

## **Coastal resources management issues in the Puttalam lagoon, Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

Puttalam Lagoon is one of the productive estuaries systems in Sri Lanka with a surface area of 32700 ha. This estuarine system is very rich in natural resources such as fish, shellfish, coral reefs, sand dunes, mangroves, sea grass beds, salt marshes and beaches. Existence of these features has a close relationship with the climatic factor of the area such as temperature, rainfall pattern, evapotranspiration, salinity levels etc. All these factors have their contribution towards the rich biodiversity found in and around the area. The main occupations of the people living in the area are fishing, trading fish products and agriculture.

Human activities within and outside the system have resulted in the degradation of this estuarine system. Rapid and uncontrolled development of shrimp farming has led to serious problems related to the quality of the surface water of the lagoon and ground water. Conversion of mangrove forest and salt marsh areas for shrimp farming and other construction activities has resulted in severe degradation of these valuable ecological habitats. Use of harmful and unsustainable fishing methods has lead to the reduction of fish varieties in the lagoon and resulted in the degradation of the sea grass beds.

Some of the important short-term and long-term actions needed for an improved management of the estuarine system were identified.

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