

Principles of Ecosystem Stewardship

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Editors

Principles of Ecosystem Stewardship

Resilience-Based Natural
Resource Management
in a Changing World

Illustrated by Melissa C. Chapin

 Springer

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Preface

The world is undergoing unprecedented changes in many of the factors that determine its fundamental properties and their influence on society. These changes include climate; the chemical composition of the atmosphere; the demands of a growing human population for food and fiber and the mobility of organisms, industrial products, cultural perspectives, and information flow. The magnitude and widespread nature of these changes pose serious challenges in managing the ecosystem services on which society depends. Moreover, many of these changes are strongly influenced by human activities, so future patterns of change will continue to be influenced by society's choices and governance.

The purpose of this book is to provide a new framework for natural resource management—a framework based on stewardship of ecosystems for human well-being in a world dominated by uncertainty and change. The goal of ecosystem stewardship is to respond to and shape change in social-ecological systems in order to sustain the supply and opportunities for use of ecosystem services by society. The book links recent advances in the theory of resilience, sustainability, and vulnerability with practical issues of ecosystem management and governance. The book is aimed at advanced undergraduates and beginning graduate students of natural resource management as well as professional managers, community leaders, and policy makers with backgrounds in a wide array of disciplines, including ecology, policy studies, economics, sociology, and anthropology.

The first part of the book presents a conceptual framework for understanding the fundamental interactions and processes in social-ecological systems—systems in which people interact with their physical and biological environment. We explain how these systems respond to variability and change and discuss many of the ecological, economic, cultural, and institutional processes that contribute to these dynamics, enabling society to respond to and shape change. In the second section we apply this theory to specific types of social-ecological systems, showing how people adaptively

manage resources and ecosystem services throughout the world. Finally we synthesize the lessons learned about resilience-based ecosystem stewardship as a strategy for responding to and shaping change in a rapidly changing world. Change brings both challenges and opportunities for managers, resource users, and policy makers to make informed decisions that enhance sustainability of our planet.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Buzz Holling who originated many of the central concepts that link resilience to ecosystem stewardship, as well as to several national and international programs that have developed these ideas and applied them to education and to the real-world issues faced by a rapidly changing planet. These include the Resilience Network, the Resilience Alliance, the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Assessment, Association for the Study of the Commons, the Stockholm Resilience Centre, the Beijer Institute, and the Resilience and Adaptation Program of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Primary funding for the book came from the US National Science Foundation and the Swedish Research Council FORMAS program. In addition, many individuals contributed to the development of this book. We particularly thank our families, whose patience made the book possible, and our students, from whom we learned many of the concepts and applications presented in this book. In addition, we thank the following people for their constructively critical review of chapters in this book: Marty Anderies, Erik Anderson, Archana Bali, David Battisti, Harry Biggs, Oonsie Biggs, Shauna BurnSilver, Steve Carpenter, Melissa Chapin, Johann Colding, Graeme Cumming, Bill Dietrich, Logan Egan, Thomas Elmqvist, Walter Falcon, Victor Galaz, Ted Gragson, Nancy Grimm, Lance Gunderson, Susan Herman, Buzz Holling, Jordan Lewis, Chanda Meek, Joanna Nelson, Evelyn Pinkerton, Ciara Raudsepp-Hearne, Marten Scheffer, Emily Springer, Samantha Staley, Will Steffen, Fred Swanson, Brian Walker, Karen Wang, and Oran Young. We particularly thank Steve Carpenter for his thoughtful comments on most of the chapters in this book.

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Contents

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Contributors | xi |
|------------------------|----|

Part I Conceptual Framework

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 1 A Framework for Understanding Change | 3 |
| F. Stuart Chapin, III, Carl Folke, and Gary P. Kofina | |
| Chapter 2 Managing Ecosystems Sustainably: The Key Role of Resilience | 29 |
| F. Stuart Chapin, III | |
| Chapter 3 Sustaining Livelihoods and Human Well-Being during Social–Ecological Change | 55 |
| Gary P. Kofina and F. Stuart Chapin, III | |
| Chapter 4 Adaptive Co-management in Social–Ecological Governance | 77 |
| Gary P. Kofina | |
| Chapter 5 Transformations in Ecosystem Stewardship | 103 |
| Carl Folke, F. Stuart Chapin, III, and Per Olsson | |

Part II Stewarding Ecosystems for Society

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 6 Conservation, Community, and Livelihoods: Sustaining, Renewing, and Adapting Cultural Connections to the Land | 129 |
| Fikret Berkes, Gary P. Kofina , and F. Stuart Chapin, III | |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 7 | |
| Forest Systems: Living with Long-Term Change | 149 |
| Frederick J. Swanson and F. Stuart Chapin, III | |
| Chapter 8 | |
| Drylands: Coping with Uncertainty, Thresholds, and Changes in State | 171 |
| D. Mark Stafford Smith, Nick Abel, Brian Walker, and F. Stuart Chapin, III | |
| Chapter 9 | |
| Freshwaters: Managing Across Scales in Space and Time . . | 197 |
| Stephen R. Carpenter and Reinette Biggs | |
| Chapter 10 | |
| Oceans and Estuaries: Managing the Commons | 221 |
| Carl Walters and Robert Ahrens | |
| Chapter 11 | |
| Coastal Marine Systems: Conserving Fish and Sustaining Community Livelihoods with Co-management | 241 |
| Evelyn Pinkerton | |
| Chapter 12 | |
| Managing Food Production Systems for Resilience | 259 |
| Rosamond L. Naylor | |
| Chapter 13 | |
| Cities: Managing Densely Settled Social–Ecological Systems | 281 |
| J. Morgan Grove | |
| Chapter 14 | |
| The Earth System: Sustaining Planetary Life-Support Systems | 295 |
| Oran R. Young and Will Steffen | |
| Part III Integration and Synthesis | |
| Chapter 15 | |
| Resilience-Based Stewardship: Strategies for Navigating Sustainable Pathways in a Changing World . . . | 319 |
| F. Stuart Chapin, III, Gary P. Kofinas Carl Folke, Stephen R. Carpenter, Per Olsson, Nick Abel, Reinette Biggs, Rosamond L. Naylor, Evelyn Pinkerton, D. Mark Stafford Smith, Will Steffen, Brian Walker, and Oran R. Young | |
| Abbreviations | 339 |

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Glossary | 341 |
| References | 355 |
| Index | 387 |

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