

Local values and decisions: views and constraints for riparian management in western Mexico



Human decisions on ecosystems at the local level are based significantly on the institutional context but also on how people understand and value the place where they live. Located at the land-water interface and connecting the streams with their valleys, riparian areas provide relevant services to society on regional and global scales and are important to the people directly interacting with them. Using a qualitative research approach, we documented rural people's knowledge and values regarding the riparian system, as well as the agreements made on its management. We found positive values; a good understanding of the riparian system's dynamics and local arrangements for its management. Degradation was also observed, indicating a discrepancy between peoples' views and their practices. Ignorance of the national ordinances emerged as an important problem, also having consequences on the conservation of the riparian area. There are constraints between individual and collective decisions since benefits from good management are not necessarily reflected at the site, but on wider spatial-temporal scales. It is proposed (1) to consider the whole stream-riparia-parcel as a more realistic approach to assess and guide the riparian system's role; and (2) a co-production of

knowledge between local people and scientists, promoting a co-responsibility stewardship of the basin-level management.

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