

## **WORKSHOP: Use of Ecosystem Service Valuations to Inform Local and Regional Land Use Decisions.**

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Abstract:

As the most densely populated US state, New Jersey faces heavy pressure to convert land from its undeveloped state to residential and commercial uses. In October 2006, researchers completed a project that estimated the total economic value of the ecoservices provided by the ecosystems of the State of New Jersey, USA and mapped those results at the watershed and sub-watershed levels. In December 2006, other investigators completed a companion project that estimated the total economic value of the natural goods provided by the same ecosystems.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is exploring how to use these results in its regulatory activities and in the land use decisions of local government units in NJ. In that context, this paper raises the following questions, among others:

- 1) exactly how can ecoservice valuation results be used in land use and conservation planning, municipal zoning, project permitting, environmental regulation, etc.?
- 2) does the use of such results add value to the tools already available to decision makers?
- 3) what are the limitations and potential downsides to such uses of valuation results?

The answers to these questions are not obvious, but preliminary answers are essential for the discipline of ecological economics to increase its role in public policy and regulatory decision making. The paper identifies a number of potential applications of natural capital valuations to land use planning and management, including setting of priorities for open space acquisitions, ecosystem management, creation of systems of payment for ecosystem services, and others. The organizers envision this session as a participatory exploration of possible uses of valuation data from ecological economics in government regulatory and policy activities.