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MOUNTAIN PEATLANDS OF THE CENTRAL ANDES: CURRENT RESEARCH ON  
*BOFEDALES* IN BOLIVIA

Karina A. Yager, ORAU/NASA-GSFC  
Rosa Isela Meneses, Herbacio Nacional de Bolivia  
Dan Slayback, SSAI/NASA-GSFC  
David Cooper, Colorado State University.

SUMMARY

*Bofedales*, the term for mountain peatlands of the Central Andes, are an invaluable ecological resource in an otherwise arid to semi-arid environment. The peatlands found in the Andes of South America differ from northern peatlands and other lowland tropical peatlands primarily in total area and species composition, but are certainly no less significant in terms of their local and regional social and ecological value. Andean peatlands provide numerous key services in these mountain environments, among them the support of hydrological systems, habitat for endemic and endangered species, carbon sequestration, and forage for livestock production. However, being intricately linked with glaciers, regional climate systems, and human management practices, the long-term sustainability of Andean peatlands are increasingly challenged by recent climate change processes and anthropogenic activities. Here we discuss research currently underway in Bolivia, which includes monitoring of glacial recession across the Andes, remote sensing study of the distribution of *bofedales*, and recent vegetation and hydrological studies of select peatland systems in Bolivia. We also highlight the ways in which these unique peatlands fulfill multiple socio-cultural needs and ecosystem services across the Andes.