

Ministry moves to stem decline in mangrove forests

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The Planning Ministry is taking action to reduce the threats to and promote sustainable use of mangrove forests.

A statement from the ministry mangrove coverage has been declining in Trinidad, adding that declines over the seven year period were recorded in Caroni Swamp primarily due to erosion on the seaward side.

There have also been large areas of mangrove die-off north of Blue River; Godineau Swamp as mangroves were cleared to facilitate a highway, the ministry added.

This has also been the case at Cuesa River in Chaguaramas, Guaracara River, Marabella and North Claxton Bay due to development.

“In Waterloo, mangrove loss has resulted because of severe coastal erosion. In Tobago, notable decline was observed in Buccoo Bay, while minor declines were recorded in Little Rockly Bay, Louis D’or, Minister’s Bay and Petit Trou Lagoon,” the ministry said.

“While these may seem like small declines, the impacts of mangrove loss are significant. With an estimated 80 per cent of all socio-economic activities and 70 per cent of our population located near the coast, mangrove protection is vital for the safety and livelihoods of our communities,” the ministry added.

It noted that through the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), and in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (UWI), workshops and a demonstration project is being undertaken with farmers to show them alternatives to using fertilisers and pesticides.

This is with the objective of reducing pollution from agricultural run-off in the southern side of the Caroni Swamp. Farmers often use these agrochemicals, and run-off containing these pollutants negatively impact mangrove forests.

The Ministry noted that through the Improving Forestry and Protected Areas Management in T&T (IFPAMTT) project, management plans have been developed for six pilot protected areas including north-east Tobago marine area, Main Ridge Forest Reserve, Matura Forest and coastal zone, Trinity Hills Wildlife Sanctuary, and two wetlands containing mangrove forests - the Nariva Swamp and coastal zone and Caroni Swamp.

“This project has resulted in the allocation of more resources to effectively enforce protection of these areas.

“The IFPAMTT project recently saw the conclusion of a socio-economic survey on the status of forests and protected areas in T&T, which included the mangrove forests at Caroni Swamp and Nariva swamp,” the Ministry said.

It added that this survey focused on the six pilot protected areas, noting that close to TT\$18 million can be derived from effective and sustainable management of these resources from just those areas.

The ministry said this country has not been immune to mangrove loss, noting that globally, over 50 per cent of mangrove cover has been lost in the last 50 years. Much of the mangrove forests in T&T have been impacted by human activities, and are now projected to be negatively affected by sea-level rise especially where they are starved of sediment and/or constrained on the landward side by built development – a process known as coastal squeeze.

The Ministry said it also recognised the capacity of mangroves to offset carbon emissions by capturing and storing carbon dioxide and through the IMA, in collaboration with UWI, is undertaking work to measure carbon sequestration of our mangrove forests and to put a monetary value for this service.

This work is aligned to T&T’s National Development Strategy Vision 2030 which through Theme V - Placing the Environment at the Centre of Social and Economic Development, makes environmental protection and conservation an essential pillar of our developmental trajectory.

Source: <https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/ministry-moves-to-stem-decline-in-mangrove-forests-6.2.1027862.f4ff509e4f>