

Integrating Ecology and Economics in the Study of Ecosystem Services:
Some Lessons Learned”

Kathleen Segerson
Department of Economics
University of Connecticut

This paper discusses both the opportunities for and the challenges associated with integrating economics and ecology in the study of ecosystem services. We distinguish between integration in positive vs. normative analysis. There is rapid growth in positive research that combines the two disciplines to provide insight and better understanding of the bi-directional linkage between economic and ecological systems. This research is a crucial part of addressing growing large-scale environmental challenges. This integration is equally important, but potentially much more difficult, in normative analysis, especially when interdisciplinary groups include individuals with different views regarding appropriate normative criteria. In such cases, reaching consensus can be difficult and slow, even when the practical implications of the different perspectives (i.e., the general policy prescriptions they imply) are the same. We suggest an approach for increasing the scope for collaboration among economists and ecologists in normative analysis.

Abstract from paper submitted with coauthor Stephen Polasky, Department of Applied Economics, Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, University of Minnesota