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LOCAL FISHING COMMUNITIES AND NATURE BASED TOURISM: SHRIMP FISHERIES AND WHALE WATCHING IN BAJA, MEXICO

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Abstract

Nature-based tourism is often advocated as a desirable conservation strategy for small-scale fishing communities as it gives local people motivation to protect wildlife and ecosystems that attract visitors, while benefiting the community. However, valuation of environmental inputs in nature-based tourism (e.g. charismatic species, scenic amenities, etc.) needs to be done correctly. Often, there are intersectorial costs and benefits involved that are not counted, so that determining the value of the environmental inputs to local communities may be more complex than simpler calculations might indicate. We model whales as an input to the production of wildlife viewing trips, but recognize that this occurs within a community dependent seasonal fishery. Standard theory suggests that industry will switch from fishing to whale watching every year when whale watching becomes marginally more profitable than fishing. We develop a simple theoretical model that allows us to analyse the interaction between the extractive and the non-extractive activities. As a case study, we use gray whale watching in the small coastal communities of the Bahía Magdalena lagoon complex in Baja, Mexico.

Keywords: local fishing communities, whale watching, valuation

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