



ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS IN THE LOS BAÑOS SUBWATERSHED THROUGH PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

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Abstract - The Los Baños subwatershed has very high biodiversity attributed to the Makiling Forest Reserve that houses most of the country's important plant and animal biota. It provides surface water, and is also the major recharge zone for ground water that supplies most of the water needed by surrounding lowland municipalities. An initial rapid assessment of patterns and drivers of land-use changes, aimed at developing an understanding of the interactions between land cover, economic intensification and river-catchment functioning, in the Laguna Lake watershed was done through the conduct of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approaches on three local communities within the Los Baños subwatershed.

The three study sites underwent various land use changes in the past eight decades. Land use changes in the subwatershed were driven by demand for food, income, policy intervention, and sustainability of agricultural system. In the upstream site, the main issue was the lack of livelihood sources. In the midstream site, landslides and flashfloods were the main problems. In the coastal site, the productivity and the quality of fish caught from the lake significantly shrank due to uncontrolled dumping of toxic, domestic and household wastes into the lake. Various solutions were proposed by the communities to address these various environmental problems.

The study demonstrated the effectiveness of PRA approaches in involving the local community in understanding the environmental problems they face and crafting solutions to address their problems. It is envisioned that the implementation of the various proposed solutions will be successful since these emanate from the community.

Keywords Los Baños Subwatershed, Participatory Rural Appraisal, PRA, environmental degradation, land use change, Laguna Lake



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