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Ecosystem accounting as input to informed development decision in southern Palawan, Philippines

Abstract:

The Province of Palawan, a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve, is one of the most biodiverse and economically dynamic island provinces in the Philippines. However, local leaders, policy makers and local communities are faced with the challenge of deciding the development path for the province. They will need refutable information to support such decision particularly its impact on natural capital and ecosystems. The World Bank thru the Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) provided support to generate these kind of systematic data management and utilization using the System of Environment-Economic Accounting – Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EEA), in short 'ecosystem accounting. The project focused on key/priority ecosystems and ecosystem services driven by key issues of contending land uses. The ridge-to-reef approach as applied to the island ecosystem of Southern Palawan calculated physical and monetary accounts of the subject ecosystems and ecosystem services provided by Southern Palawan natural capital using multiple data sources and approaches that include satellite images, primary and secondary data, modelling softwares and econometrics. The exercise was able to generate initial values for Land Account (land cover, land use, and changes in land cover), Carbon Account (carbon stored and sequestered by the forests), Ecosystem Condition Account (terrestrial and coastal condition), Ecosystem services supply account (flow of services for water regulation, crop production, and fisheries), and Ecosystem asset account (crop production). Results of the accounts provided empirical evidences on ecosystem linkages, the level of implementation of environment and natural resources policies in the pilot-area, projection of future scenarios, and possible implications of development programs.