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## A Study of soil erosion using USLE method: A Cast Study of Temghar Catchment area.

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### **Abstract:**

‘Land degradation’ means reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rain fed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities. In this paper, universal soil loss equation (USLE), a quantitative method of predicting soil erosion losses from rainfall, and other factors is used. Present study evaluates only the physical factor of Mutha River Catchment in order to arrive at the maximum potential loss, therefore the values of cropping management and erosion control practice factors have been taken as a unity. This paper also studies prioritization of sub watersheds for conservation planning based on soil loss estimation. This study finds that reduction in the soil loss is observed to the areas where dense forest cover patches are in existence. Hill summits, hill fringe slopes are subjected to severe soil loss and accounts for about 1.3871% of the land surface area. For simplification six soil grades have been set up in by combining soils having ranges in Storie index rating. It can be observed from this paper that productivity classes of grade 1 and 2 are almost absent in the study area and productivity from fair to non agricultural land do exist in the study area. Grade 3 and 4 of fair and poor productivity almost comprises 73.74% of the entire catchment area and 84.99% of the total land surface area. It can be therefore said that, soil productivity in the study area is not at all good; however, some of the land facets are amenable and can be regenerated for optimum potential desired land use.

**Keywords:** land Degradation, universal soil loss equation (USLE), land use, soil erosion, watershed, conservation planning, Mutha River Catchment

### **Introduction:**

Land degradation means reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rainfed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands

resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns, such as:(i) soil erosion caused by wind and/or water; (ii) Deterioration of the physical, chemical and biological or economic properties of soil; and (iii) long-term loss of natural vegetation.” land degradation primarily relates to a reduction in soil quality and quantity as an input to the production of agricultural crops. But there are also off-site effects, such as loss of watershed function. This section of the chapter related with land degradation pertaining to soil cover loss due to geomorphic process as well as evaluation of land resources which dealt with the assessment of land and soil resources in the study area to infer general restrictions of land and soil resources for optimum utilization this will pertaining to land capability, land suitability classification as well as land productivity assessment. This exercise is thought to be very essential component of the present study which will form the basis for the soil suitability for rehabilitation of the people in the native area. As mentioned earlier, exploratory land resource field studies have been carried out this gives a rapid general appraisal of an area. Normally this is either to determine what further studies are required or to locate suitable sites for specified development.

**Study Area:**

The area selected for the present study is a catchment area of Temghar lake catchment from western Maharashtra. The Temghar dam commenced in the year 2000. The dam has been constructed keeping in view the increasing population of Pune city and thus linked to Khadakwasla irrigation project. The main purpose of these minor/medium projects is to supply water for Pune city as well as for irrigation in Haveli, Daund, Indapur, and Baramati tahsils.

The present study has been initiated to assess available natural resources in the lake catchment area itself and to ascertain the potential of it to hold these populations in the same catchment.

The dam is located near village Temghar across river Mutha. The study area is a catchment of Temghar dam and located between 18° 47' 00”N to 18° 38' 00” latitude and 73° 27' to 73° 32' 00” E longitude. The study area is located about 50 km to the west of Pune city. It is accessible by road only from Pune via Khadakwasala- Bahuli or via Pirangut - Mutha (S.H-57). The nearest railway station and Airport is at Pune. The Mutha river is a right bank tributary of the Bhima River in main Krishna basin. The Mutha river originates in the main Sahyadri ranges in taluka Mulshi, District Pune and flows through Mulshi and Haveli tahsils before meeting Mula river in Pune. The dam is located at about 13 km. from the origin of the river Mutha. The catchment area is 37.7 km<sup>2</sup>. up to dam site including water body and area under water body is 4.99 km<sup>2</sup>. The average gradient of the river at the dam wall location is 35 m/km. the average width of the valley is 4km.

**Objectives:**

1. To find out the soil erosion in the Temghar catchment area.
2. To suggest methods for the soil conservation.

**Methods****Estimation of soil erosion using USLE**

The universal soil loss equation (USLE) is a quantitative method of predicting soil erosion losses from rainfall, soil and other factors. The factors in the equation and its applicability to some situation in India have been used by Ram Babu et al (1970).

Since the present evaluates only the physical factor in order to arrive at the maximum potential loss, therefore the values of cropping management and erosion control practice factors have been taken as a unity.

The universal soil loss equation (USLE)

$A=RKLSCP$  where,

$A$ =Soil loss in short tons (2000lb)/acre/year (converted to  $kg/m^2/yr$ )

$R$ =Rainfall erosivity factor,  $K$ = Soil erodibility factor=Slope length factor

$S$ = Slope gradient factor,  $C$ = Crop management factor,  $P$ = Conservation practice factor.

**Computation of basic inputs parameters in USLE**

Estimating **R** factor (Erosivity factor)

The rainfall erosivity factor 'R' in the USLE is the number of rainfall erosion index units ( $EI_{30}$ ) for a particular location. It is defined (Wischmeier 1959) as one hundredths of the product of the kinetic energy of the storm (KE) & the 30min intensity ( $I_{30}$ ) as the most reliable single estimate of rainfall erosion potential & was termed as ( $EI_{30}$ )

The R factor has been computed applying three methods, Roose (1975 a) Morgan (1974) foster, Lane, Nowlin, Laflen & Young (1981) The mean of these three methods have been given appropriate estimates of erosivity factor, ( $EI_{30}$ ) range from 300 to 800 mm.

**Estimating K factor (soil erodibility factor)**

This factor relates the rate at which different soil erode due to inherent soil properties. Soil erodibility defines the resistance of soil to both detachment & transport depending upon the physical & the chemical properties of soil. The factor is defined as mean annual soil loss per unit of erosivity for a standard condition of bare soil.

**Estimating LS factor (slope length steepness factor)**

The factor of slope length (L) & slope steepness (S) is combined in a single index. The high relative relief exhibits a significant variation in the LS factor in the study area ranges from 06 to 58 m. LS factor seems to be the dominant factor in accentuating soil loss in the area. The appropriate values are obtained from the equation.

$$LS = L/22.13 (0.065+0.0455+0.0065S^2)$$

Where 'L' is in m & 'S' in percent

The high relative relief exhibits a significant variation in the LS factor in the study area ranges from 0.98 to 21.28 m.

According to Wischmeier the magnitude of the above values (0.01-0.9) is a function of soil characteristics, vegetal cover, crop residues & other factors.

#### **Estimating C factor (Crop factor):**

It represents the ratio of soil loss under a given crop to that from bare soil. In the present study this factor is taken as a unity & based on the % vegetation cover as estimated from FCC image for the Google image 2006.

#### **Estimating P factor (conservation practice factor):**

As like 'C' factor 'P' factor is also considered as unity in the present study.

#### **Results and Discussion:**

The area comprised of five major land facets viz; hill summits surface, hill fringe surface, rolling pediment & valley floor (plain) surface and escarpments. The information thus generated & results obtained are discussed according to type of land facets in the study area.

Hill summit surface comprises about 16.01381 area in km<sup>2</sup> (48.957%) of total land surface mostly cut as runoff zones along the marginal area of the study area. Mean soil loss estimated along this land facet is of varying magnitude and range between 5 to 10 Kg/m<sup>2</sup>/yr<sup>-1</sup>. Some pockets of the higher soil loss above 15 Kg/m<sup>2</sup>/yr<sup>-1</sup> are noticed in southern part of this land (Table 1)

**Table 1:** Extent of the soil loss by Universal Soil Loss Equation

Soil loss in Kg/m <sup>2</sup> /Y <sup>-1</sup>	Below 5	5 to 10	10 to15	15 to 20	Above 20	Total
Area in Km <sup>2</sup>	07.09856	16.01381	05.83911	3.30481	00.45371	32.71
Area in %	21.701	48.957	17.851	10.103	1.3871	100

Hill fringe surface is a skirt zone of hill summit surfaces marked by sharp to blunt crests with rugged appearance indicating that the surface runoff at the upper reaches of the surfaces has caused rill erosion, & characterized by gully heads & ravenous land. Higher mean soil loss is to the order of 13.89169 Kg/m<sup>2</sup>/yr<sup>-1</sup>, has been observed along this land facet. Pediment surfaces have moderate mean soil loss ranges between below 5 to 10 Kg/m<sup>2</sup>/yr<sup>-1</sup>. Mean soil losses in the plain surface range is below 0.117587 Kg/m<sup>2</sup>/yr<sup>-1</sup>.

**Prioritization of sub watersheds for conservation planning based on soil loss estimation studies:**

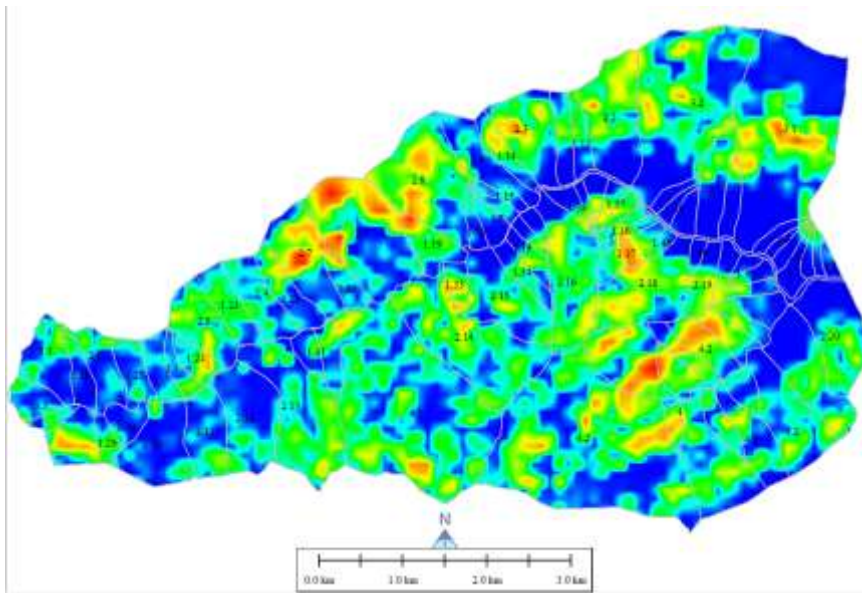
Natural resource development programmes are applied generally on watershed basis and thus prioritization is essential for proper planning and management for sustainable development. Watershed deterioration is a common phenomenon in most parts of the world. Amongst several causes, the major ones are improper utilization of watershed resources without any proper vision. Therefore, drainage basins, catchments and sub- catchments are the fundamental units of the management of land and water. The watershed management concept recognizes the inter-relationships among the linkages between uplands and low lands. Soil and water conservation is key issue in watershed management while demarcating watershed. While considering watershed conservation work, it is not feasible to take the whole area at once. Thus, the whole basin is divided into several units as a watershed and sub- watershed. In the study area (Temghar lake catchment) prioritization of sub watersheds for conservation planning based on soil loss estimation studies has been planned in the following manners.

**Grid wise estimation of soil loss:**

In order to understand spatial patterns of variations in soil loss of the entire area, an attempt has been made to classify the whole catchment into 90 cells. It can be observed from the figure 4.1 that middle portion of the Temghar lake catchment area is subjected to very high soil loss and it varies between 0.11 to 21.98 tons per acre per year. This part mainly consists of the areas of both the flanks of the reservoir. The middle part of the northern as well as southern flanks heavy soil loss is subjected to summital convexities of hill slopes and gullied ravenous topography of the area. Reduction in the soil loss is observed to the areas where dense forest cover patches are in existence. Hill summits, hill fringe slopes are subjected to severe soil loss and accounts for about 1.3871% of the land surface area.

**Sub basin wise estimation of soil loss:**

In all five priority levels for conservation planning has been determined.



1. **Priority level I: - Very severe soil loss: (Above 20 kg/m<sup>2</sup>/year):** About 03 sub basins are noticed to be in this category. 03 fourth order basins namely TEM 4.2.7, TEM 4.2.9, TEM 4.212 covers under this category. Percentage slope variation is between 20 to 35.5% mainly of Sandy Loam and Sandy clay Loam soil covers this area. Main characteristics of this area fall under watershed category of Land use/ Land cover class. This category covers 0.45371 km<sup>2</sup> (1.38371% areas).
2. **Priority level II: - severe soil loss: (Between 15 to 20 kg/m<sup>2</sup>/year):** This category between 15 to 20 kg/m<sup>2</sup>/year covers about 3.30481 km<sup>2</sup> (10.103% area) of the total land surface area and covers 01 first order basin, viz TEM - 1.33, TEM -2.5 TEM -2.6 TEM - 2.7 TEM -2.17, total 04 are second order basins while TEM -4.2.10 and TEM -4.2.13 covers fourth order. Very steep valley side slopes with numerous formations of gullies and typical ravenous topography of these basins mainly noticed to fall under wasteland category of land use types.
3. **Priority level III: - High soil loss: (Between 10 to 15 kg/m<sup>2</sup>/year):** About 16 sub basins comprise this category and covering 05.83911km<sup>2</sup> (17.851% area) of the total land surface area. Hill slopes with devoid of vegetation, sandy loam dominant soil type with very less infiltration capacities contributes maximum soil loss along with high erodibility index. Slopes in this category range from 15% 30%. In this category in all 16 sub basins have been noticed, i.e. seven first order basins, TEM - 1.14, TEM - 1.19, TEM - 1.24, TEM - 1.41 TEM - 1.42 TEM - 1.43 TEM - 1.44. Seven second order basins TEM - 2.2, TEM - 2.3, TEM - 2.8, TEM - 2.14, TEM - 2.16, TEM - 2.18, TEM - 2.19, two fourth order basins, TEM - 4.2.11, 4.2.14 covers this entire category.
4. **Priority level IV: - Medium soil loss: (Between 05 to 10 kg/m<sup>2</sup>/year):**

Sr.no	Average soil loss Category Kg/m <sup>2</sup> /Year	Description	Area in Km <sup>2</sup>	Area in %	Sub basin codes
1	Below 5	Low	07.09856	21.701	TEM-1.1, TEM-1.2, TEM-1.3, TEM-1.4, TEM-1.5 TEM-,1.6, TEM-1.7, TEM-1.8, TEM-1.9, TEM-1.10, TEM-1.11, TEM-1.15, TEM-1.16, TEM-1.17, TEM-1.18, TEM- TEM-1.26, TEM-1.27, TEM-1.28, TEM-1.30, TEM-1.31, TEM-1.37, TEM-1.38, TEM-1.46, TEM-1.48, TEM-1.49, TEM-2.4, TEM-2.9, TEM-2.10, TEM-2.11, TEM-2.12, TEM-4.2.3, TEM-4.2.15.
2	5 to 10	Medium	16.01381	48.957	TEM-1.12, TEM-1.13, TEM-1.20, TEM-1.21, TEM-1.22, TEM-1.23, TEM-1.25, TEM-1.29, TEM-1.32, TEM-1.34, TEM- 1.35,1. TEM-36,1.39, TEM-1.40, TEM-1.45, TEM-1.47, TEM-1.50, TEM-2.1, TEM-2.13, TEM-2.15, TEM-2.20, TEM-3.1, TEM-3.2, TEM-3.3, TEM-4.1, TEM-4.2.1, TEM-4.2.2, TEM-4.2.4, TEM-4.2.5, TEM-4.2.6, TEM-4.2.8.
3	10 to 15	High	05.83911	17.851	TEM-1.14, TEM-1.19, TEM-1.24, TEM-1.41, TEM-1.42, TEM-1.43, TEM-1.44, TEM-2.2, TEM-2.3, TEM-2.8, TEM-2.14, TEM-2.16, TEM-2.18, TEM-2.19, TEM-4.2.11, TEM-4.2.14.
4	15 to 20	severe	03.30481	10.103	TEM-1.33, TEM-2.5, TEM-2.6, TEM-2.7, TEM-2.17, TEM-4.2.10, TEM-4.2.13.
5	Above 20	Very severe	0.45371	01.3871	4.2.7,4.2.9,4.2.12.

Soil loss in this category range to vary between 05 to 10 kg/m<sup>2</sup>/year comprises 31 sub basins out of which 17 are first order basin, viz TEM- 1.12, TEM - 1.13, TEM - 1.20, TEM -

1.21, TEM - 1.22, TEM - 1.23, TEM - 1.25, TEM - 1.29, TEM - 1.32 TEM - 1.34 TEM - 1.35, TEM - 1.36, TEM - 1.39, TEM - 1.40, TEM - 1.45, TEM - 1.47, TEM - 1.50. Four second order basin, TEM - 2.1, TEM - 2.13, TEM - 2.15, TEM - 2.20. Three third order basin i.e. TEM -3.1, TEM -3.2, TEM -3.3. and 07 fourth order basins TEM -4.1, TEM -4.2.1 TEM -4.2.2, TEM - 4.2.4, TEM -4.2.5, TEM -4.2.6, TEM -4.2.8. This category covers maximum area about 16.01381 km<sup>2</sup> (48.957% area) of the total land surface area. In this category it is noticed to be high seems to be due to the hill slopes of mainly scrubland, elongated depression along hill slopes.

**Priority level V: - Low soil loss: (Below 05 kg/m<sup>2</sup>/year):** This category covers maximum area about 07.09856 km<sup>2</sup> (21.701% area) of the total land surface area and comprises 32 sub basins out of which 25 are first order basins viz, TEM-1 TEM-1.2, TEM-1.3, TEM-1.4, TEM-1.5, TEM-1.6, TEM-1.7, TEM-1.8, TEM-1.9, TEM-1.10, TEM-1.11, TEM-1.15, TEM-1.16, TEM-1.17, TEM-1.18, TEM-1.26, TEM-1.28, TEM-1.30, TEM-1.31, TEM-1.37 TEM-1.38, TEM-1.46, TEM-1.48, TEM-1.49, 05 second order basins TEM-2.4 TEM-2.9, TEM-2.10, TEM-2.11, TEM-2.12, and 02 are fourth order basins TEM-4.2.3, TEM-4.2.15. The spread up of these basins mainly noticed along the pediment zone with sandy clay loam soil environment. Which favors high infiltration as well as area in well marked with medium to dense vegetation cover. Slope is ranging between 5% to 10%.

#### **Conclusion:**

Reduction in the soil loss is observed to the areas where dense forest cover patches are in existence. Hence it can be said that forest cover is essential to decrease the soil loss. Natural resource development programs are applied generally on watershed basis and thus prioritization is essential for proper planning and management for sustainable development. Watershed deterioration is a common phenomenon in most parts of the world. Amongst several causes, the major ones are improper utilization of watershed resources without any proper vision. Therefore, drainage basins, catchments and sub-catchments are the fundamental units of the management of land and water. The watershed management concept recognizes the inter-relationships among the linkages between uplands and low lands. Soil and water conservation is key issue in watershed management while demarcating watershed. While considering watershed conservation work, it is not feasible to take the whole area at once.

In view of the site suitability for rehabilitation of the project affected people in the native area itself detailed study of land and soil resources is essential; therefore, land evaluation of the study area can be performed and land capability, suitability and productivity assessment can be done.



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