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Breaking through: acknowledging and addressing constraints on mainstreaming ecosystem services thinking

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Abstract:

The concept of ecosystem services has shown itself to be a useful basis for productive dialogue between government, industry, conservation interests and the general public. It has become a basis for emerging approaches to environmental-economic accounting, and has expanded the interpretation of state of the environment reporting. In theory, the idea of naming the benefits humans receive from nature should enhance most, if not all, approaches to managing the relationship between humans and the environment. But the mainstreaming of this idea still has not happened. It is still an approach that can be taken or left by governments and industry, depending on ideological standpoints or fears that it might involve throwing away investments in other ways of thinking or that it is yet another market base mechanism capitalizing on nature. This presentation will reflect on the barriers and opportunities for mainstreaming the ideas behind ecosystem services, drawing on Australia's experiences over the past decade and a half and comparisons with developments in other parts of the world.