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Title: Attitudes of pastoral communities towards conservation and alternatives to forest resources: case study from north-west Himalayas, India



The paper examines attitudes of pastoral communities of Dachigam National Park (DNP) in north-west Himalayas of India. Household surveys were conducted for Gujjar (8) and Bakerwal (32) settlements. Fixed response questionnaire was used to collect data on attitudes of pastoral communities towards conservation and alternatives to forest resources. These communities have traditionally depended on DNP for grazing livestock - 27.5% of respondents reported degradation in grassland and forest ecosystems of DNP. Major dependence was for grazing livestock, 80% households considered fuel wood, fodder, timber and water as major benefits derived from DNP. 72.5% of households wanted to conserve DNP for fuel wood, timber and future generations. While 80% favored conserving plants, 77.5% were against conservation of animals, specially the Himalayan black bear due to incidences of human-wildlife conflicts. 87.5% were not in favour of growing fodder as they did not feel the need to do so, 57.5% were ready to agitate against restrictions and 32.5% were ready to steal. However, 10% were willing to adopt alternatives to grazing in DNP. For long term conservation of DNP, pastoralists should be brought into the mainstream by providing education to younger generation so that they can benefit from governmental programs and from extension services. Forest department should establish permanent communication with them and utilize their knowledge of the forest by involving them in conservation and monitoring of DNP which will help reduce their antagonism towards wildlife and park authorities. Involving them in conservation related work can also help fulfill the conservation goals in the region. Keywords: Dachigam national park, conservation, forest resources, pastoral communities, attitudes