

# Ecological health

4

An ecosystem is a naturally occurring community of plants, animals and micro-organisms interacting with one another and the surrounding environment.

Within healthy, self-sustaining ecosystems critical processes or functions are naturally regulated. Processes include soil formation & stability, nutrient cycling, water infiltration & holding capacity, pollination and seed production.

Ecosystems provide many “services” from which humans benefit. Ecosystem services flow from vegetation, soil, water systems, animals, other living organisms and the atmosphere to provide us with financial, ecological and cultural benefits.

Highly simplified agricultural landscapes and small patches of remnant vegetation often require increasing external inputs in order to maintain a given level of function. Highly functional landscapes may be better able to respond to natural & imposed disturbances such as fire & drought, or provide stable yields without requiring increased inputs.

