

**Effects of Urban Growth on Coastal Wetlands: A Case Study of the Densu Delta Ramsar Site**

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**Abstract**

Wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems in the world and provide socio-economic services to majority of people who are vulnerable to poverty. These services, however, are reducing due to population pressure, urban growth and over exploitation. The study determined the extent of encroachment in to the wetland through built areas and the extent of vegetation degradation around the Densu Delta wetland. The study also determined the water quality of the Densu Delta wetland and residents' knowledge on the importance of wetlands. The study also focused on the effect of urban growth and encroachment on farmers and fishers around the wetland. Satellite images were used to analyse land change detections and statistically generate amount of vegetation loss around the wetlands. Surface water was collected to determine physico-chemical and bacteriological quality for comparisons to international standards. Social survey was also conducted to assess people's awareness and knowledge on wetland importance. The study showed that the Densu Delta is moderately polluted and with the current rate of population and urban growth, the Delta risks being highly polluted. The education and awareness level of residents on the use of the wetland is very low. The study recommends that alternative employment opportunities be made available for residents to reduce over exploitation of wetland resources. Improvement in sanitation facilities, traditional institution empowerment and enforcement of regulations were also recommended to preserve this important resource.

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