

Effects of land use and protected area management on socioeconomic conditions of forest dependent communities: a case study in the North Negros Natural Park, Philippines

(Manuscript under peer review, full manuscript available upon request)

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1 **Abstract:** Forest-dependent communities in the tropics typically rank lower in socioeconomic
2 status compared to agricultural and urban communities. Protecting the remaining forests for
3 their ecological function and increasing the livelihood choices of forest dependent
4 communities is a difficult task. Community forestry management strategies have been
5 developed, but most studies find that such programs provide benefits to only a small portion
6 of the targeted communities and often focus on profitable species that do not restore
7 ecosystem function. Additional conflicts can arise from protected area management that
8 targets biodiversity conservation but may restrict resource access to forest dependent
9 communities. In this study, we investigate how land use, land use planning, and protected area
10 management affects communities in and around a major forest reserve in the Negros Island in
11 the Philippines. We conduct a large-scale socioeconomic analysis at the provincial level using
12 secondary data derived from government statistics. At a more local scale, we compare the
13 socioeconomic status of communities close to a protected forest with more distant
14 communities to see what costs or benefits are associated with being next to a protected area.
15 Community level analysis shows that resources are more abundant in areas close to protected
16 areas where population densities are low. While rural communities have fewer amenities and
17 infrastructure than urban centers in general, we find that those communities close to a
18 protected forest where non-destructive activities are allowed are better-off than other rural
19 communities farther from protected areas.