

## Valuing the Benefits of Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas

It is important to value and quantify the benefits of wildland and wilderness:

- A cost:benefit argument against threats and alternative land uses
- Promoting the case for land purchase for restoration or protection
- Policy formulation, particularly in competition with other sectors
- Fund raising and development of incentives
- Promoting the worth of wild areas to politicians, media, landholders etc

Many elements of wilderness and wild lands, including their intrinsic spiritual, landscape and biodiversity values, are literally priceless. The quantification approach is thus intended to supplement and not supplant traditional approaches to assessment of wildland.

However it is increasingly feasible and useful to quantify the benefits of wilderness, wildlands and large natural habitat areas, both in monetary terms and for wider societal gain.

Above all, there is growing perception that the relevance of large natural habitat areas to urban populations can bring increased political support – with wildlands seen as an integral part of modern society.

Quantifying the benefits:

### 1. Direct benefit valuation

1.1 Income flows, cost savings, employment creation:

1.2 Additional benefits from ancillary activities (accommodation and branding opportunities, possible increases in land values. Assess the multiplier effect.

Use sensitivity analysis to factor in alternative assumptions about subsidy levels, income and employment potential from benefits etc.

### 2. Indirect benefit valuation

2.1 Social benefits of wild areas: eg youth at risk – costs saved through reduced re-offence rates or non-custodial sentencing; remedial or palliative healthcare – eg less working days lost from stress or; shorter and thus cheaper psychotherapy courses

2.2 Environmental benefits – eg flood mitigation: examples of savings in downstream capital expenditure, running costs and insurance claims as the result of natural habitat restoration in catchment areas and lowland flood sinks reducing run-off variability or pollution.

3. Opportunity for use of Contingent Valuation and Willingness to Pay (WTP) method to assess the value of landscape and species conservation benefits as quantified by consumer, taxpayer and general public surveys.

4. Review the overall cost-benefit of protection or restoration:

- 4.1 Assessment of the aggregate “net value”. Take into account value, income, employment and costs - including direct land cost, opportunity cost, restoration costs (through natural and assisted regeneration).
  - 4.2 Comparison of cost:benefits – as against alternative land use: both current and projected under alternative scenarios. Factor in the subsidy issue and the future impact of CAP and WTO, forestry markets, cost/benefits of existing land uses etc.
  - 4.3 Draw conclusions on the quantifiable rationale for protecting or restoring a wild area
5. Indications of resource allocation merited for such a programme.
- 5.1 Summarize funding source categories: subsidy (habitat restoration, enterprise support), income (activities), grants and sponsorship (especially where related to non-business benefits).
  - 5.2 Relate to likely timescales assessing different requirements at different stages of restoration and different landholding arrangements.