

## **Intern project: Ecosystem services under a social and economical lens**

The Arava Long Term Socio Ecological Research (LTSER) platform in the south of Israel is part of the international LTSER network run by the DSASC. The vision is to represent entire regions in the sense of cultural, historical, natural, administration, and economic and land-use units. Therefore it combines ecological, social and political research and covers a much wider field than LTER sites. The research agendas are adapted to regional and local needs for the benefit of the local population. Therefore the platform is an open communication space, implementing trans-disciplinary and participatory approaches. Pro-active involvement of the research community on the regional, national and international level enables such approach. The Arava LTSER platform produces applicable knowledge towards a sustainable desert community. One of the projects of the Arava LTSER platform, "Valuing Ecosystem Services Through a Multi-National, Multi-Cultural Lens" is implemented in cooperation with Jordan. The goal of this project is to use ES assessment as a platform to integrate local stakeholders into land use policy making. Part of this is done by establishing and comparing three ES assessments – a social, an economic, and an ecological assessment, both in Israel and Jordan. Assessments are based on interviewing, surveying and observing local communities, direct and in-direct estimates of monetary value, expert knowledge, data collection and geographic mapping. As part of this an economic study "Determining the Economic Benefits and Disadvantages of Ecosystem and Environmental Services in the Southern Arava Valley" explored the degree of reliance the residents of the Southern Arava exhibit on their ES based industries now, and presents recommendations for future development.

The internship includes a follow up study, evaluating the results under the social lens of the project, to reveal the connections between the economics of ES and their social value. The economic value is one side of the coin, but what are the feelings and thoughts connected to them? Are there other ES which are more valuable from a different point of view (relational value) than the once determined in the economic study? If yes what are they and do they contradict the economic value of the other ES? The intern will help to finalize two priority lists of ES based on the Social and Economic study. We will include the residents in the area of the 10 Kibbutzim and 2 community settlements of the southern Arava in this task. In meetings, interviews and/or focus groups three tasks will be discussed:

1. Ranking the ES that are socially important and relevant.
2. Ranking the economically valuable ES after economic importance right now, for the future and personal importance.
3. Mapping of the relevant ES on maps for a spatial analyses.

Meetings with policy makers will be implemented to determine how the development of the area will impact the priority ES (social and economic). How will the development of business/industry that is dependent on specific ES (agriculture and ecotourism for example) impact other ES.

Knowledge gained will be used for sustainable policy making and development at the Arava area.