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“Development on the margin”

The Economic Value of Environmental Services on Aboriginal Held Lands in Australia

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Abstract

The need and opportunities for Aboriginal ranger groups and individual initiatives have recently been acknowledged to help with the management of northern Australia's vast land. Although very little research has been conducted on the community level, the potential of Aboriginal participation in PES-schemes on their traditional land raises great hopes as new conservation approach providing viable source of funding for the north. This study assesses the monetary value of benefits from three different environmental services that can potentially being provided by Aboriginal people on their land -biodiversity, carbon, recreational- by means of willingness-to-pay. The results showed that Australians could be willing to pay from \$878 m to \$2b per year for Aboriginal people to provide environmental services on their land. This is up to 50 times the amount currently invested by government. This result was derived from a survey that included a choice experiment with 927 respondents from all over Australia. The highest values were found for benefits that are likely to improve biodiversity outcomes, carbon emission reductions and improved recreational values. Of the activities that could be undertaken to provide the services, feral animal control attracted the highest level of support followed by coastal surveillance, weed control and fire management. Respondents' decisions to pay were not greatly influenced by the additional social benefits that could arise for Aboriginal people spending time on their traditional country while providing the services. Respondents showed, however, positive preference for reduced welfare payments that might arise for Aboriginal people when engaging in PES schemes as new source of income.

Keywords: Biodiversity conservation, choice experiment, non-market evaluation, payments for environmental services