

Nature has tremendous value to business, governments and people. We rely on ecosystems to purify our water, regulate our climate, reduce flood risk and pollinate crops. Governments and industries make decisions that degrade ecosystems because they do not have a reliable way to assess their true value. Accounting for “natural capital” can help people make more informed decisions on how to use their lands and waters.

Mission

The Natural Capital Project works to integrate ecosystem services approaches into all major resource decisions that affect Earth’s natural resources. Our ultimate objective is to improve the state of biodiversity and human well-being by motivating greater and more cost-effective investments in both.

Goals

- Ensure people and institutions recognize natural systems as capital assets
- Create innovative and practical tools to model, map and value natural capital
- Apply our tools and approach in major policy decisions around the world
- Help governments, corporations and multilateral organizations understand, and account for, the true value of their natural resources
- Engage influential leaders and encourage them to incorporate natural capital into decisions that impact the environment and human well-being

WE ARE

The Natural Capital Project is an innovative partnership with the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, the University of Minnesota’s Institute on the Environment, The Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund aimed at aligning economic forces with conservation. Our team of scientists, software engineers, economists and policy experts works with leaders of key institutions to meld world-class research on environmental economics with influential conservation programs. Together, we develop science-based methods and software tools to map and value nature, and help leaders around the world understand what nature gives us so they can make smarter, more sustainable investment and policy decisions.

WE REACH

We empower governments, corporations, multilateral institutions and individuals to credibly value the goods and services they receive from nature and analyze trade-offs in resource management decisions.



InVEST: Powerful Technology for Powerful Conservation

The Natural Capital Project's signature tool is the Integrated Valuation of Environmental Services and Tradeoffs (InVEST) family of software. InVEST is free, open-source software that can help inform and improve natural resource management and investment decisions.

InVEST helps users quantify, map and value the goods and services from nature that contribute to sustaining and fulfilling human life. Regionally specific data describe natural resources in terms of their biophysical supply, the service

they provide humans or their projected economic value. InVEST can estimate how the current quality, distribution and value of these outputs will change under various use and investment plans.

InVEST enables decision-makers to assess the trade-offs associated with alternative choices and to identify areas where investment in natural capital can enhance human development and conservation in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems.

InVEST in China

The Natural Capital Project recently took its InVEST tool to China. The software is being used to conduct China's first-ever national assessment of ecosystem services, spanning a wide range of ecosystems, services and scales. InVEST will also be used as a tool for implementing a new system of conservation areas that will span 24 percent of the country's land area. These massive initiatives open a new paradigm for integrating ecosystem functions (such as clean water and carbon storage) and human development to achieve improved outcomes for both.

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