



COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS ON THE ECOLOGICAL SERVICES OF PEATLAND IN VICTORIA, ORIENTAL MINDORO, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT – Freshwater peatlands are important terrestrial carbon pool that are at risk of degradation due to anthropogenic interventions. This study described the socio-demographic characteristics of the communities in Bambanin, Victoria, Oriental Mindoro, Philippines and assessed their knowledge and awareness on the ecological services of peatlands. The research surveyed 170 randomly selected households and conducted key informant interviews. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results revealed that households are fully aware of the concept and existence of peatlands. However, there is a low understanding on the importance of peatlands and the impacts of anthropogenic activities on its overall condition. The low understanding could highly be associated with the respondents' low educational attainment and very low proportion of the respondents' population who were able to participate in the IEC activities in the site. This presented new challenges to the DENR regulators. Low environmental awareness hinders the communities to protect and conserve the peatland ecosystem that leads to the degradation of ecological services. The findings of this study will help in the formulation of mitigation policies particularly on the land use management that will address issues on peatland hydrology, agricultural activities, GHG emissions, and human encroachment to the protected area. The study also highlighted the importance of community participation in the decision-making process and implementation of local policies for sustainable peatland management. Massive IEC activities, such as informational seminars and distribution of localized IEC materials are recommended for the communities to recognize the fragility of this sensitive ecosystem.

Keywords: community knowledge and awareness, ecological services, peatland



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