

Scientists find gold in British bogs

July 28 2011

The price tag of Britain's bogs could be set to soar, making them just as valuable as prime farmland.

A review by scientists at Bangor University has highlighted the growing importance of peatlands in carbon trading markets and international laws aimed at combating climate-change.

The research, led by Prof Chris Freeman, showed that despite peatlands containing twice the amount of carbon as the world's forests they are all but ignored in the United Nations' original policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – the Kyoto Protocol.

However, things look set to change in 2013 when the first phase of the protocol finishes and a new scheme takes its place.

Such a change could see the conservation and restoration of peatlands – which include [Britain's bogs](#) and fens - becoming a lucrative business for governments and landowners.

Christian Dunn, a postgraduate student who worked on the research with Prof Freeman at the Wolfson Carbon Laboratory in Bangor's School of Biological Sciences explained: “Peatlands give off varying amounts of greenhouse gases – most notably methane and carbon dioxide – which contribute to global warming.

“However, correct management of peatlands can reduce the amount of these gases released into the atmosphere,” he said.

“Recent developments and decisions surrounding the Kyoto Protocol, and any predecessor to it, mean that accounting for greenhouse gas savings from the management of peatlands could become very profitable.

“Governments could use ‘carbon stewardship’ of their countries’ peatlands to help achieve international emission reduction targets and organisations could create official carbon credits to trade on the growing number of carbon markets.”

Christian added: “Britain’s bogs are far more important than people realise but the actual monetary value of their land area is relatively low.

“Carbon stewardship of peatlands could change this though and maybe one day we will see their price tag reach that of prime agricultural land.”

Prof Freeman said: “Britain’s peatlands cover an area of 5.24 million hectares - about twice the size of Wales - and lock-up around 3,121 mega tonnes of carbon.

“We obviously don’t want that carbon to be released as carbon dioxide or methane so we need to look after our peatlands, but with the constant pressure for land we need an incentive to stop our bogs from being drained.”

“If climate change legislation and carbon trading makes it worthwhile for countries and organisations to look after their peatlands we stand a much better chance of preserving these unique landscapes and the wildlife living in them,” Prof Freeman added.

Provided by Bangor University

Citation: Scientists find gold in British bogs (2011, July 28) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-07-scientists-gold-british-bogs.html>

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