

CNAES
HQP Research & Collaborative Exchange
Funding
Visit report

1. Exchange information

Visitor: Dalal Hanna, PhD Candidate, McGill University, CNAES Project III -6

Supervisor: Elena Bennett, McGill University

Conference: Natural Capital Symposium, Stanford University, California, March 20th-23rd 2017

2. Objective/Purpose

The objectives of attending this symposium were threefold. The first was to present a poster summarizing the results from the first chapter of my thesis, a review of how research has quantified ecosystem services in riverine habitats. The second was to attend a series of lectures of how the natural capital approach is being used to integrate ecosystem services into land management and decision making. The third was participate in practical workshops held during the symposium in order to learn how to use The Natural Capital Projects modeling tools, including InVEST.

3. Description of the visit

This symposium was an enriching experience on multiple levels. First, I had the chance to present a poster summarizing a portion of my PhD work, during which over 20 people visited my poster to discuss the details of my findings. Among the people visiting my poster was a group of researchers from Spain whose work was included in my review, which allowed for detailed conversations concerning the implications of the work. This poster session not only allowed me to share my findings with a diverse group of people, but also to reflect on how these findings can inform future riverine ecosystem service research. Next, the series of lectures on integrating natural capital into land management and decision making helped deepen my understanding of how the ecosystem service concept can be applied to help solve sustainable development problems facing communities around the world. Through numerous examples from organizations like The Nature Conservancy, and The World Wildlife Fund, I gained insight on programs like "Water Funds", or Belizes new island management plan, which integrate ecosystem services into land management decisions. Finally, the symposium was extremely useful in learning how to use various ecosystem service modeling tools, such as InVESTs nutrient regulation, sediment retention, and recreation models. Having the opportunity to run these models with their developers truly helped understand the functioning and limitations of the model, as well as determine how they might be useful in the various projects of my PhD.

We also had the chance to experience some of the regions ecosystem services in person, on a short hike in the Big Basin Park, where some of the oldest and largest Redwood trees attract numerous visitors annually.