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Comparative Study NbS and Tourism Management in Coastal Sand Dune Conservation Areas

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Abstract

Coastal ecosystems are degrading worldwide due to human activities and climate change. However, at many places along the shoreline, sand dune systems are still a vital part of the coastal defense. The awareness on the importance of sand dune conservation is growing, and actions are taken to maintain landscape features and increase resilience through Nature-based Solutions (NbS). Often by establishing a coastal geopark or a national park, sand dune areas can be conserved or enhanced. But, in the context of NbS, different benefits should come forward and therefore the conservation areas also focus on attracting tourists, stimulate local economies and provide environmental education or leisure activities for visitors. In many cases, governments are now focusing too much on the economic benefits of tourism and forget about the negative side-effects. The relationship between tourism and the natural environment is important for the future of the sand dune areas. More data is needed on this relationship, especially in this time of global pandemic when more people go out in nature, it becomes increasingly challenging to find a balance between tourism and nature conservation. For this study five categories of main tourism impacts on dune vulnerability were defined after a literature research; trampling, illegal structures, unmanaged roads and paths, waste, and leisure activities in the dunes. The management strategies to reduce these impacts are assessed. Based on the results of this study, evaluation of the implemented strategies is vital to determine their effectiveness, but is still lacking in many cases or is focused on just one factor. It will be valuable to also determine evaluation strategies for existing and emerging coastal (geo)parks in sand dune areas. Furthermore, an all-inclusive assessment is required for each specific dune area, including as many stakeholders as possible, to develop a sustainable tourism strategy.

Keywords

Coastal Sand Dunes, Tourism, Nature-based Solutions, Management Strategies