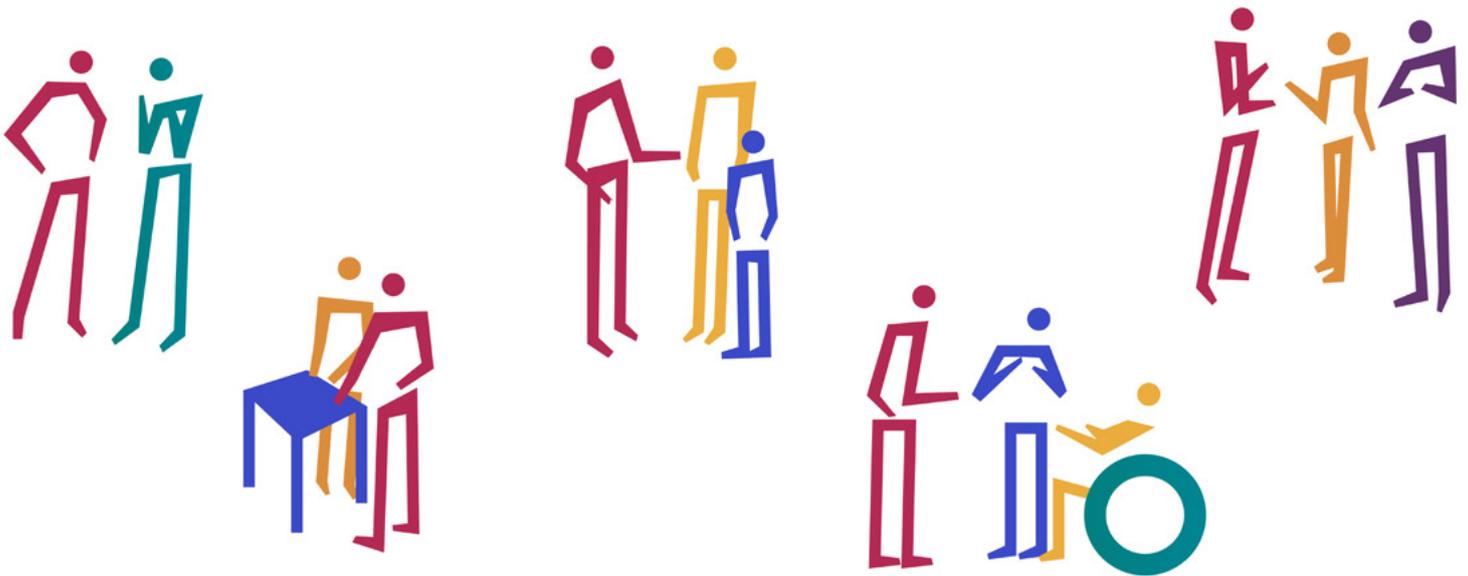


# How to engage citizens through applying the ecosystem service approach?



## Summary

**Sustainable citizen behaviour is important for the effective conservation of ecosystems.**

Decision-makers sometimes fail to engage with the general public surrounding the importance of ecosystems and many people are unaware of the importance of conservation or how it is relevant to them. Successful public engagement in the conservation of ecosystems depends on framing the topic in a way that everyone understands. Through highlighting ecosystem services people care about, decision-makers can adopt an approach that resonates with the public. To achieve this, it is important to map and understand the values that a community places on its local ecosystems. This document presents some approaches to understand and elicit citizen values and demand for ecosystem services.

## Key messages

- ▶ Citizen/community engagement is important for conserving local ecosystems
- ▶ Decision-makers need to understand the ecosystem services that people value
- ▶ An eight-step framework for eliciting citizens' demand for ecosystem services has been developed based on experience from seven exemplar case studies in the OPERAs project
- ▶ Decision-makers can elicit values for ecosystem services through a range of instruments and methods
- ▶ Understanding demand can help inform conservation goals and actions ('capacity effect')
- ▶ Understanding demand can also influence decisions and reduce conflict ('constraint effect')
- ▶ Involving citizens in the decision making process not only ensures their voices are heard but gives policy makers the tools to communicate with them through an increased knowledge of the values that citizens derive from the ecosystem

# Knowledge

## Engaging citizens and stakeholders is an important aspect of the ecosystem services approach.

Though objectives, scope and audience vary widely, experience in eight case studies (Swiss Alps, Wine, Scotland, Barcelona, the Lower Danube, the Montado region, Dublin and Europe) has led to the development of an eight-step framework for eliciting demand for ecosystem services from citizens and stakeholders:

- 1. Determine study objectives** – for example, find out the value that local residents place on coastal areas
- 2. Identify and engage key stakeholders** – from groups or individuals who can affect or are affected by the ecosystem's services (i.e. ES beneficiaries')
- 3. Identify all potential ecosystem services for your case** – select an ecosystem services framework (e.g., CICES, TEEB, MAES) and use it to figure out which are relevant to your project, along with stakeholders
- 4. Develop indicators for ecosystem services** – in order to measure and understand demand
- 5. Select method to elicit demand** – potential methods include choice experiments, participatory GIS, workshops or focus groups; the choice depends on your stakeholders and the form of results required
- 6. Elicit stakeholder demand for ecosystem services** – carry out the research you have planned
- 7. Analyse and compare demand** – for example, identify the most highly valued services within your study and compare stakeholder demand with ecosystem service supply
- 8. Assess implications of results** – determine potential actions to improve or maintain the ecosystem service

More information on the eight-step framework can be found in this [summary “quick guide”](#) and [comprehensive guidance document](#).

# Instruments

## Eliciting the values people place on ecosystem services can be carried out through a number of different instruments.

Their selection depends on the context, specific circumstances, and objectives of the study, including whether or not the study is intended to inform decision- or policy-making. **The purposes of such valuation can include:**

- Assessing the current social value of an ecosystem and its services
- Determining preferred future ecosystem states and acceptable trade-offs
- Identifying and understanding the diversity of stakeholders and their behaviour

An inventory of methods for social valuation, as well as prototype applications from the OPERAs exemplars, can be found in this [report](#).

Regardless of the instruments and methods chosen, it is important to approach a study in a way that stakeholders can relate to – such as using language that resonates with stakeholders (as illustrated in [this video](#) about language used by the Balearic exemplar) and framing issues for specific audiences (such as in [this video](#) demonstrating why local authorities might use ecosystem services approaches to inform the design of land use strategies).



# Practice

## Eliciting demand for ecosystem services.

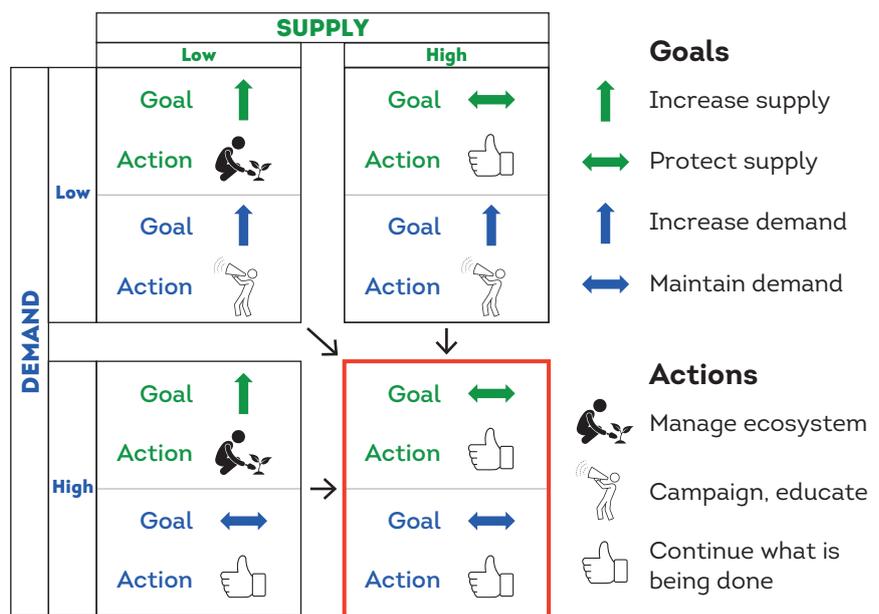
Identifying peoples' perspectives on ecosystem conservation can provide guidance for targeted information that can be used by local organisations to reach a diverse set of stakeholders.

Policy makers can also use this insight to make decisions based on the values of a wider community of stakeholders in an ecosystem. These values are usually not immediately obvious, which is why engaging citizens in decision-making processes is key.

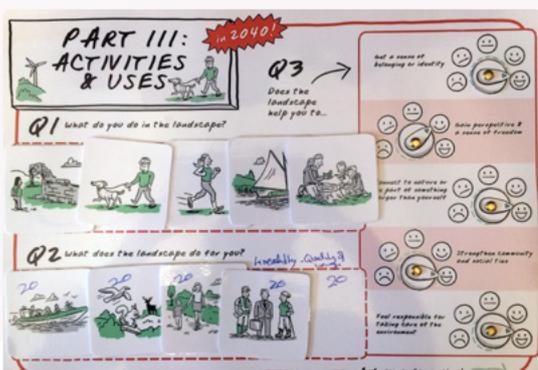
## Using demand to inform conservation goals and actions

Considering demand for an ecosystem service can inform actions to improve or maintain that service. If supply of the service is low but demand is high, managers could harness this demand to involve stakeholders in managing the ecosystem. However, if both demand and supply are low, education may first be needed.

Icons from the Noun Project.  
 "Planting Plant" by Gan Khoon Lay.  
 "Election Campaign" by Juan Pablo Bravo.  
 "Like" by Numero Uno.



## Estuary restoration and conservation planning at the Inner Forth Estuary, Scotland



**Aim:** understanding how local people value their landscape and the ecosystem services it provides

**People addressed:** interested public and stakeholders

**Instruments:** socio-cultural valuation through in-depth one-on-one interviews using Streamline, a bespoke scientific interview format enabling public participation in policy, planning and research.

<https://www.streamline-research.com/>



Queensferry Crossing, Firth of Forth, Scotland

## The Future

### Citizen engagement is vital for the success of future conservation projects.

Using the ecosystem services approach, decision-makers can engage citizens by learning what they value and highlighting the importance of the ecosystem in maintaining the services that people value and care about. Involving citizens in the decision-making process not only ensures their voices are heard but gives decision-makers the tools to take citizens values for ES into account when designing management and land use strategies.

Envisaging a future where planning may become more less contested and confrontational, the ES approach may advance a more collaborative form of planning based on the knowledge of the values that citizens derive from nature.

“Thought provoking stuff.”  
Pentland Hills Regional Park visitor

“We are having a great discussion, I am really enjoying this.”  
Inner Forth resident

“Enjoyed it - love a good chat! Good chance to highlight issues important to me, thought provoking. Thanks for taking young people’s views into account!”  
Teenager from Perth

“Very good idea - I got it - it came across very well.”  
Dublin resident



Find further details about this theme on Oppla:  
[oppla.eu/operas/citizens](https://oppla.eu/operas/citizens)

[www.operas-project.eu](http://www.operas-project.eu)  
[info@operas-project.eu](mailto:info@operas-project.eu)



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