



FACTSHEET

Recreation

In a nutshell

The cultural ecosystem service 'recreation' is defined here as the role nature-based recreation plays in maintaining humans beings' mental and physical health, e.g. for walking, hiking, climbing, or playing sports in green spaces or natural landscapes.

1. Role for human well-being

Ecosystems and biodiversity are crucial for nature-based recreation opportunities, including activities such as relaxing in a park, jogging or walking or recreational fishing. For example, green spaces in urban areas provide multiple opportunities for sporting activities, improved mental health and cognitive development. This can have a powerful positive effect on economic productivity and hence on regional prosperity (adapted from [TEEB Ecological & Economic Foundations Ch. 2 p. 42](#)). For further information, find out here [why parks and recreation are essential public services](#).

2. Typical threats

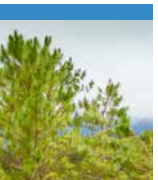
As people often choose where to spend their leisure time based on the characteristics of available (semi-) natural spaces, any changes that reduce the attractiveness of those areas play a role here. Urban planning, especially in and around cities, should take account of the importance of (semi-) natural areas for recreation. Urbanisation can lead to a loss of green spaces and can hinder access to parks and other sites. As green spaces in cities are often scarce, entrance restrictions such as fees can exclude people on low incomes. Furthermore, land use changes can decrease the scenic beauty or environmental conditions required for recreation. Cultural landscapes such as terraced hill slopes degrade when traditional land use practices change. Rapid increases in tourism can lead to a degradation of natural recreation assets if these are left unmanaged.

3. Example indicators

The value of natural landscapes or green spaces for recreation usually needs to be assessed by ascertaining people's subjective perceptions e.g. via [questionnaires](#). Nevertheless, attempts can be made to assess the value of the ecosystem service 'recreation' based on the following indicators:

- The indicator 'access to green spaces for city inhabitants' (parks, forests etc.) shows the value of green spaces for recreational activities. See, for example, a [map displaying park access for children of color living in poverty with no access to a car in Los Angeles](#).
- In some areas, public investment or the subsidies used to support traditional cost intensive land use practices necessary to preserve the scenic beauty of a semi-natural area could be used as a proxy for high recreational value.
- The indicator 'visitor numbers' can be used to measure the importance of a site for recreational activities over time (number of visitors/ year). For further information see [CBS TCS No. 58 p. 113](#).
- Indicators for monitoring natural features that are particularly appreciated by visitors help prevent their degradation, e.g. water quality at beaches, condition of hiking trails, proportion of an area in an attractive condition, or sightings of charismatic species.





- Questionnaires and interviews are useful to gain an understanding of the aspects and areas valued by visitors for recreational purposes.

For information regarding the lack of measurements and insufficient data availability on cultural services, see [TEEB Ecological & Economic Foundation Ch. 3 p. 24 & 32](#) (p. 131 & 137 in book version).

4. Example methods

For **assessing the value** of this ecosystem service:

- [Travel cost method](#)
- [Direct market price method](#)
- [Contingent valuation method](#)
- Ranking or socio cultural valuation e.g. [Methodological guide for social valuation of ess](#)
- [INVEST Recreation](#)
- For methods and information on assessing nature-based recreation see: [Tessa Toolkit p. 275 & 98](#)

For **assessing the condition** of this ecosystem service:

- Issues such as availability, accessibility, quality and security of public green spaces are relevant
- [Maps of land use changes](#) in combination with information on areas people value for recreation
- Assessing the availability of access to areas important for recreation
- See also the relevant section in the ValuES ecosystem service factsheet: [Tourism](#).

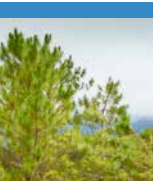
5. Managing this service

Typical instruments for managing this service include:

Maintenance and development of parks and open spaces in urban areas

- In [Quezon City, Philippines](#) a park development programme created or rehabilitated 111 open spaces and parks between 2003 and 2009.
- See [Natural Spaces and Health: Mapping Accessible Natural Greenspace](#) for a set of policy targets to encourage green space provision in Wales, UK.





Including information on recreational values in spatial planning

- In Denmark an [assessment of recreational values of Danish forests](#) was used to guide national afforestation plans
- In the [Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur](#), India, an additional recreation park for morning walkers and others was created outside the national park. This measure lowered the impact on birds' and other wildlife's habitats while improving the value for tourism.

There are increasing resources on the role and the management of urban green spaces. Examples are:

- [Healthy Parks Healthy People Central](#)
- [Botanic Gardens: Using biodiversity to improve human well-being](#)
- [City Parks Blog](#)

On behalf of:



of the Federal Republic of Germany



Compiled by: Florian Manns & Dominik Wiehl. UFZ. 2014.

Contact: info@aboutvalues.net

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