

The Njoro River near Njoro Town. Stagnating and polluted water, and severely eroded banks. The main problem is the destruction of the Indigenous Catchment resulting in seasonal flows. Sort that out and then concentrate on issues along the course of the river.

The last Newsletter was written in December 2006 and was headed "A review of commercial forestry around Molo and Koibatek Forests within the Mau". The conclusions reached were that:

(a) The Government's achievements within its own plantations were very poor.

(b) The Government's policies and attitudes towards the private farmer planting for commercial purposes on his land were unhelpful, despite many statements to the contrary.

2. No comment was made on the state of the Indigenous Forest which continued to be destroyed. Now that a new Government is in place it is appropriate to review such progress, or

lack of it, in affording the Indigenous Forest the protection that it deserves, and to examine whether the "authorities" have adopted more productive policies in their own commercial activities, and in their attitude to those who plant on their own land.

3. To take the Indigenous Forest first:

(a) Throughout 2007 encroachment continued, and even in the few areas where evictions had taken place people were allowed back towards the end of the year, presumably as part of electioneering. The Government seeking short term gains to the disadvantage of the country's long term future. We have become accustomed to that.

(b) On Jan 23rd 2008 Christian Lambrechts of The United Nations Environmental Programme, (UNEP), and Michael Gachanja of the Kenya Forests Working Group, (KFWG) arranged a flight over the Mau, courtesy of Boskovitch Air Charters, to whom many thanks for their generosity, to take representatives from the Ewaso Ngiro South Development Authority (ENSDA), the Narok Forest Officer, and others from the area, over the Mau so that they could see what had been going on. The flight covered the S and E Maasai boundary, the Maasai Mau/Ol Posimoru boundary, the NE and SW Transmara boundaries, the 2001 excision boundary of the SW Mau, and the W part of the Maasai Mau in Narok South District.

Photo taken at the Red Arrow showing the destruction of the Maasai Mau.

c.1) The Maasai Mau is Trust Land Forest managed by the Narok County Council. Encroachment and settlement was extensive and intense.

c.2) The Ol Posimoru Forest Reserve is a gazetted forest managed by the KFS. Encroachment is extensive, and the complete destruction of the forest corridor linking the Maasai Mau/Ol Posimoru block with the SW Mau/ Transmara block is imminent.

c.3) SW Mau Forest Reserve. A gazetted forest managed by the KFS. While those who had settled in 2005 and earlier, along the excision boundary to the east were later evicted, settlement was taking place once more.

c.4) Transmara Forest Reserve. A gazetted forest managed by the KFS. Still relatively intact.

The Recommendations were:

1. To present the findings to the new Narok County Council for appropriate actions.
2. To request the KFS Director to provide additional support to prevent further encroachment, in particular into Ol Pusimoru Forest. The DC, Narok is ready to join hands with the KFS.
3. To initiate as promptly as possible, the marking of the forest boundaries of the Maasai Mau

Forest starting with the Eastern side.

4. The findings of the aerial recce to be presented to the MM Forest project implementers and partners at Narok.

5. The Gov to settle those with titles elsewhere, and to consider removing those without title.

3(a) A second aerial recce, organised and paid for by UNEP, was carried out on Feb 19th with the Head of Enforcement, and the Head of Natural Forests, KFS. Following this, statements were made that it was essential to protect the Indigenous Forests. Prof ole Kiyapi, the PS/MENR asked Christian Lambrechts to prepare a Power point presentation on Kenya's declining forests to be shown to all the Permanent Secretaries. (Comment; this has been done to no avail several times in the past).

3(b). On May 7th 2008 Lambrechts arranged yet another flight over the Mau. It was expected that the following would participate. John Michuki, Minister for MENR; Prof ole Kiyapi, PS MENR; Dr Mwinzi, Director General of NEMA; who went. Hassan Noor, PC Rift Valley, and Dr Julius Kipngetich, Director Kenya Wildlife Service, both of whom sent their deputies, and Kombo Mwero, PS Min of Forestry and Wildlife, and David Mbugua, Director KFS, who did not appear.

3(c). In the Daily Nation of May 28th, 2008 it was announced "State moves to save the Mau Forest". This followed a flight over the Mau by the Prime Minister, and organised by him the previous day,

on which Lambrechts was the navigator/guide. The main Editorial of May 28th was headed "The Mau must be restored at all costs".

For the first time we are seeing very positive statements coming from those at the top of government and we must hope that this is the beginning of restoring the Mau to good health. Indeed the Prime Minister has stated that everyone within the forest boundaries must move out by Oct 30th, with those with titles being compensated. THIS IS VERY WELCOME NEWS AND SHOULD RECEIVE WIDE SUPPORT.

3(d). However, there is no room for complacency. The informed article in the East African Wildlife Society's magazine, Swara, of Jan/March 08 emphasises the critical position of the Eburru Forest, part of the greater Mau. The authors Solomon Kirui and Nigel Carnelly are of the opinion that "there is little prospect in sight of an end to the illegal plunder of what remains of the Eburu Forest- until, that is , the forest itself has been exhausted."

It is past Governments, which are responsible for the sorry state of affairs. It is only the Government which has the ability to take the steps which are necessary to start the long process of recovery.

UNEP, and, in particular, Christian Lambrechts, have fought tirelessly to bring the plight of the Mau to the attention of the authorities. They have been actively assisted by Michael Gachanja of the Kenya Forests Working Group. Kenyans should be grateful to them.

1. The Role of donors and NGOs in restoring the Mau's water basin to good health.

Many claims have been made about restoration being about to start; of the huge amounts of cash that are available etc. But when a search is made for these proposed activities nothing can be found on the ground.

For example.

(a) Announced in the Nation of May 16th 2007 that sh35 million had been given by the European Union for "The Molo Basin Integrated

Left: The large area of KFS land in the background was felled in the mid 90s. It then lay fallow till 06 when it was replanted with poor results, and replanted again in 07, again with poor results. The tall trees, remnants from a commercial plantation have recently been pruned. For what purpose? Right: A private commercial gum plantation supported by Fomawa

Conservation and Development Project". It was then stated that, "The project's aim is to provide water for the local communities by sinking boreholes and constructing nine dams for rain water harvesting. It will also incorporate the establishment and development of nature based enterprises including beekeeping, dairy goats, pasture bulking!! and eco-tourism".

Further to this announcement there was an article in the Nation of June 7th 2007 that there was KShs. 436 million for the rehabilitation of the five major lakes in the Rift Valley, Nakuru, Naivasha, Elmentaita, Baringo and Bogoria, funded by the European Union. This to be done through local communities facilitated by government agencies and other partners. A year later there is no evidence that anything worthwhile has been achieved either on the Molo river, or, as far as we can see, elsewhere.

(b) Egerton University has had a project since 01 to restore the health of the Njoro River which feeds Lake Nakuru. Their friends from Wyoming University in the US come out to help them to decide what to do. But thus far they have done nothing of value.

There are other examples, and it is very disappointing that so many projects are directed so badly that they achieve nothing. A mammoth waste of time and money. When will common sense and realism prevail?

COMMERCIAL FORESTRY

1. It was stated when the Kenya Forest Service took over from the Forestry

Department in early 2007 that a commercial attitude would be adopted. There has been no sign of this and the gross ineptitude continues. Two of the three big millers continue to get timber from the KFS apparently at prices below market value, and the standard of the replanting done by Comply is mainly poor. Stands of timber within the area in which Fomawa operates have not been auctioned. We were told by the Director, KFS, that in 2007 they had sold gums as poles for Kshs. 300 when the going rate was Kshs. 2500. We had a brief meeting with Prof ole Kiyiapi, PS MENR, and told him of our concerns about the Government's regulations which were obstacles to the greater development of commercial forestry on private farms, and cost money as well, and his reaction was that in order to give the Indigenous Forests the protection they deserved these regulations and permits were needed. It's about time the government put its house in order, and listened to the farmer. The fact is that permits to fell and transport apply to farm produce, and not to timber stolen from the Government's forests.

We have continued to promote the idea that the KFS should lease its commercial forestry land, which in some cases has been fallow for over twelve years, to competent tenants and we know of one Tea Company which has made a formal request to lease land. They have had no response. While that is unfortunate and demonstrates an unwillingness to utilize an idle asset, we believe that the proposed terms of the so called

"Concessions" are so one sided that no prospective tenant of sound mind would take them up. There have been many statements from the Government about encouraging investments by businesses and private landowners in commercial forestry, but all our attempts to discover what these 'encouragements' are have produced nothing. Rhetoric and nothing more!!

2. Farmers are expanding their commercial forestry with a view to producing poles for KPL which has stated that in 2007 they used 450,000 poles. They got 70,000 within Kenya and imported the rest from as far as Chile and Finland. In 2007, 250 farmers planted over 350,000 trees mainly with Fomawa's help, and generally to a high standard. The Gum Growers' Group was formed in 2007 as a subsidiary of Fomawa.

Its main objectives are to:-

(a) Encourage the growing of gums-for-poles on a commercial scale on private land.

(b) To assess the quality of all the plantings with a view to giving informed advice on what to grow where, which clones suit what area, can seedlings outperform clones etc, and to coordinate with Tree Biotech from whom the clonal crosses come.

(c) To coordinate the marketing effort so that growers get a good price for their poles relative to the cost of imports, and a fair price for those trees not suitable for poles which are sold as firewood.

The price paid by commercial users of fuelwood in their factories represents a cost of less than one third of using oil. There is scope to move the price up thus

Students at Rongai Boys Secondary School admire the clonal gum trees they have planted with help from Fomawa. Within ten years these will be sold as poles to KPL thus generating a substantial amount of cash which will be used for development at the school"

giving an incentive to the farmer, while continuing to give a saving over oil. We are trying to educate farmers on the true market value of their gums trees.

(d) To persuade the Government not to sell their timber at below market rates. Despite many assurances that the Government's intention is to assist the private grower there is no evidence of this. The burdensome rules over permits continue, and our pleas to have the sale of trees/timber by the farmer exempt from tax and VAT have fallen on deaf ears. All our efforts to have a dialogue with the authorities have failed. BIG BROTHER KNOWS BEST!!

Fomawa's efforts with farmers have resulted in more commercial forestry being done around the Mau

than in any other part of the country.

3. Planting in Schools

With the help of funding from the Finns Fomawa started a "tree planting in schools project" in 2006 which was a great success. With further assistance from a UK based donor, seventy six schools now participate.

It is anticipated that within ten years the schools will be able to sell their trees for poles and firewood thus generating sufficient cash to build a classroom, or install guttering and water tanks. There is a queue of schools wanting our advice and funding, the latter being mainly used for the stock proof fencing without which the goats always win. This scheme has many advantages. The school makes money while the

pupils, their parents and staff, and many of the local population see that commercial planting can be a success. The key for success is the quality and frequency of the advice given by Fomawa's field officers. If adequate care is given in the first year then the trees look after themselves.

CONCLUSION

(a) The Indigenous Catchment

The Prime Minister has stated that he intends to give the forest the protection it deserves "for the benefit of all Kenyans". It is the first time that such a statement has been made and we must hope that it will be carried through.

(b) Commercial Forestry

The Kenya Forest Service which took over from the Forestry Dept in early 2007 has not performed any better than its predecessor WITH ITS OWN COMMERCIAL FORESTRY. MEANWHILE, IT PERSISTS IN ITS OBSTRUCTIVE DETERMINATION NOT TO LISTEN TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

Fomawa is continuing with its efforts to have the Indigenous Forest protected and to have in place Government's policies which actively assist the private farmer to invest in commercial forestry. There is a very long way to go, bearing in mind that success is more likely if all Kenyans are willing to join in the campaign for better things

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