

How does EMS actually work?

Context

Incentives are important motivators for people. EMS programs provide incentives for people to restore and protect ecosystems. Funding is provided by those benefiting from local ecosystems, who recognize the full value of ecosystems and the need to have Indigenous Peoples as stewards of these ecosystems. Certain targets will be voluntarily agreed by the parties in EMS programs. The benefits from EMS programs to ecosystems, individuals and societies can be significant.

Key Elements

- A. In a market economy, a buyer will purchase a good or service from a provider to satisfy their needs. Recognizing the value of ecosystem services, like clean air, clean water or forests for spiritual well-being, is important to help protect these services.
- B. When someone's actions directly enhances the quality or the quantity of an ecosystem service, we can say that this person helps to 'provide' this environmental service. Therefore, if a buyer needs this service, they can enter in a voluntary transaction with a provider (or stewards) to acquire what they need.
- C. For example, two neighbouring communities live along a river. One upstream and one downstream. The upstream neighbour has healthy forests in the river's headwaters, that clean the water. The downstream neighbour needs clean water to drink, to bathe and to grow food. **But, what if the upstream neighbour considers harvesting the forest for income?** In this case, the downstream neighbour can pay the upstream neighbour to conserve the forest. This voluntary transaction allows the upstream neighbour to conserve their forests and earn income, and preserves the drinking water for the downstream community. There are also many benefits that flow from this transaction, including clean air and healthy forests that are important for biodiversity and for people's well-being.
- D. In summary, EMS programs are incentives for people to protect and steward ecosystems, so these can continue to produce environmental services that have previously been ignored.