

## SCIENCE TEACHERS AND COASTAL DWELLERS PERCEPTIONS ON MANGROVE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

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Biodiversity loss in natural coastal systems such as the mangroves is a major global issue threatening sustainability. As a result, several conservation initiatives are being implemented by different organizations and national governments. Education at all levels has been responding in various ways to this global issue so as to abate the rapid depletion of the remaining mangroves. There is now an increasing interest to rehabilitate/regenerate lost mangrove stands with the involvement of people's organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions. Science education in this regard, remains inextricably linked with biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural systems. Life science teachers are considered the most fitting group to help the people understand the interdependence of various ecosystems in the coastal zone and the vitality of conserving the biodiversity of mangroves that serve communal groups on a long-term basis. The purpose of this paper is to provide contribution about science teachers' and coastal dwellers or "mangrovellers" perceptions on the extent of utilization of mangrove resources, values and benefits of mangrove biodiversity conservation and educational aspects on the conservation of mangroves in a typhoon-prone island province in Bicol region, Luzon. The general agreement of science teachers and "mangrovellers" on the ecological values such as protection from flood, erosion and other climatic factors, indicate that indeed the local people are aware of the "free" services of mangrove ecosystem. Their perceptions were found significant to the various educational initiatives (i.e. instruction, research and community service) in support of various educational management programs of higher education institutions in the Philippines (such as CMRLinks of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas) on sustainable use, rational management and biodiversity conservation (SURMABIOCON) of mangroves.