This course will consider the design, implementation and evaluation of payments for ecosystem services (PES), using the “pago por servicios ambientales” (PSA) policy in Costa Rica as a case study. PSA is the most prominent example of direct payment for conservation of tropical forest and is often cited in both the scientific literature and policy debates. The course will begin by placing PSA in context of other PES schemes in the tropics.

Course content

Throughout the course, we will learn about PSA directly from government officials, forestry professionals, non-governmental organizations, and landowners involved in its implementation. In order to assess PSA, we will review relevant methods and tools such as (i) cost-benefit analysis, including different concepts of value and categories of cost, (ii) non-market valuation, using meta-analysis and benefits transfer, (iii) quasi-experimental impact evaluation, and (iv) rapid rural appraisal. In each case, we will assess and critique how these methods have been applied to PSA, as reported in both the published and gray literatures. We will identify where information is lacking and key points of contention in this literature and explore several of these issues through analysis of secondary data and field work employing rapid rural appraisal and interviewing techniques. This will involve group work in the computer lab at La Selva and field work in the region around La Selva, interviewing landowners and foresters and visiting areas under PSA contract. We also anticipate a trip to San Jose to hear from government officials and other stakeholders in the national PSA program.
Participants

The course will be held in Costa Rica and is limited to 22 students. We anticipate that half of the students will come from Latin American institutions and about half from U.S. institutions. All participants should be fluent in English. A working knowledge of Spanish would be useful.

The course is intended for graduate students with an interest in conservation policy and environmental services.

Course Instructors:
Erin Sills, Ph.D.
North Carolina State University

Rodrigo Arriagada, Ph.D.
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

With guest lecturers and module instructors including:

Subhrendu Pattanayak
Duke University

Edgar Ortiz
Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica

Tuition:

$2150 OTS consortium applicants
$2950 Non-consortium applicants

A limited number of partial need-based scholarships are available, with first priority to OTS consortium applicants and Latin Americans. Costa Rican residents are eligible for a discount.

Tuition covers: all meals and lodging during the course, field and lab materials, and transportation during course. Does not include airfare.

Further Information:
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For course content:
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Application Deadline:
February 3, 2015
(for priority consideration, followed by open enrollment until filled; 22 participants)