

Land Cover Mapping for Management Plan for Conservation  
of Juniper Woodlands Project  
Saudi Arabia

The first, digital base map showed the distribution of major vegetation groups in Asir mountains.

Asir mountains are not only popular resort and recreation areas but also rich biodiversity areas covered with juniper woodlands and other vegetations.

However, Juniper woodlands which decorate mountain slopes with green blanket and contribute to the rich biodiversity of the areas have been damaged due to die-off and die-back. To deal with this situation, National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) has been implementing a series of projects to protect the precious woodlands under technical cooperation from the Japanese government.

The most recent activity of the management plan project was the production of digital maps to show the situation of vegetation cover in the Asir mountains.

For the purpose of this mapping, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japanese government's official agency responsible for the implementation of technical cooperation programs, sent two experts in the field of vegetation survey and geographic information system (GIS).

Together with the staff of NCWCD, they spent more than two months carrying out field surveys and indoor mapping works.

One of the new maps is the Land Cover Maps, which show the distribution of major vegetation groups with particular focus on Juniper communities. The other map is to show the vitality of Juniper communities. These maps will be used to make a management plan for conservation of Juniper woodlands as fundamental materials.

The maps were prepared in digital format by using the modern GIS software installed at the GIS Unit of NCWCD headquarters in Riyadh. Therefore, sharing modification and updating of the maps can be done without much hustle. The maps can also be utilized in the planning process in many creative ways.