on projects. Users can also form sub-groups within the Commons. The Commons is currently in a Beta Version and is continually updated and modified based on user feedback. The Commons also hosts “Soapbox” topics that encourage members to express their opinions on and discuss new and interesting concepts or challenges facing ecosystem services practitioners.

Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition/ Ecosystem Services Learning Action Network

- Created/maintained by: Sustainable Northwest
- Geographic scope: National, but predominantly the West
- Target audience: Community-based organizations, rural landowners, and practitioners
- Website: <http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/what-we-do/success-stories/ecosystem-services-research-project>

For over a decade, the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition has worked to develop policy solutions to meet the ecologic and economic challenges facing the rural West. Recently, ecosystem services has been a popular topic of discussion in RVCC working groups focused on public and private working lands. Under the banner of the Ecosystem Services Learning Action Network, RVCC participants are learning about ecosystem services pilot projects around the West and the potential for rural communities and landscapes to benefit from payments for ecosystem services..



LEARN MORE

This fact sheet highlights useful examples in each resource category. Many more online resources are included in the complete catalog. For more information about the project, the complete online resource catalog, and the full fact sheet series, go to:

www.tinyurl.com/SNWEcosystemServices, or contact:

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This fact sheet series is part of a multi-state research collaboration involving Oregon State University, University of Oregon, and Sustainable Northwest, with funding from the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture, Grant #2009-85211-06102-C0405A.

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