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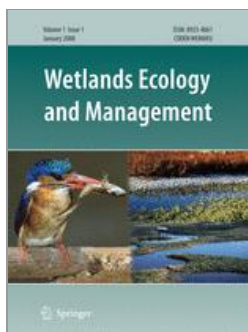
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Perceptions of biodiversity, environmental services, and conservation of planted mangroves: a case study on Nijhum Dwip Island, Bangladesh

Abstract

Restoration of mangroves is often considered a way to minimize losses incurred from their decline and to provide additional services to coastal communities. However, the success of restoration programs is often focused on biological or ecological criteria. The situation is no exception in Bangladesh, which houses the world's largest mangrove plantations. This study has been undertaken in a south-central estuarine island (Nijhum Dwip) of the Bangladesh coast and aims to understand societal perception on the achievements of a plantation program. Through 110 household interviews and seven group discussions, an assessment was conducted of peoples' perception about major flora and fauna of the mangrove ecosystem, benefits derived from the forest, present condition of the forest, causes of degradation, and ways to improve the situation. Around one-fourth of the respondents mentioned that they were highly dependent on the ecosystem. The most important perceived benefits were: provision of raw materials, prevention against natural disasters, climate regulation and soil retention. However, the majority (>80%) of the respondents perceived the ecosystem to be degrading. Encroachment and illicit felling were identified as the main causes of such degradation. In order to arrest the continued degradation allowed by conventional forest management flaws, adaptive co-management has been recommended to conserve this ecosystem in a more equitable way.



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