

ABSTRACT

Coastal wetlands are an important part of the mosaic of habitats that make up the South Australian coast. They perform a range of essential environmental functions, are highly productive and support regional economies. However, coastal wetlands in South Australia are under threat. Key threats are induced by development activities and sea level rise. Coastal wetlands perform a range of environmental functions including filtering of land-based run-off to the sea, buffering the coast from storms and wave energy, providing feeding grounds and habitat for an abundance of species both terrestrial and marine. Ecosystems can provide a range of provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services. Analysing ecosystems using an ecosystem services framework has proven beneficial in developing biodiversity conservation strategies. An opportunity to investigate Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) locally has arisen through a coastal reclamation project implemented by the Goyder Institute of South Australia. One key element of the project is an ecosystem service evaluation, part of which is trying to understand cultural values attached to the coastal wetlands north of Adelaide. Cultural values are rarely considered in planning and decision making in South Australia. This study is designed to investigate the cultural and social values that the population living adjacent to the coastal wetlands of northern Adelaide, as well as those who visit and recreate, or use this coastline. Three dimensions of cultural values regarding cultural practices, environmental spaces and cultural ecosystems benefits are considered in this study. The aim of this study is to understand the cultural values associated with Northern Adelaide coastal wetlands and to contribute to the ecosystem service valuation of the Goyder Institute project. In this study, mixed methods were incorporated into the survey questions. Two data collection approaches; online survey and household questionnaires were used in this study. A total of 85 questionnaires were received and SPSS software was used to analyse the data. The results of this study show the interaction between people and the coastal region based on their cultural practices, places and benefits. In addition, the results show the perception of the respondents for the development of coastal wetland. The conclusion can be drawn that taking into consideration cultural values is vital for enhancing environmental planning and management. Finally, the outcomes of this study will help decision makers better understand cultural values associated with coastal wetlands in northern Adelaide, South Australia.

Key words: cultural values, cultural ecosystems services, coastal wetlands, cultural practices, cultural places and cultural benefits