

Projected Future Fencing South of Nairobi National Park

April 9, 2014

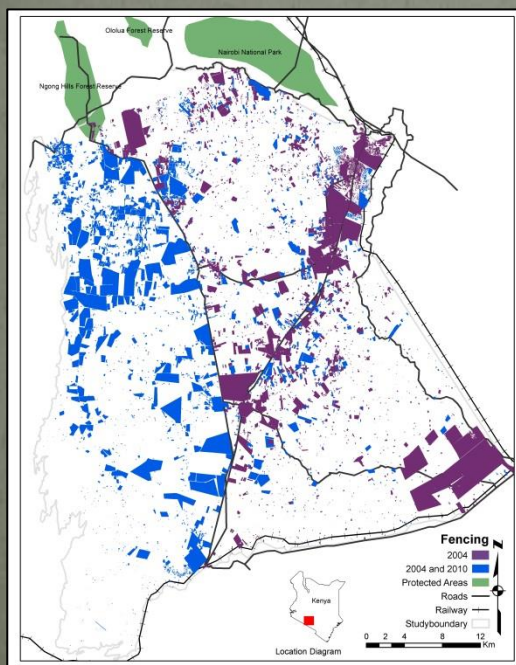
Background

Nairobi National Park (NNP) covers 117 km² and was established in 1946 to protect dry season habitat for wildlife in the Athi-Kaputiei plains – an area of seasonal migration that was once second only to that of the Serengeti. At the time of creation, the region south of NNP was designated as a Game Migration Corridor to allow migratory wildlife such as wildebeest, zebra and eland access to the Athi-Kaputiei plains and beyond. Despite this intent, the Game Migration Corridor was never formally protected from fencing and development.



Changing Land Ownership and Use

Much of the region in and around NNP was historically Maasai territory, open to the grazing of cattle, sheep and goats. British authorities beginning in the early 1900s began restricting access to these lands, and especially Kikuyu lands to the north as Nairobi grew in size. In the 1970s, Maasai were formally allocated lands as communal group ranches, with groups and/or individuals receiving title to lands ranging from 50 to 300 acres in size. Over time, many of these lands were subdivided through inheritance, and increasingly through land sales to a wide range of people interested in settling the relatively inexpensive lands south of Nairobi's growing commercial center. This transition led to fencing and new housing, farms, and commercial enterprises such as greenhouses for flower export.



Projections of Future Fencing

Today, the fencing and development of lands within the Game Migration Corridor has increased rapidly as parcels become subdivided and new residents locate to the region. Figure 1 shows the extent of fencing in 2004 and 2010. These fenced lands restrict the movement of both livestock and many species of wildlife. Figure 2 shows projected future fencing based on historic rates observed between 2004 and 2010. Statistical analysis found that fenced areas tend to be located near roads, water sources, and areas already fenced. Clearly, the current and projected patchwork of fenced parcels shown in Figures 1 and 2 creates a barrier to the movement of both livestock and wildlife.

Figure 1. Extent of fencing in 2004 and 2010.

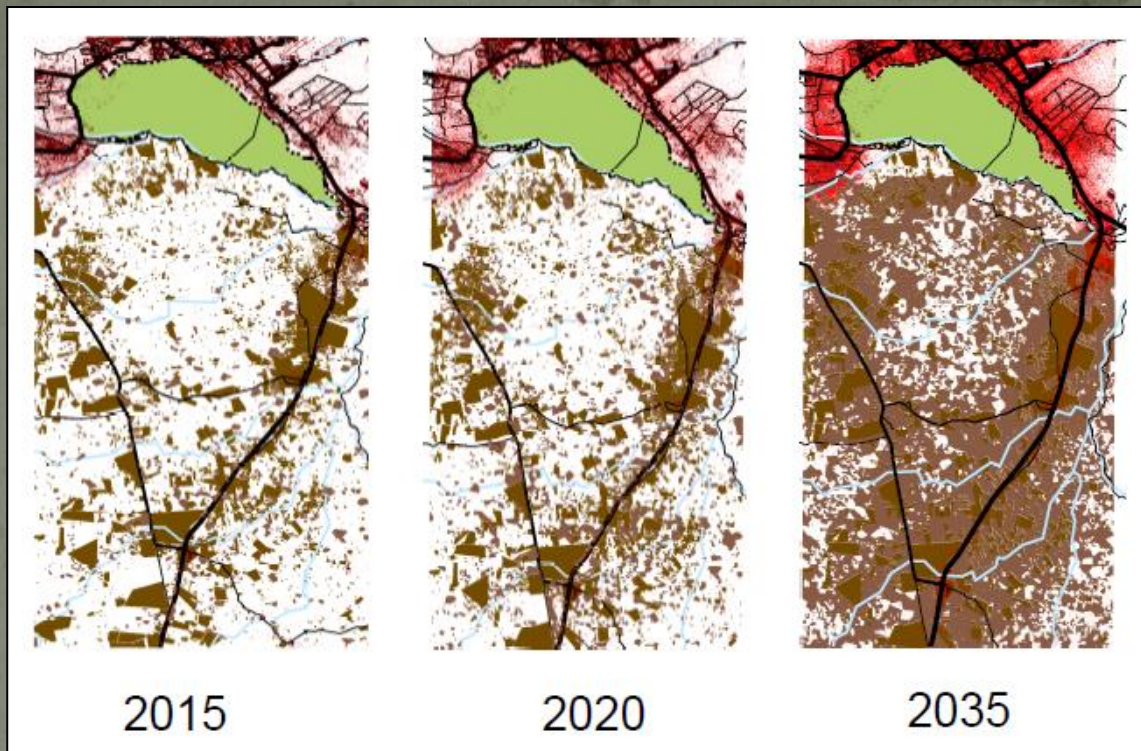


Figure 2. Projected future fencing based on historic rates.

Already, research by Kenyan and U.S. scientists suggests that wildebeest residing in NNP and areas to the south do not cross the road between Kitengela and Kajiado. These wildlife populations have already experienced significant declines in recent years. Loss of the migratory component of NNP's ecosystems threatens the long-run viability and integrity of the Park. This in turn compromises the ability of the Park to attract an estimated 100,000 tourists each year, and also undermines Kenya's reputation as a leading tourism destination in Africa.

Consequences for Social and Economic Development

Kenya is recognized around the world for its spectacular wildlife and unique cultures. These features attract millions of visitors each year, and together provide a source of national pride and economic income. In short, protecting Kenya's unique landscapes, wildlife, and cultural traditions lies at the heart of any sustainable plan for national development. Fencing in the Game Migration Corridor, along with unplanned and haphazard development, threatens not only pastoralists and NNP, but Kenya's thriving tourism industry. Unplanned growth also presents serious challenges to Kajiado County's ability to protect public health, safety and welfare. Indeed, dispersed, widely scattered settlement such as that emerging in the region south of NNP presents significant challenges to the provision of basic human services such as water, sanitation, transportation, electricity and education. Kenya, as a developing country with much promise but limited resources, simply cannot afford to develop in such an inefficient manner.

For more information visit

<http://www.nrel.colostate.edu/projects/gnu/>

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