Kenya Tana Delta generates millions annually from its ecosystems

30 September 2016

The expansive mangrove forests that dot Tana Delta in the Kenyan coast generates 2.5 million U.S. dollars annually through a range of ecosystem services like flood control, provision of clean water and energy sources, fisheries and building materials, a study has said.

According to Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity Services of Tana River Basin launched Thursday in Nairobi, Kenya’s longest river could provide answer to poverty, hunger and energy deficit if its resources were utilized prudently.

Conservation group, Wetlands International (Ramsar Convention International Organization Partner), and a host of partners carried out the study to evaluate the economic potential of the Tana River basin.

Julie Mulonga, Kenya program manager with Wetlands International, said the Tana Delta is endowed with abundant resources that can be harnessed to propel Kenya’s socio-economic progress.

"The Tana delta has already been declared Wetlands of International Importance under Ramsar Convention - Tana River Delta Ramsar Site. Millions of people depend on its ecosystem services like fresh air, water and fisheries," Mulonga said.

She urged concerted efforts to boost conservation of the Tana River basin that is currently grappling with ecological depletion linked to population pressure and climate change.

The Tana River basin covers 22 percent of Kenya’s land mass and is home to 18 percent of the country’s population.

It is the source of 80 percent of clean drinking water supplied in Nairobi and sustains reservoirs that generate 70 percent of hydropower in Kenya.

According to the report, the current value of electricity generated from reservoirs along the Tana Delta is estimated at 400 million dollars annually.

It also revealed that irrigated agriculture sustained by the Tana River basin has the potential to produce 64,000 tons of rice and maize every year.
Joakim Harlin, Chief of freshwater ecosystems unit at UNEP, said that attaching monetary value to ecosystems would strengthen efforts to conserve them for future generations.

"Appreciating the true value of freshwater ecosystems like the Tana Delta is key to achieve the agenda 2030 on inclusive development," Harlin said.

He underscored the critical role of community led interventions to reverse degradation of Tana River basin.

Source: www.coastweek.com

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