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Risk of Forest Fire in Uva Province of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The forest fire is influenced by both natural and human factors. Previous studies proved that most of the forest fires are caused by human factors in Sri Lanka. The increasing trend of temperature, dry spells and less rainfall and humidity might be the triggering factors for spreading the forest fire. The objective of this research is to examine the causes of forest fire in Badulla and Moneragala districts of the Uva province in Sri Lanka and to examine the measures that can be taken to minimise it. Apart from the secondary data the primary data was obtained through questionnaire survey and focused group interviews. The questionnaire survey has been conducted for Haldummulla and Ella DS divisions from Badulla district, and Moneragala, Wellawaya, and Buttala DS divisions from Moneragala district. 30 households have been surveyed from the random sampling. 93% respondents stated that the forest fire occurs from June to September and with the peak in August. The high temperature, less rainfall and the low humidity are recorded in this month. During this period entire area of Uva province get dry due to the inverse direction of the monsoon rainfall. Dry mix evergreen and sub mountain forests are predominant in this area. 87% respondents stated that forest fire is purposely done for hunting purposes. Animals such as bulls, rabbits, deer, and pheasants are targeted by hunters. Some wild animals come to eat the ashes after burn the forest. People set up the animal-traps to capture animals when they fire the forest. 26% said that forest fire is done for making "jungle-based feedings" for cattle herds. They expect fresh grass to bloom in the rainy season by setting fires in the dry season. Burning of degraded forests for shifting cultivation and Bee honey collection are the other reasons. They put smoke to remove flies, but after collecting beehive they drop the firing stuffs in the forest. Forest fires rarely pose any threat to human life or property. Environmental damage and economic losses caused by forest fires might be greater in many forms. When a forest fire occurs, the Forest department and Disaster management centre send the SMS message to aware the community. The notice boards with essential information are set-up in the forest fire sensitive areas. There is a model village in Sadinnawala, demonstrating the fire breaks such as (Green belts; corridors with Hana trees) and (Mix belts; corridors without and with floras) as Buffer zones to minimise the forest fires. Theses barricades are maintained by the Forest Department with the support of the village community.

Keywords: Forest fire, Human factors, Risk, Green belt, Model village

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