

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

## **Master of Science**

**Lea Wilson**

Will defend her thesis

### **Attitudes towards Ecosystem Services in Urban Riparian Parks**

Urban sustainability is a critical component of sustainable human societies. Urban riparian parks are used here as a case study seeking to understand the social-ecological relationships between the subjective evaluation of ecosystem services and the vision and management of one kind of green infrastructure. This study explored attitudes towards ecosystem services, asking whether 1) the tripartite model is an effective framing to measure attitudes towards ecosystem services; 2) what the attitudes towards ecosystem services are and whether they differ between two types of park space; and 3) what the relationship is between management and the attitudinal assessment of ecosystem services by park users. A questionnaire was administered to 104 urban riparian park users in Phoenix, AZ evaluating their attitudes towards refugia, aesthetics, microclimate and stormwater regulation, and recreational and educational opportunities. All components of attitude were positive, but attitudes were stronger in a park managed for habitat restoration than a more classic park space. Park users were more positive towards refugia, stormwater regulation, recreation, and educational opportunities in the restoration area. On the other hand, microclimate regulation and aesthetic qualities were valued the same. Most attitudes supported management goals, however park users valued stormwater regulation less than managers. Qualitative answers suggest that the quality of human interactions differ between the parks and park users consider both elements of society and the physical environment in their subjective evaluations. These findings imply that park users highly value ecosystem services and that park design and management mediates social-ecological relationships. This study supports the provision of ecosystem services through green infrastructure and suggests that an integration of park designs throughout urban areas could provide both necessary services as well as expand the platform for social-ecological interactions.

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2:00 pm  
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Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:  
Dr. Daniel L. Childers, Chair  
Dr. Kelli Larson  
Dr. Juliet Stromberg