"Latin America and the Caribbean; A Biodiversity Superpower" is an initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Marlon Flores, Senior Policy Advisor at Ecologic Institute, contributed the chapter on "Protected Areas" to the initiative's report "Importance of Biodiversity and Ecosystems in Economic Growth and Equity in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Economic Valuation of Ecosystems".

The Latin American and Caribbean region has one of the greatest endowments of natural capital in the world, which is a source of economic growth and has the potential to become the world leader in offering the services its ecosystems and biodiversity provide, and in return receive new benefits from this conservation and sustainable management. The new policies recommended in the publication promise to transform the traditional model of development — one that often disregards environmental costs —
into a new paradigm that recognises the value of services provided by healthy, fully functioning ecosystems.

The Report aims to inform policy makers and businesses in the Latin American and Caribbean region about the economic risks and opportunities of undertaking productive activities that impact on and are influenced by biodiversity and ecosystem services. The Report is a tool to assist governments and stakeholders in analyzing the role of ecosystem services in order to incorporate these services into economic planning, policy and investment at the sectoral level.

In his chapter on "Protected Areas" [2], Marlon Flores, Senior Policy Advisor of Ecologic Institute, assesses the evidence on the contribution of Protected Areas to the wider economy and contrasts this against the current status of financing for Protected Areas in Latin America and Caribbean.

Protected Areas have cross-cutting effects. They contribute to the economies of Latin American and Caribbean countries through each of the other sectors reviewed in the book: agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, and hydrological services. Marlon Flores' chapter relates the varied functions of Protected Areas and of the ecosystem services they support to productive processes in each of those sectors. The chapter also compares the effects of contrasting management regimes — from not managed to minimally-managed and well-managed — on the cross-cutting contributions of Protected Areas.

The chapter illustrates how Protected Areas contribute to sustain ecosystem services and examines the potential decline in productivity due to the degradation of ecosystems as a consequence of under-investment in Protected Areas. To this end, three scenarios are considered: a “not protected” scenario, in which habitats are not safeguarded and, thus, likely to be degraded; a “business as usual” scenario, where basic Protected Area protection is available but can mitigate only low level threats; and a “sustainable ecosystems management” scenario, with sufficient funding to support comprehensive, cost-effective Protected Area system management plans. In the case of sustainable ecosystems management, threats are fully managed (mitigated), and new business opportunities may be created in areas like eco-certification, sustainable sourcing, and novel ecosystem services.

Growing evidence indicates that the economic benefits of well-managed Protected Areas are multiple: increased production (GDP) in selected sectors, more jobs in rural areas, higher tax revenues, and higher foreign exchange earnings, especially though international tourism. Additional sectors can be affected as a result of economic ripple or multiplier effects.

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Attachments

- Protected Areas and the Importance of Biodiversity and Ecosystems in Economic Growth and Equity in Latin America and the Caribbean

Main Link

Protected Areas and the Importance of Biodiversity and Ecosystems in Economic Growth and Equity in Latin America and the Caribbean [pdf, 6.6 KB, English]

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