



Understanding the health functions of peri-urban forests in protected areas and Payment for Ecosystem Services

Public Institution Nature Park Medvednica, Croatia

This case study provides a unique and innovative way of evaluating health as a component of forest ecosystem services. The goal is to develop several scenarios for payments of those services, while empowering future management of the protected area.

In Croatia, Nature Park Medvednica becomes a source of forest ecosystem services and a place for sport and recreation.



Setting the scene

Medvednica is a nature park (IUCN category V) near the Croatian capital, Zagreb. Almost a quarter of the Croatian population lives in the surroundings. The park's main phenomenon is well-preserved forests: 81% of the area is covered by forest. Forests provide multiple goods for people and one of the most important goods in our case study is a place for sport and recreation.

Objectives

- Medvednica is recognised as a place that provides ecosystem services to people in surroundings
- All stakeholders and park visitors recognise the benefits of forests for their health.

Challenges

- There are a large number of stakeholders with different interests
- There is low awareness about forest ecosystem services
- Land-use conflicts

Innovation mechanism

Two selected mechanisms - one-time concession permits and donation boxes - are being used for the first time in the Medvednica Nature Park. A one-time concession permit includes a fee to entities organising sports and other activities in the area while donation boxes are placed at the start of the two most visited hiking trails. The idea is to raise money each year for a specific activity. Donors are informed via web, Facebook and stickers on the donation boxes about SINCERE, the case study and forest ecosystem services.

These mechanisms raise money for new content and infrastructure to support human health and wellbeing (workout, enjoying nature, exercise in nature). Primarily the goal is to evaluate the health function of ecosystem services and assign a monetary value to the health function of the peri-urban Medvednica Nature Park forest. At the same time, the action is raising awareness among visitors and the local population about forest ecosystem services.

Expected impacts

- ✓ Increased awareness about FES
- ✓ Better visitor attitude towards nature
- ✓ Visitors are willing to pay for FES

The bigger picture

There are plenty of protected areas in Croatia and almost 30% of the country is a Natura 2000 site. Although forests in nature parks are used (forestry, hunting, tourism), it is essential to start to appreciate other forest ecosystem services, not just wood. Protected area forests should primarily be important in terms of recreation, nature conservation, oxygen production, etc.

Action

- Workshops and presentations about forest ecosystem services
- Meetings with stakeholders
- Sports and cultural events
- Raising the public awareness about FES; articles on official web sites and Facebook sites; survey

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