

**Review: Monitoring Ecosystems: Interdisciplinary Approaches for  
Evaluating Ecoregional Initiatives**

By David E. Bush and Joel C. Trexler (Eds.)

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David E. Bush and Joel C. Trexler (Eds.) *Monitoring Ecosystems :  
Interdisciplinary Approaches for Evaluating Ecoregional Initiatives.*  
Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003. 384 pp. ISBN 1-55963-851-6 (paper).  
US\$35.00

When the Bush Administration agreed to settle a lawsuit brought by two Oregon-based timber groups by discontinuing surveys required by the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994, much of the outcry from environmentalists centered around their fears that the safety net for rare species was being removed.

But also lost will be a unique data gathering event in support of what is known as "survey and manage" (or S&M) measures intended to protect rare species which might be disturbed by logging. In fact, the president of the American Forest Resource Council was quoted as saying, "We think the amount of money and time being spent on survey and manage is ridiculous."

Such sentiments are far from unusual where monitoring is concerned. Yet without the ridiculous data resulting from such ridiculous expenditure, decisions about land use could be made blindly. It is difficult enough deciding what data to collect and how to collect it. In the case of the Northwest Forest Plan, a chapter is devoted to the thought processes that went into monitoring design for the many complex considerations that impact the old growth forests in this area, ranging from impact on specific species to cumulative effects on entire ecosystems.

In the case of the Everglades, several chapters outline the care with which scientists have tried to design ways to learn how human manipulations of the water supply impact the natural balance of this unique ecosystem. Where short-term human needs are ill-timed with natural patterns, disasters have already resulted. By better understanding natural patterns, scientists hope to at least partly satisfy human needs, without losing the Everglades.

Part II deals with monitoring design, using case studies from projects in the Pacific Northwest, Colorado, and the Florida Everglades. Part III deals with data processing and the use of modeling. It discusses how to avoid losing valuable data to obsolete information retrieval systems and inadequate

documentation. Part IV discusses specific problems associated with monitoring complex natural systems such as habitats, populations, and communities. There is also a chapter on establishing restoration goals in cases where historical data is lacking.

This book will be useful to scientists who have to grapple with such issues. Some portions would also be helpful to policymakers in getting an idea of the need for care in making decisions that affect something as complex as an ecosystem, as well as to understand that without good data, good science may be compromised. Good for university and special collections.

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