



Human Value Studies in Forestry

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Research Areas: Forest Policy, Sociology, Political Studies, Natural Resource Management, Outdoor Recreation Management, Environmental History

Research Topics:

1: Human values and interests that lead and influence forest policy making.

Human values toward forests are diverse. However, whether these values become legitimized and reflected in forest policy strongly depends on the political power and position of value-holders (stakeholders). Perspectives of political ecology and environmental sociology can help us understand these political dynamics, and thereby reconsider and reframe existing categories of values and benefits of forests, including ecosystem services. (Figure 1)

2: Changes and dynamics of multiple values of forests.

From the perspective of environmental history and applying social science field research, it becomes evident that values and benefits of forests recognized in society are unstable. The value of forests as carbon dioxide sinks and fields of multiple recreational sports were unknown even in the early 20th century. As forestry researchers, we must understand what social changes create these values and how. (Figure 2)

3: Social relationships and institutions that can harmonize and resolve conflicts between multiple values of forests.

To find ideal social systems to resolve conflicts between multiple values of forests in a sustainable manner must be a major goal of natural resource management. Through the human value studies of forests at 1-2, we can develop a practical framework to identify and adapt all values of forests to social changes. (Figure 3)



Figure 1 Large scale afforestation in the People's Republic of China seems to improve ecosystem services and has strongly reflected the value political leaders place on forests to prevent natural disasters and secure their regime.



Figure 2 Recreational sports such as mountain biking and trail running have emerged as new ways of attributing value to forests reflecting social changes in the late 20th century.

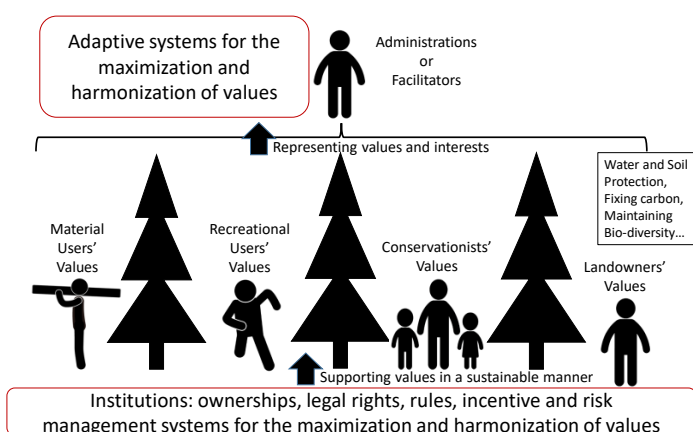


Figure 3 Adaptive systems to maximize and harmonize values of forests and institutions allowing and supporting multiple values in sustainable ways are needed to resolve conflicts and enrich human-forest relationships.

Expected Future Development:

- 1: Categories of values and ecosystem services of forests, especially cultural values and services, will be redefined through more human-based, realistic perspectives through the study.
- 2: By implementing a policy to reflect all human values placed on forests, we can attain "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" in forestry.

Expectation for International Cooperation:

Understanding the differences in human values placed on forests across different cultures and environments is key to further research. As the disciplines of sociology and political studies have antecedently executed international comparative research on human values, we as forestry researchers can follow and advance such research.