Mangroves are important. Mangroves provide important resources to our communities and vital services to the environment.

**RESOURCES**

**FOOD**
People eat fish, crabs, and clams that live in mangrove swamps. Many reef fish also spend part of their lives in the mangroves.

**MATERIALS**
Mangrove wood is used to build homes and make boats, fishing gear, and craft items. Lumps of mangrove wood are used to thatch roofs.

**RECREATION**
Beaches, picnic areas, and shade trees among mangroves are wonderful places for children and adults to play, enjoy the outdoors, and learn.

**FUEL**
In some places, mangrove wood is used to make fuel for cooking. This is not a good idea: the forest is damaged.

**FISHERIES**
Mangroves are very productive places, with many fish, crabs, and clams. Some fishermen sell their catches and make money to support their families.

**COASTAL PROTECTION**
Mangroves along coasts reduce the force of waves and winds. They protect the environment and human communities from storms and floods.

**RESISTING EROSION**
Mangrove root systems help hold the ground. That prevents mud and soil from being washed away by waves and currents.

**TRAPPING SEDIMENT**
Mangrove roots trap sediment, sand, and silt washed from the land by rains and rivers. This causes the ground around mangroves to build up.

**TRAPPING NUTRIENTS**
Water running off from land also brings nutrients. Nutrients stick to mud in the mangroves and become food for microorganisms and other local living things.

**FILTERING WATER**
Excess sediment and nutrients are food for crabs and other animals. By trapping sediment and nutrients, mangroves clean the water and protect the ecosystem.

**NURSERY**
Mangrove trees give young fish and other fish food from fish eggs and fish. Mangroves are one of the most important nurseries for fish and other animals from nearby reefs.

**CARBON SINK**
Mangroves absorb large quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and turn it into organic material. Storing of carbon in the mangroves reduces the greenhouse effect and climate change.

**UNIQUE HABITAT**
Mangroves are valuable for their unique biodiversity. Many plants and animals -- including rare and endangered species -- live in mangrove swamps.