

Economic Valuation of Ecosystem Services of a Sacred Landscape in Garhwal Himalaya

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Sacred species/groves/landscapes have played an important role in conserving the biodiversity based on the socio-cultural practices in different parts of the world including India. It has been observed in recent times that these sacred entities are weakening and facing degradation. The current study conducted in Hariyali sacred landscape in Garhwal Himalayas is to evaluate and rank the ecosystem services based on people's perceptions so that people can be sensitized about the economic significance of the landscape in addition to ecological and cultural significances. Contingent valuation method was used for calculating willingness to pay (WTP) for different ecosystem services from 140 respondents belonging to core villagers, nearby villagers and outsiders, associated with the landscape. The study revealed that local people identified six direct and seven indirect ecosystem services with Hariyali sacred landscape. Respondents of nearby villages ranked maximum for benefits from these services, but WTP for conservation of the landscape was recorded minimum amongst nearby villagers. WTP was positively correlated with socio economic factors like age, income and education. A careful intervention to integrate the adjoining villages in the rights and ritual related to temple and to evolve a more transparent way to manage the funds generated from religious offerings and Government, may lead to higher participation and WTP for conserving the landscape.