

**A PERCEPTUAL STUDY OF WETLANDS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR WETLAND RESTORATION
IN THE URBAN AREAS IN MALAYSIA**

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(Abstract)

The restoration of natural wetlands is a wonderful, noble and pragmatic idea, but such efforts often meet resistance from certain segments of society. One reason for this is that the public perceives the environment in different ways than do the experts, such as landscape architects and land managers. This dissertation analyzes people's preferences for wetlands in comparison to those of landscape architects. It specifically studies the conflict about the wetland restoration program in the Malaysia's Kelana Jaya Municipal Park. This dissertation is based on data obtained from a preference survey using photo questionnaires that polled both the public's and landscape architects' group preferences for wetlands. The data was analyzed using the Content Identifying Method (CIM) to determine group preferences for wetlands and factors that influence these preferences. Park managers from several local authorities also were interviewed to determine their expectations of public preferences and attitudes toward wetland restoration and public participation. The public and landscape architects have significantly differed in stated preferences for wetlands. The public strongly prefers park-like landscapes that demonstrate human influences and provide the potential for human involvement; in contrast, landscape architects prefer natural wetlands that are visually pleasing, with well-defined spaces, visual coherence, and visual complexity. In addition, park managers did not accurately predict the public's view of wetlands. Their prediction was similar to landscape architects' preferences. Attitudes toward wetland activities and safety, knowledge about wetland benefits, the motivation to use urban natural open spaces, and familiarity with nature significantly affected the public's preferences. Further, the motivation to use urban natural open spaces was the best predictor of public's preferences. The primary implications of this dissertation are that environmental education should be a core activity in changing people's perceptions of natural wetlands and that opinions of local people should be incorporated in many aspect of wetlands restoration, planning, design, and policymaking, especially in Malaysia.

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About the researcher,

“I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.”

Albert Einstein

About the study,

“I therefore claim to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men’s mind without their being aware of the fact.”

Claude Levi-Strauss

Of the visual

“Everything that we see is a shadow cast by that which we do not see.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

“If only we could pull out our brain and use only our eyes.”

Pablo Picasso

Through the method

“What we observe is not nature itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning.”

Werner Heisenberg

And the results

“When we see the land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

Aldo Leopold