



Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Findings of the Condition and Trends Working Group v. 1: Current State and Trends

By -

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Humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively in the last 50 years than in any comparable period of human history. We have done this to meet the growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber, and fuel. While changes to ecosystems have enhanced the well-being of billions of people, they have also caused a substantial and largely irreversible loss in diversity of life on Earth, and have strained the capacity of ecosystems to continue providing critical services. Among the findings are: approximately 60 per cent of the services that support life on Earth are being degraded or used unsustainably, and the harmful consequences of this degradation could grow significantly worse in the next 50 years; only four ecosystem services have been enhanced in the last 50 years - crops, livestock, aquaculture, and the sequestration of carbon; the capacity of ecosystems to neutralize pollutants, protect us from natural disasters, and control the outbreaks of pests and diseases is declining significantly; terrestrial and freshwater systems are reaching the limits of their ability to absorb nitrogen; and harvesting of fish and other resources...



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