

CONTINGENT VALUATION OF RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR RIVER NETWORK PROTECTION. A CASE STUDY IN AL-BUNA RIVER BASIN

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Abstract

River network have experienced serious degradation because of rapid urbanization and population growth in developing countries such as Albania, and the protection of these networks requires the integration of evaluation with ecology and economics. Restoration of impaired waters is gaining increasing attention, and the improving the quality of impaired waters will yield environmental benefits that will also translate into economic and social benefits. The estimation of the economic value of these environmental benefits by assessing the total willingness-to pay (WTP) of households for restoring water quality in impaired transboundary Buna River basin, Albania (AL-Buna) was the primary objective of this study. A stated-preference estimation technique, known as the contingent valuation method (CVM), was utilized in this study. A structured questionnaire survey of local residents in AL-Buna was conducted in urban and suburban areas. The study examined residents' awareness of the value of the river network, sought their attitude toward the current status, and employed a logistic regression analysis based on the contingent valuation method (CVM) to calculate the total benefit and explain the socioeconomic factors influencing the residents' willingness to pay (WTP). The results suggested that residents in AL-Buna had a high degree of recognition of river network value, but a low degree of satisfaction with the government's actions and the current situation. The study also illustrated that the majority of respondents were willing to pay for river network protection. Results from survey indicate that households would pay an average of €4.54 annually for the additional ecosystem services. The number of years lived in AL-Buna, and the amount of the bid were important factors that influenced the respondents' WTP. Suggestions for comprehensive management were proposed for the use of policy makers in river network conservation. The approach described in this study may be applied to larger ecosystems with a broader range of the ecosystem services to be valued.

Keywords: *River Buna; contingent valuation; logistic regression analysis, residents' awareness, willingness to pay*