



THARAKA NITHI COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCE PROFILE REPORT

THE STATE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY



PROFILE PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

DEVELOPMENT TRAINING AND RESEARCH AFRICA ([DETRA-AFRICA](#))

Under Project Titled “Increased Citizenry Participation in Governance and Sustainable utilization of Natural Resources in Tharaka Nithi, Nyeri and Meru Counties, Kenya

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|--------|-------|---------|
| Kijege | 32.89 | Tharaka |
| Ntugi | 13.79 | Tharaka |

Introduction

Tharaka Nithi County found in the Eastern region of Kenya and is composed of four districts which are: Meru South, Maara, Tharaka North and Tharaka South. The County is endowed with a variety of natural resources which ranges from national parks, rivers, hills, wetlands, iron ore deposits, forests, bushlands, grasslands, mountains, among others.

The County has bi-modal rainfall pattern with the rains falling during the months of March to May and October to December. The rainfall is favorable for cultivating *tea, Coffee, maize, Cow peas, pigeon peas, Tobacco* in the highland areas of the county and *Cow peas, pigeon Peas, Tobacco, Cotton, Green grams* plus many other food crops which are drought resistant.

1. Key Natural Resources in Tharaka Nithi County

1.1 Forests and vegetation cover

Tharaka Nithi County has several forests and a variety of vegetation covers. The total area covered by forest in Tharaka Nithi County is 2110.50 km² some of which are key water catchments in Kenya. These forests are summarized in table 1 below:

Table 1: Forests in Tharaka Nithi County

| Forest | Area km ² | District where it is located |
|-------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Mount Kenya | 1986.56 | Meru South and Maara |
| Kikingo | 11.98 | Tharaka |
| Maatha | 6.29 | Tharaka |
| Mutejwa | 13.12 | Tharaka |
| Kiagu | 13.55 | Tharaka |
| Njuguni | 19.78 | Meru South and Maara |
| Munguni | 1.88 | Tharaka |
| Mutharanga | 2.92 | Tharaka |
| Kierera | 7.74 | Tharaka |

Mount Kenya forest is one among the key forests in the County and it covers a total area of 1986.56 km². The area bordering Mt Kenya forest is the highest part of the County and receives fairly reliable rainfall which decreases as you go to the lower parts of Tharaka districts which are semi arid areas. The County also contains numerous bushlands, woodlands, barren land and cultivated land under agriculture. The county has a total 167.07 km² under Bushland while 1996.96 km² is on agriculture. A total of 31.41 Km² is barren land while 119.32 km² contains woodland. (See Tharaka Nithi Map No 4).

It is worth to note that, these forests are key livelihood sources of the local communities residing in Tharaka Nithi County since they provide resources such as water, timber, firewood, grass resins, honey among others. These forests are heavily exploited for timber and firewood for domestic use. Eco-tourism is also being done in these forests but on a small scale.

1.2 Landforms in Tharaka Nithi County

The main Landforms in Tharaka Nithi County are mountains, hills and mountain foot ridges. Mt Kenya is the main mountain in Tharaka Nithi County which covers an area of 6117.04 km². The topography of the county is greatly influenced by the Mount Kenya volcanic activity creating a V shaped valleys within which main tributaries of river Tana flow originating from Mt Kenya Forest. Landforms within the County are represented in table 2 below.

Kurugucha, Muthi, Irigu, Kamuu, Naka, Tharia, Thangatha, Mataka, Kambogo, Nziitu, Gituambugi among others. For more details, refer to Tharaka Nithi Map No (5).

However, the rivers have low flows during the dry season. Due to environment degradation, levels of are on downward trend. The river water is also turbid due to cultivation of the river banks and water source catchments which are under intensive farming using unsustainable methods. Most permanent rivers above have capacity for development of micro hydro power generation sites. These points' rivers include:

1. Machui falls in Naka River
2. Two sites along river Ruguti.
3. Kanda Kame and Enamwamba falls in south Maara River
4. Tungu river near the forest
5. Nithi river in the forest
6. South Maara in Mount Kenya Forest

The county also contains numerous wetlands, however due to the heavy rains that were being experienced in the region; it was difficult to map them due to demarcation problems and establishment of temporary and permanent wetlands.

Table 2: Mountains and hills in Tharaka Nithi County

| Mountain/hill name | Area in Km ² | District located |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Mount Kenya | 5959.68 | Meru South and Maara |
| Kikingo | 23.95 | Meru South and Maara |
| Kiagu | 13.54 | Meru South and Maara |
| Maatha | 6.29 | Meru South and Maara |
| Ntugi | 13.79 | Tharaka |
| Mutejwa | 39.37 | Tharaka |
| Njuguni | 19.78 | Meru South and Maara |
| Kijege | 32.89 | Meru South and Maara |
| Kierera | 7.74 | Meru South and Maara |

(For more information, check on Tharaka Nithi map No. 2)

1.3 Water resources in Tharaka Nithi County

Tharaka Nithi County contains many streams most of which are perennial. The County also contains rivers that are big having drained all the streams upstream. Most of water resources have their catchment in Mount Kenya which drains eastwards to river Tana. The Main Rivers originating from Mt. Kenya forest in the County are: Tana, Thuchi, Ruguti, Maara, Nithi and Mutonga all of which flow eastwards. The drainage pattern in the County is characterized by rivers and streams draining into the Indian Ocean through Tana River. Other rivers in Tharaka Nithi County which originate from Nyambene hills in Meru County include: Kithenu, Kiriria, Kathengecha, Kathita, Thanantu, Thangatha, Mubuura, Ngoru, Ura, kambogo, Mutonga. Other rivers in the County, among them include; Tungu, Nithi, South Maara, North Maara, Gituambugi, Mwirithi, Namakithie, Tungu,

1.3. National Parks and other tourist sites in Tharaka Nithi County

In Tharaka Nithi County contain two national parks as shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: National Parks in Tharaka Nithi County

| National park | Size |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Meru North National park | 0.34 |
| Mt. Kenya forest national park | 352.96 |

(For more information, check on Tharaka Nithi County maps No. 2&6)

Other tourist attraction sites in the County include: Njuguni Hill, Mount Kenya in Meru South and Maara Districts and Ntugi, Mutejwa, Kijege, Kierera, Kiagu and Kikingo Hills in Tharaka Disticts. The water falls indicated in the earlier

chapters also form part of tourist attraction in the District.