



## World Atlas of Mangroves



### Background

Human societies and coastal ecosystems are very closely interlinked. Currently, about 55 percent of the world's population inhabits coastal areas and draws heavily on coastal and marine ecosystems for food, housing, industrialization, transportation, recreation, waste disposal and reclamation for other uses. Coastal ecosystems in tropical and sub-tropical regions include coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds, and are among the world's richest storehouses of biological diversity and primary productivity. Globally, nearly two-thirds of all fish harvested depend on coastal ecosystems for various stages in their life cycle. However, these coastal and marine resources are under threat from a range of destabilizing effects due to human activities.

Mangrove ecosystems are unique and highly productive and constitute a critical element of the coastal hydrosphere. Tens of millions of people around the tropics and sub-tropics depend on mangrove forests as a source of fuelwood, charcoal, timber, and other non-timber products. Similar numbers rely on coastal fishery resources within or linked to mangrove ecosystems as one of most important source of livelihoods to coastal dwellers. In a less documented role, mangroves defend many coastlines from flooding and erosion, protecting the lives and livelihoods of untold numbers of people. However, mangrove ecosystems have also been damaged by human activities including urban development, agriculture, development of shrimp aquaculture and pollution. Drastic loss of mangrove forests has been observed in tropical and sub-tropical countries all over the world. The conservation of mangroves is essential for the survival of the two other major tropical ecosystems - coral reefs and seagrass beds.

With the publication of *the World Atlas of Mangroves*, the second edition of an Atlas first published in 1997 by ISME, in collaboration with ITTO and WCMC, the co-operating institutions listed below aim to further promote the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of resource-rich mangrove ecosystems, which are highly beneficial for the overall goal of sustainable management in integrated coastal ecosystems.



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## The Atlas

The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Atlas is intended for managers, conservation experts and scientists. It will help in decision-making related to conservation and development schemes. It will also strengthen awareness for the protection and sustainable management of mangrove habitats not only at the rural community level but also at the political level. The Atlas will be based on standardized evaluation of existing data, leading to the development of a reliable and consistent baseline.

The Atlas will include national and local-level case studies and thematic case studies that cut across national boundaries. It will also include an overall evaluation of the relationships between human societies and mangrove ecosystems as well as the global levels of threat to these precious natural resources. Country data will include: profile, map, threat data where available, and updated information on the current extent and changes in mangrove areas over time. Descriptive information will focus on true mangrove tree species, although case studies will provide additional information on other mangrove-dependent species. Inputs from mangrove specialists throughout the world will be sought. The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *World Atlas of Mangroves* will have 380-400 pages, including 60 full-page maps, colour plates and index. The expected publication date is late 2005.

## Partners and Contact Information

The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *World Atlas of Mangroves* is being prepared as a joint initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Society for Mangrove Ecosystems (ISME), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Man and the Biosphere Programme (UNESCO-MAB), the United Nations Environment Programme - World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and the United Nations University - International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH).

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