

Floristic and hydrological characterization of Chiloé Island peatlands, Chile

Caracterización florística e hidrológica de turberas de la Isla Grande de Chiloé, Chile

Díaz, María F.

Larraín, Juan

Zegers, Gabriela

Tapia, Carolina

Peatlands are globally known as major deposits of fresh water and carbon, affecting the planet's weather and local hydrology; for bearing unique plant and animal species, contributing to biodiversity; and because they represent a major economic resource to humanity. Peatlands are dominated by plants forming dense populations, especially Sphagnum moss and vascular plants belonging to the Cyperaceae and Juncaceae. They present high water table levels and a deep organic matter layer (peat) below the living layer of plants. The use of fire and logging to clear forests in poor drainage soils have generated a kind of ecosystem similar to peatlands, dominated by Sphagnum moss, where peat accumulation is very low or absent (anthropogenic peatlands or "pomponales"). Compared with natural peatlands, they share the presence of Sphagnum, but they are very different in the use human beings give to them. While natural peatlands are used for peat extraction, anthropogenic peatlands are harvested for