**Welcome message**

Welcome to the Discussion Forum on the Costs and Benefits of IAS Management. I will be acting as your moderator for these discussions throughout May and look forward to working with you all.

To get things moving, I have suggested five headings for our discussions and set up separate threads for each, with a brief introductory piece of text to provide context.

* What do we mean by cost-benefit?
* How can we classify the costs and benefits associated with IAS management?
* Examples of the use of cost and benefit analysis to support IAS management.
* What decisions are based on the analysis of management costs and benefits?
* Measurement and availability of data to support the analysis of the costs and benefits of IAS management

Please feel free to post messages and information in these streams or in the general discussion area. We can also create new streams if needed, so please send in suggestions for further questions for consideration.

I look forward to working with you all and for a stimulating discussion.

Pete Robertson

**Introductory messages for each of the stream**

**What do we mean by cost-benefit?**

The analysis of costs and benefits can include a wide range of different forms of analysis. These can include:

* Formal cost-benefit analysis - using monetary values to assess the overall economic effects of an action.
* Cost-effectiveness analysis, contrasting the costs of implementing a programme with the benefits measured in non-economic terms, for example the number of a threatened species saved.
* Multi-criteria methods – assessing a range of different criteria, often measured in different currencies, to prioritise amongst a variety of different available options.

I would suggest all of these, and others, should be included in this discussion. It would be useful to discuss the different definitions and uses of these and other approaches to analyse the costs and benefits of IAS management.

**How can we classify the costs and benefits associated with IAS management?**

This stream is to discuss, and if possible classify, the different costs and benefits associated with IAS and their management. I would start with the suggestion that there are four categories to consider.

* Costs associated with the ongoing presence of a species
* Benefits associated with the ongoing presence of a species
* Costs associated with the management of a species
* Benefits resulting from the management of a species

It would be useful to discuss the usefulness of this classification, possible alternatives, the sub-categories that sit within each and the currencies in which they are measured. For example, the costs of management include the practical economic costs of implementing a programme, but also possible costs in animal welfare terms arising from the chosen method, costs associated with social acceptability, together with the indirect costs of management, for example the contamination of ground water with a pesticide, on other aspects of biodiversity or ecosystem function.

**Examples of the use of cost and benefit analysis to support IAS management.**

What methods and approaches have been used in the context of IAS management. It would be useful to provide examples of current applications and the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. Are there existing standards or best-practice guidelines from other areas of relevance to this topic?

**Measurement and availability of data to support the analysis of the costs and benefits of IAS management**

The range of costs and benefits and the different currencies in which they are measured are large. What methods have been used to measure key elements of these costs and benefits? What existing data sources or models are available to help? How do we balance the needs for large volumes of data on large numbers of species with the practicalities of decision making? When should we use empirical data or rely to expert elicitation?

**What decisions are based on the analysis of management costs and benefits?**

Analyses of the costs and benefits of management are used to support decision making. It would be useful to gather examples of the types of decisions supported by these analysis. For example:

* Did a management programme have an overall economic benefit?
* What is the most cost-effective surveillance strategy to balance the costs of detection with the risk of incursion?
* How to prioritise a list of species for eradication to achieve the greatest benefit at lowest cost?

It would be useful to discuss and provide examples of the forms of decision making that are informed by these analyses.