Forestry conservation and resource utilisation on the southern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro: trends, conflicts and resolutions.

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Abstract

Analysis of land cover and land use changes, using aerial photos taken in 1952 and 1982, demonstrates that the area coverage of the natural forest on the southern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, north-eastern Tanzania, has decreased by about 41 km^2. Some areas which were under natural forest in 1952 were under cultivation or degraded types of vegetation in 1982. The most affected areas are located along the edges of the forest reserve. Forest degradation prior to 1952 was mainly due to timber harvesting by big companies. Recent observations showed that population increase in the area has enhanced pressure on the forest through activities such as charcoal making and collection of various products (building poles, fuelwood, fodder). Illegal timber harvesting is common within the forest reserve. Vegetation degradation has caused soil erosion and general land degradation in some parts of the study area. There are 2 categories of forest reserves; the catchment forest and the productive zone. The catchment forest, aimed at conservation, is managed directly by the state. The productive zone (buffer zone) is a 0.5-mile strip along the southern and eastern edge of the forest where local people can harvest products (fuelwood, animal fodder, building poles, wood). The catchment forest and 0.5-mile strip have been under different management systems with varying objectives, some of which enhanced degradation.

Keywords

Land use; environmental degradation; deforestation; forest protection; watershed management; nature reserves; buffers; trends; East Africa; Tanzania; Kilimanjaro.