

The Natural Capital Alliance

Pioneering science, technology, and partnerships that enable people and nature to thrive

Our vision is a world in which people, governments, investors, and businesses recognize the values of nature in supporting human well-being and routinely incorporate them in decision-making.



All around the world, nature's benefits are constantly flowing to people, providing us with food, water, and climate security. Bees pollinate crops that feed communities and support livelihoods; wetlands remove chemicals from farm runoff and thus protect drinking water while also absorbing carbon and floodwaters; neighborhood parks promote both physical and mental health, while reducing ambient air temperatures and providing places for communities to gather. A deeper understanding of nature's contributions to people can improve outcomes for both people and nature.

The world's ecosystems can be seen as capital assets: if well-managed, their lands, waters, and biodiversity yield a flow of vital benefits that sustain human life, in addition to having their own intrinsic value.

Relative to other forms of capital, natural capital is poorly understood and undergoing rapid degradation. Often, the benefits nature provides to people are widely appreciated only upon their loss. For 20 years, the Natural Capital Alliance (formerly the Natural Capital Project) has been transforming that paradigm through advancing a systematic approach to valuing nature in planning, policy, finance, and practice.

How We Work

- **Collaborations and engagement:** With its hub at Stanford University, NatCap is a global alliance of researchers, professionals, and leaders directly engaging in more than 75 countries. We co-develop natural capital approaches with decision-makers from communities, governments, and international financial institutions so new science, tools, and information are immediately relevant to their needs, and nature is integrated into operations and mindsets. We work closely with local experts to build capacity to bridge science and policy, creating longstanding impact.
- **Science:** Through cutting-edge ecosystem service science, we map, measure, and value nature's benefits to people across vital dimensions including climate, energy, nutrition, water, mental and physical health, and livelihoods.
- **Software & data:** We make our science accessible and actionable through our free, open-source natural capital data and software platform, integrating environmental, economic, health, and social data so that policy, finance, and management decisions can easily factor in nature's values.



- **Scaling impact:** We leverage our engagements by working closely with scaling partners who integrate natural capital approaches into their operations, supporting their innovations and investments with extensive training and capacity development.
- **Global standards:** We are co-creating new metrics for tracking ecological performance and guiding investments in nature, notably Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) which serves as a complement to GDP and has been approved by the UN Statistical Commission. China has adopted GEP at multiple scales, and we are assisting other countries worldwide in implementing it as well.

NatCap's Impact

NatCap's software, InVEST® (Integrated Valuation of Ecosystem Services and Tradeoffs), has now been used in >185 countries and in >1000 independent, peer-reviewed publications. Our approach to co-creating solutions with collaborators has shaped decision-making across a diverse range of contexts, such as:

- **Country / regional strategic planning, investments, and incentives:** In China, NatCap's tools and approaches helped zone more than half of the country for ecosystem protection and restoration, while improving the livelihoods of 200 million rural land stewards through eco-compensation payments. In countries like Chile and Belize, finance ministries are now leading cross-sectoral efforts to improve economies and livelihoods through nature-based investments.
- **International financial institutions:** Leading multilateral development banks have pledged to mainstream the values of nature in their financing and operations. NatCap is helping them achieve this: for example, our work with the World Bank in 11 countries in Africa and Asia influenced nearly \$1 billion in development finance over just two years.



- **Corporate environmental risks and opportunities:** With Morgan Stanley, we pioneered a free, systematic, and transparent approach to reporting the impacts of corporate assets on nature, which they have incorporated into a platform for use with their clients.
- **Coastal climate resilience and mitigation:** We work with governments and communities from Colombia to the Cook Islands to guide investments in coastal ecosystems to maximize benefits, including protection from storms and sea-level rise, carbon sequestration, tourism, and fisheries. We are also innovating ways to track and report on progress in meeting nature and climate-related targets for international commitments and innovative finance mechanisms.
- **Water security under climate change:** To secure water for drinking, irrigation, and energy, we co-created an approach showing the return-on-investment from improved watershed management. With Inter-American Development Bank and TNC support, dozens of major cities in Latin America use the water fund approach, with expansion across Africa and Asia.
- **Sustainable cities:** From cities across China to the San Francisco Bay Area to San Antonio, Texas and beyond, we are guiding investments in green space to maximize flood and heat protection, recreation, physical and mental health, and other vital benefits.

The Natural Capital Alliance's global hub is based out of the [Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment](#) within the [Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability](#), and the [Department of Biology](#) in the [Stanford School of Humanities and Sciences](#).

NatCap's current core members are the Stockholm Resilience Centre, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the University of Minnesota's NatCap TEEMs, WWF, The Nature Conservancy, and Natural Capital Insights.