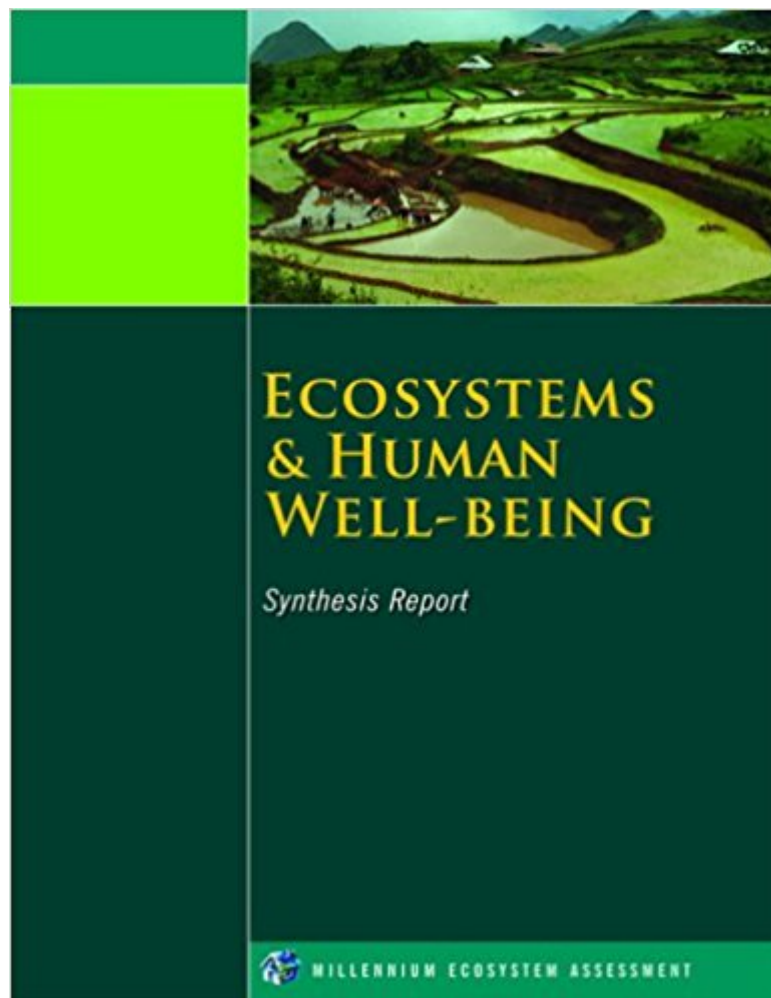




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Ecosystems And Human Well-Being: Synthesis (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Series)



Synopsis

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Synthesis Report boils down the findings of the four working groups into a simple, straightforward description of Earth's ecological health and its linkages to human well-being. It answers a series of key questions, such as: How have ecosystems changed over the past 50 years? What are the most critical factors causing ecosystem damage? What options do we have for better conserving, restoring, and benefiting from ecosystems? The volume then presents a snapshot of the health and prospects for each of the main services that ecosystems provide, including the provision of food, water, timber, fuel, climate regulation, disease prevention, and others. The Synthesis Report will prove ideal for students and laypersons interested in a quick, but nuanced, understanding of the state of Earth's ecosystems.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) is an international process designed to meet the needs of decision makers and the public for scientific information concerning the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and options for responding to those changes. Leading scientists from more than 100 nations will conduct the assessment, with oversight by a Board comprised of representatives of four international conventions, five United Nations agencies, international scientific organizations, and leaders from the private sector, NGOs, and indigenous groups. The MA is designed to meet some of the assessment needs of the Convention on Biological

Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Wetlands Convention, as well as needs of other users in the private sector and civil society. It was launched by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in June 2001. The first products will be released in 2003, and the main products will be released in 2004. It is anticipated that a process like the MA will be repeated every 5 to 10 years.

Very informative and well documented.

“Ecosystems and Human Well-being” (also known as “The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment”) is an extensive, multi-part report that details the adverse effects a burgeoning human population is having on the ecological health of our planet. With a clear framework, it synthesizes the current state of the science as well as providing lucid discussions of trends. Unlike some other reports that profess to discuss the state of ecosystems but then fail to deliver, The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment not only covers the underlying causes of the pending ecological meltdown, but also contains projections for the future under various scenarios and recommends policies that might help avoid worst cases. As a result, it is by far better than any other report out there. Best of all, The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is available via the web (free) or in printed form (for a fee). To access this excellent report, just type “Millennium Ecosystem Assessment” into your search engine.

In June 2001 the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was launched under the auspices of the United Nations at the request of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The resulting effort has been a remarkable collaboration of over 1,300 blue ribbon scientists from 95 countries, a governing board of the broadest possible stakeholders--international organizations, financial institutions, health workers, governments, business leaders, NGOs, and indigenous peoples, and funding from broad and diverse quarters. The MA was tasked to "assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and to establish the scientific basis for actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and their contributions to human well-being." Scientific credibility, policy relevance, and well-being for all human beings guide the report. Their first product was Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: A Framework for Assessment (2003), which set out the conceptual and methodological foundations of the project. The current Synthesis focuses on four core questions. How have ecosystems changed over the last 50 years? What have been the gains and losses? What are the prospects for the next 50 years? How might we reverse ecosystem degradation and enhance human well-being? In addition, the Synthesis reviews their findings on

nine key questions, and then adds five appendices. Where needed, the report qualifies the "certainty" of their findings as "very certain, high, medium, low and very uncertain." Some losses, for example, are already irreversible. Nonlinear changes are more complicated to predict. Tradeoffs are quite common and shift responsibilities and costs to different stakeholders. Monetary-market values are important, but so are non-monetary-non-market ones. One finding is clear: a disproportionate share of ecosystem degradation is being borne by the very poor who are most impacted by it. The Synthesis does not admit to simple solutions, and reads as a very sober and sobering document, but in fact it identifies itself as guardedly optimistic in the sense that our wise choices in the future could make significant, positive differences. The very first sentence of the Bible invests our world with an inherent value, in and of itself: God created the world, declared it very good, and then asked human beings to manage it as His stewards. That alone, it would seem, would cause Christians to care very deeply about issues of environment and ecosystems. In addition, there is a utilitarian argument to make. We are, as the Synthesis puts it, "fundamentally dependent upon" and "integral parts of" the ecosystem. Our fate is bound up with the fate of the planet. You might not know know about biomes, eutrophication, or mean trophic levels. I didn't. But you will still understand much of this important document. I hope it finds its way into the hearts and minds of many believers and their churches.

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