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Interactions between rural migration and land use change in the forest villages in the Gökçay Watershed

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Abstract: This study was carried out to analyze the spatial and temporal pattern of land use/land cover change (from 1955 to 2008) and migration movement (from 1935 to 2007) in the Gökçay River Watershed. To assess this period, the necessary data were obtained from forest stand maps (1955 and 2008) and evaluated by using Geographic Information Systems. Maps of the study area dated 1955 and 2008 have been analyzed, and land use type and change on the land pattern have been investigated. The data reveal that the percentage of forest area, which was 47% in 1955, rose to 50% in 2008; the percentage of rangeland area increased from 2% to 7%, and the percentage of agricultural area went up from 25% to 27%. The percentage of degraded forest area was 1% in 1955 and increased to 2% in 2008. The biggest change was observed in the forest opening areas. Forest openings decreased from 24% to 12%. These areas have been converted to forest, agricultural, and settlement areas. The population of the watershed area was 5561 in 1935, however, dropping by 73.2%, it fell to 1486 according to data in the latest census of 2007.

Key words: Land use, mountainous forest villages, rural migration

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