

Feasibility of Payments for Ecosystem Services for Forest Stewards

Biohabitats, University of Maryland, and The Conservation Fund
Maryland



The research team offers a financial estimate for how much each resident of Maryland benefits from existing forest cover.

Can protecting a forest be as profitable as clearing the land for other use? This question has motivated conservation professionals to examine Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) programs to compensate people who own property that benefits the public. After all, their land provides vital benefits to their neighbors. Forests can improve water quality, trap carbon, stabilize coastlines, provide habitat, generate and maintain soils, improve water quality, dampen storm flows, abate air pollution, and provide food, fiber, fuel, and shelter. One of the economic benefits produced by the forest is timber, which supplies mulch, lumber, veneer, plywood, and paper. People also enjoy hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, birding, and horseback riding in their forests. While markets exist to set the price for an economic good like timber,

many of the ecosystem services listed above are poorly valued, if at all.

Biohabitats worked with researchers at the University of Maryland to evaluate the value that forest ecosystem services provide to Maryland's economy and determine a fair price for ecosystem services. On a per capita basis, a resident of Maryland enjoys \$830 worth of ecosystem services from the forest as public value without paying anything to the land steward. If all state residents were to contribute PES to generate the approximate value of the timber and ecosystem services provided by Maryland's forest, each would need pay between \$43 and \$124 per year. This analysis was presented to the Harry Hughes Agro-Ecology Center.

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