



ECOSYSTEM SERVICES RESEARCH PROGRAM

A National Ecosystem Services Research Partnership Opportunity for Participation

The Ecosystem Services Research Program (ESRP) at the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking partners for a National Ecosystem Services Research Partnership. The Partnership goals are to:

1. establish ecosystem service standards, indicators, and measurement protocols that support environmental accounting systems and markets;
2. advance ecosystem service valuation techniques;
3. create institutional capacity for investments in natural capital that provides sustainable flows of ecosystems services; and
4. improve the ability to perform ecosystem service assessments across institutional, spatial, and temporal scales.

One possible action for the Partnership is to establish multiple Centers of Excellence that can host long-term inquiry in particular geographic areas with unique challenges and implementation opportunities, such as large metropolitan centers, coastal areas, or other biogeographically or politically-defined regions. The participants, organizational structure, responsibilities, and funding opportunities will be determined in collaboration with interested parties through future communications, including meetings, telephone conferences, and correspondence. The purpose of this announcement is to identify interested parties from the governmental, non-governmental, and private sectors interested in pursuing a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional, national research partnership.

Overview

Ecosystem services are vital for public health and the well-being of human communities. Improved understanding of ecosystem services across institutional, spatial, and temporal scales is crucial for designing management strategies and institutional and governmental policies intended to increase and sustain the value of ecosystem services. The ESRP is focused on understanding the present and future ecological dynamics of ecosystem services to create a solid scientific foundation for environmental decision-making. Approximately 200 EPA scientists with an annual in-house budget of \$62 million are associated with this program and will participate in the Partnership; EPA funding will primarily support this in-house research effort. For more information on the ESRP, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/ecology/>.

The Partnership will join not only ecology and economics, but also law, public policy, and business, among other disciplines. The ESRP proposes a three-part framework to understand ecosystem services research: (1) the ecology frame; (2) the economic-ecologic frame; and, (3) the institutional frame. The ecology frame focuses on the biophysical characterization of ecosystem functions and services, seeking to make multidimensional, multi-scalar phenomena quantifiable using methods that are replicable across contexts. The economic-ecologic frame is intended to advance and extend research at the interface between ecology and economics, often using joint economic-ecological models to characterize production relationships between ecosystem status and the delivery of economically valuable services. The institutional frame emphasizes law, policy, and business research to enable routine, operational investments in ecosystem services.



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The ESRP's core strength is in the ecology frame. ESRP research products (e.g., ecological methods, data, maps, and models) will be EPA's primary contribution to the Partnership. We seek feedback from all potential partners on ways to make our research products more valuable for decision-making within the public and private sectors. We encourage others to use this Partnership to critique, refine, extend, and apply ESRP research in novel ways, including branding, investment standards, marketing, or other approaches that can create revenue streams from ecosystem service investments.

The ESRP is also using strategic partnerships to advance its work within the economic-ecologic frame. Establishing a research focus within the institutional frame is of the utmost importance to the ESRP, and we especially seek partners to advance this area. Institutional approaches will necessarily draw upon research from the ecology and economic-ecologic frames. They must also respond to a different set of challenges related to the design of institutional policies and instruments required to enable significant private, public, and municipal sector investments in the protection and restoration of ecosystem services.

Invitation

We invite interested organizations, public or private, to participate in this exciting research and development venture with EPA through a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) or other appropriate instrument (e.g., Memoranda of Understanding or Interagency Agreements). For more information on CRADAs, the most probable instrument, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/osp/fta.htm>.

To Indicate Interest

Please reply in an email to Alexander Macpherson (macpherson.alex@epa.gov) by February 15, 2009, if you are interested in pursuing participation in this research partnership. In your response, please provide the following information:

1. Name and address of your organization
2. Name, address, telephone number, and email address of organization's contact person
3. Area(s) of research that most interest your organization

Next Steps

Early in 2009, the ESRP will convene the first of a series of meetings that will include key respondents to this announcement to refine the vision, objectives, and next steps for the Partnership. Meeting participants will discuss issues such as: (1) membership and organization of the Partnership; (2) participants and their responsibilities; (3) developing a multi-year research strategy; and, (4) developing a funding strategy that leverages EPA's in-house investment. We will incorporate the perspectives and insights from this meeting to refine and formalize the Partnership, its representatives, their responsibilities, and its research and funding strategy.

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