

# Southern Palawan: Frequently Asked Questions

## What is ecosystem accounting?

Ecosystems are an intricate web of interdependence between humans and nature. We depend on ecosystems for our basic needs such as food, water and fuel. We also use its natural resources to drive our economies.

Some of these resources are reflected in our country's GDP. But services naturally provided to us by a healthy, well-functioning ecosystem such as flood control, air and water filtration and soil erosion prevention are neither quantified nor assessed for their economic value.

Ecosystem accounting is a way of accounting for the all the benefits--both concrete and intangible--that ecosystems give us. In accounting for all the value nature provides us, we can manage these resources more sustainably and leave a healthier planet for future generations.

The framework of ecosystem accounting is based on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), an internationally agreed standard of concepts, definitions, classifications, accounting rules and tables for producing internationally comparable statistics on the environment and its relationship with the economy.

## What are ecosystem services?

Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from nature's ecosystems. Tangible benefits are used in economic and other human activity such as the use of timber to build houses or for energy. There are other ecosystem benefits that are intangible like water purification and flood mitigation. Without these ecosystem services, our quality of life would be reduced.

### Ecosystem services are classified into three types:

1. **Provisioning services** - reflects material and energy contributions generated by or in an ecosystem. For example, a fish or a plant with pharmaceutical properties. The associated benefits may be provided in agricultural systems, as well as within semi-natural and natural ecosystems.
2. **Regulating services** - results from the capacity of ecosystems to regulate climate, hydrological and bio-chemical cycles, earth surface processes, and a variety of biological processes. It is also commonly referred to as "regulating and maintenance services".
3. **Cultural services** - relate to the intellectual and symbolic benefits that people obtain from ecosystems through recreation, knowledge development, relaxation, and spiritual reflection.

## What is the WAVES partnership and how is it related to ecosystem accounting?

WAVES stands for Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services, a global partnership that aims to account for the natural capital and services provided by ecosystems to know the full value of these resources for better planning, management, and policy formulation.

The Philippines has been selected as one of the eight core implementing countries where the WAVES Global Partnership Program (WAVES - GPP) has been launched.



Wealth Accounting and the  
Valuation of Ecosystem Services  
[www.wavespartnership.org](http://www.wavespartnership.org)

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## Why was Southern Palawan chosen as the pilot site for the ecosystem account?

Southern Palawan is an area that is highly mineralized, has rich levels of biodiversity, relatively rich fishing grounds supported by extensive mangrove forests, seagrass beds and coral reefs. The area is home to a number of indigenous tribes with strong potential for conservation, tourism and agriculture.

Southern Palawan was selected as one of the two test sites for the Phil-WAVES project because of the competing demands on its natural capital including biodiversity where ecosystem accounting following the “ridge-to-reef” approach can be demonstrated in an island setting.

## What was the data produced for Southern Palawan and who were the agencies/organizations involved in putting together this data?

The variety of ecosystem services supplied and the need to address competing resource use claims makes Southern Palawan an excellent case study area for testing the ecosystem accounting approach.

The Southern Palawan ecosystem account has been tested in three different levels of management areas:

- (i) the Southern Palawan region
- (ii) Pulot watershed which is the largest watershed in the region
- (iii) the coastal zone of Sofronio Española municipality

A Technical Working Group consisting of members from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), Western Philippines University, the Local Government of Sofronio Española, as well as international and national experts led the research of the ecosystem accounts. The technical expertise of the group covered the disciplines of ecology, agronomy, forestry, hydrology, marine fisheries, policy analysis, GIS analysis and economics.

## But we already know about deforestation, declining quality of coastal areas in Southern Palawan, what is new about this information you're telling me?

True, but this is the first time that we have scientific evidence-based information that will tell us a number of things. For example, the data can show us how much resources we have in physical terms and the monetary value of services of selected ecosystems; the degree of deterioration; and because of the mapping technology used, where these areas are. In addition, the accounts show how changes in ecosystems are impacting biodiversity and people.

More importantly, the Philippine government expects that the resulting methodologies and framework of this pilot study can be applied in different settings in other parts of the country where indicators, tools, and methodologies are required to inform development planning and policy analysis in support of the goals of sustainable use of natural resources, economic growth, and alleviating poverty.

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## Ok, so how will this information help the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development and the local government units (LGUs) manage the ecosystem services?

The experimental ecosystem accounts produced through this study can support policy making in three important ways.

First they can inform policymakers of the status, uses and monetary values of ecosystems. For instance, the account can indicate sensitive areas where there are concerns on ecosystems or areas that are particularly important for supplying ecosystem services.

Second, they can alert policymakers to trends in ecosystems and the services they supply. This information can be used to forecast the potential impacts of current human and economic activity in the area and can better inform future policies on sustainable development and conservation.

Third, the accounts allow monitoring trends in ecosystems over time, providing information that can help evaluate the effectiveness of specific policies.

Sources:  
System of Environmental - Economic Accounting (SEEA) 2012  
[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/eea\\_white\\_cover.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/eea_white_cover.pdf)