

Teso districts to benefit from sh730m project

PALLISA

By Lawrence Okwakol

The National Fisheries Resources Research Institute (NAFIRRI) is to implement a \$199,530 (sh736m) project on Lake Nyaguo to conserve and increase the number of rare fish species and other aquatic habitats.

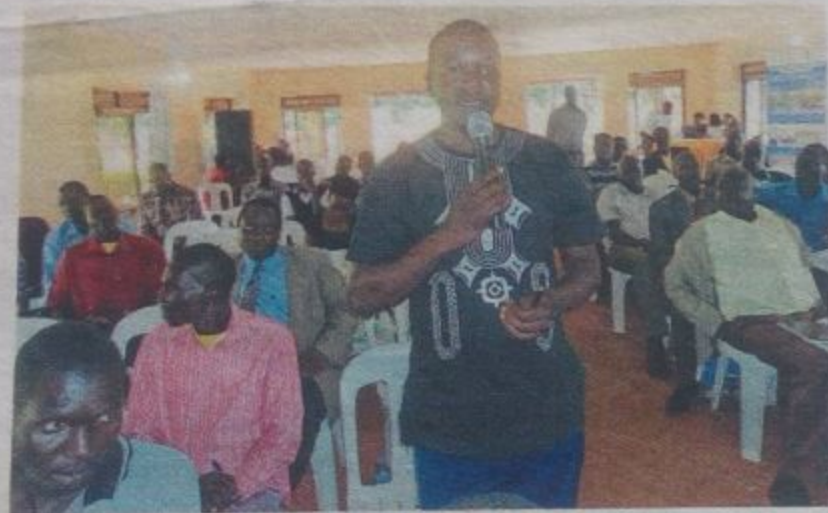
Lake Nyaguo is located near Lake Kyoga between Ngora, Pallisa and Kumi districts.

Dr Anthony Taabu Munyaho, the director of research at NAFIRRI, said their project got funding from a rain forest trust.

Munyaho was addressing an inception meeting at Country Inn in Pallisa on Friday.

"We are not going to block fishing activities on this lake, but we ask the fishing community to stay away from the places that we are going to demarcate," he said.

Dr Winnie Nkulabo, the project co-ordinator, said the three-year project will help Uganda achieve her national targets in biodiversity and increase chances for the recovery of the threatened native endemic fish



Eumu addressing residents during the meeting at Century Inn in Pallisa on Friday. Photo by Lawrence Okwakol

and other wildlife.

"Tilapia consume more dissolved oxygen than any fish and Lake Nyaguo has the favourable vegetation for oxygen provision and conducive breeding places, since tilapia builds nests in lake vegetation unlike other fish," Nkulabo said.

Deo Kabaali, the eastern Uganda regional wetlands officer, said to

ensure the success of the project, the surrounding districts should consider demarcating the buffer zones of the lake to protect them from human activities.

Bernard Eumu, the Ngora district chairperson, said what fails most projects is the disengagement of communities and local leadership after inception.

He said the project should be community-based, so not all decisions are taken by technical people from Kampala.

"We are ready to sensitise our communities about the importance of this project, but what worries me is its sustainability since it needs money at every level," Eumu said.

David Oluka, a beach management unit member for Lake Nyaguo, said fishermen were waiting to be shown the areas in the lake they should not interfere with.

Richard Mangeni, a senior fisheries officer, said fishermen stubbornly use illegal gear. He asked them to fish in the areas they will be allowed to, and using approved nets.

Erich Opolot Ogozo, who is developing tourism in the area and is a resident of Nyaguo village in Agule sub-county, Pallisa district, said a number of opportunities would come from this project and the community should embrace it.

Ogozo said Lake Nyaguo is gifted with rocks, caves, a natural landing site and rare animals both in water and on land, which will attract tourists.