

Land-Use Land-Cover Change of the Unawatuna Beach Area in Galle: A Special Emphasis on the Human Impact

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Coastal Eco systems are rich in natural resources and especially, tropical coastal zones in a developing country support economic development and social welfare of the country. As a result of that the coastal zone attracts people to utilize their resources. This unlimited human consumption of the resources makes a reason to rapid land-use land-cover change in the coastal area. The study area consisted of three Grama Niladari (GN) Divisions namely, Bonavista, Yaddehimulla, and Unawatuna Central located along the Unawatuna coast. The objective of the study was to identify the change of coastal land use land-cover of Unawatuna area during the period of 1956-2018. Primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data were collected via five focus group discussions, aerial photographs, google earth images and questioner survey selecting 10% of sample from each GN division. Secondary data were collected through research papers, reports and internet. The qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the collected data. Tables, maps, figures and photographs were used to present information. In 2018, more build up areas, strong road network and less coastal vegetation cover can be observed comparing with 1956 and 1994. Coastal land-use land-cover of the area had become more complex with the human activities. It was found that land-use land-cover of the area was dominated by the expansion of tourism infrastructure. Overcrowding, development activities and urbanization were identified as the main drivers that influenced land-use land-cover changes. As a result of land-use land-cover changes, negative impacts such as habitat loss for associated species, coastal erosion, and decrease of coastal vegetation cover including the reduction of aesthetic value of the area was evident. Removal of illegal constructions and introducing reservation areas will be effective to minimize the negative impact.

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