

Progress and Challenges in Valuing Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Services

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Abstract

Coastal and marine ecosystems (CMEs) generate some of the most important services to humankind, but they are endangered from overexploitation and loss. The widespread decline in CME services suggests that it is important to understand what is at stake in terms of the critical benefits and values of these services. This article examines how environmental and resource economics has contributed to our knowledge of CME services and discusses progress as well as challenges in valuing these services. The article highlights case studies in which the economic valuation of key CME services has influenced policy decisions concerning the management of CMEs. Two key features of CME benefits are also examined. First, the natural spatial variability in these systems can influence the economic value of CME services. Second, because they occur at the interface between watersheds, the coast, and open water, CMEs can produce cumulative and synergistic benefits across the entire seascape that are much more significant and unique than the services provided by any single ecosystem.

[Q57](#), [O13](#), [Q20](#)

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