An ecosystem services approach to sustainable management of an ecologically sensitive area: The case of Grande Riviere, Trinidad.

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The community of Grande Riviere is driven largely by conservation efforts and recognition of the area as a prime nesting ground for the endangered leatherback turtles (Dermochelys coriacea) and the blue-throated piping-guan (Pipile cumanensis). Sustainability of this area depends on proper identification, quantification and management of the ecosystem services it provides, particularly within the context of climate change. The eco-tourism generated, brings significant but seasonal economic benefits during the nesting season, making community livelihoods particularly vulnerable. Secondary data revealed that turtle nesting was the fundamental ecosystem service provider to villagers and tourists through tourism as income, recreation and education. To inform the economic sustainability of this community, this research aimed to determine dependency on the beach service as a habitat, value the services provided by the environment and examine the use of natural resources and conflicts between beneficiaries and losers. Structured interviews were administered to residents of Grande Riviere and nearby communities using a convenience sampling methodology. Results indicate that dependence on the environment and awareness of ecosystem benefits is low. Other survey results were evaluated and progress towards the application of a management framework for the community is presented.

Key words: ecologically sensitive area, ecosystem services, community livelihoods, climate change, human geography.

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FFA-W, John Spence Building
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Light refreshment provided