

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS



**MONITORING LAND COVER CHANGES AND THE IMPACTS OF THE  
RECLAMATION INITIATIVE - CASE OF MAU FOREST COMPLEX**

By

**GATHURU, Simon N. (BSc.)**

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
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## Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other university.

Signature.....

Date.....

**GATHURU, Simon Ndarao, BSc. Hons**

The undersigned supervisors certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance by the University of Nairobi a thesis entitled **Monitoring Land Cover Changes and The Impacts of The Reclamation Initiative - Case of Mau Forest Complex**, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science (Physics).

### 1. Dr. Collins Omulo Mito

Department of Physics  
University of Nairobi

Signature.....

Date.....

### 2. Prof. Giovanni Laneve

Dipartimento di Ingegneria Astronautica,  
Elettrica e Energetica(DIAEE) University of  
Rome "La Sapienza"

Signature.....

Date.....

## **Dedication**

George Munyua Gathuru  
1996-2011

## Abstract

The Mau Forest Complex is the largest closed canopy forest in Eastern Africa, covering about 400,000 hectares. It is of great value to Kenya and its neighbors as it supports hydroelectric-power generation, the tourism industry and agriculture in this region. Despite this, over 100,000 hectares of the forest has been destroyed over the past few decades largely due to human encroachment. Using satellite based measurements, this study sort to establish whether the current restoration and conservation policies are producing any noticeable improvement in the condition of the forest. There was also an attempt to determine how vegetation in the forest relates to rainfall and Land Surface Temperature (LST). By understanding how the forest is responding to current restoration and conservation initiative, and the influence of climatological variables, better restoration and conservation strategies can be developed. To achieve these objectives, the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) MOD13Q1 and MOD11C3 products were used to estimate vegetation density/vigor and LST variation respectively. Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission (TRMM) 3B43 rainfall data was used to estimate the rainfall received by the forest over the period of interest.

The Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) time series, extracted from MOD13Q1 data, were divided into two groups; one covering 2001-2007 and the other 2008-2013. Ordinary Least Square (OLS) slopes were then used to estimate the changes in the trend of the NDVI time series during the two periods. The result show that there was a general increase in NDVI values within the forest in 2008-2013, with over 26% of the Mau Forest Complex recording positive NDVI slopes during this period, up from only 7% in 2001-2007. The regression analysis results show that there is a weak correlation between NDVI and Rainfall  $R^2$  values less than 0.5. It was also observed that vegetation in the Mau Forest Complex takes between one and two months to respond to changes in precipitation. On the other hand, there is a strong LST-NDVI relationship, with some blocks recording  $R^2$  values greater than 0.7. Generally, this study showed that the restoration and conservation initiative is producing positive results, hence more resources should be allocated to it. Higher spatial resolution sensors should also be used to determine how the forest is changing at a finer spatial scale.

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## List of Acronyms

AFRI	Aerosol Free Vegetation Index
AGPI	Adjusted Geostationary Observation Environment Satellite (GOES) Precipitate Index
ARVI	Atmospheric Resistant Vegetation Index
AVHRR	Advanced Very High Resolution Radiometer
BISE	Best Index Slope Extraction
CERES	Clouds and the Earth's Radiant Energy System
CMORPH	Climate Prediction Center Morphing method
CVMVC	Constrained View Maximum Value Compositing method
DIAEE	Dipartimento di Ingegneria Astronautica, Elettrica e Energetica
EMR	ElectroMagnetic Radiation
ENSO	El Niño Southern Oscillation
ENVI	ENvironment for Visualizing Images
ETM	Earth Trends Modeler
ETM+	Enhanced Thematic Mapper Plus
EVI	Enhanced Vegetation Index
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GOES	Geostationary Observation Environment Satellite
GPCP	Global Precipitation Climatology Project
GV	Ground Validation
LIS	Light Imaging Sensor
LST	Land Surface Temperature
MODIS	Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer
MRT	MODIS Re-projection Tool
MSAVI	Modified Soil Adjusted Vegetation Index
MSS	Multispectral Scanner
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASDA	National Space Development Agency
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NetCDF	Network Common Data Form