

An Overview of the Current Status of Lake Jipe and Its Biodiversity Dilemma

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Abstract : Lake jipe, a shared water resource between Kenya and Tanzania located at the East African Coast, is under multiple pressures. The lake has receded from 30Km² to 27.32Km² due to prolonged dry spells and intensified water abstraction for irrigation and re-route to Mungu ya Nyumba Dam in Tanzania. Agricultural activities have significantly (90%) contributed to the lake levels decline and further affected the lakes' aquatic biodiversity. Among the most affected are the commercially important endemic fish species of the lake, of which *Oreochromis jipe* has experienced the greatest decline. Overfishing, use of illegal unreported and unregulated fishing gears, intensified fishing along protected fish breeding areas as well as poor management and uncoordinated conservation efforts have significantly contributed to the decline of fish catches from 348 kg of *O. jipe* in 2016 to 90 kg daily catches in 2022. Therefore, the lake is on the verge of extinction if no action is taken. This calls for awareness of the significance of the L. Jipe ecosystems and its immediate and long-term benefits. Further, there is a need to revive alternative economic activities, including aquaculture and sustainable agriculture, to offer alternative livelihood to local communities.

Keywords : biodiversity, ecosystem, conservation, fisheries

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