

City wetlands lose 99% value to urbanization

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Bengaluru: Degradation has stripped the wetlands of Bengaluru of all their value. The loss in value is a staggering 99.8%, an IISc study has revealed. The study put the valuation of a relatively pristine wetland in Bengaluru at Rs10,435 per hectare per day. However, a polluted wetland of the city is valued at a mere Rs20 per hectare per day. The IISc study, incidentally, provided Koramangala residents enough ammunition against the setting up of an SEZ in Bellandur wetlands in violation of environmental laws. Hearing a petition filed by the residents and activists, [the National Green Tribunal](#) last week slapped a Rs 140 crore fine on two builders implementing the SEZ project. The study, titled Conservation of Bellandur Wetlands: Obligation of Decision-makers to Ensure Intergenerational Equity, was undertaken by TV Ramachandra and others of Energy and Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc. The project has tellingly illustrated the threats faced by wetlands of Bengaluru. Pointing out that the number of water bodies in Greater Bangalore has shrunk from 207 in 1973 to 93 in 2010, the study says that 72% of the lakes have lost their catchment areas, 66% are now sewage fed and 14% are hemmed in by slums. According to the study, 54% of lakes have been encroached for illegal buildings. "Multi-storey buildings have come up on some lake beds... leading to sharp decline and deteriorating quality of water bodies. These anthropogenic activities particularly, indiscriminate disposal of industrial effluents and sewage wastes, dumping of building debris have altered the physical, chemical as well as biological integrity of the ecosystem. This has resulted in the ecological degradation, which is evident from the current ecosystem valuation of wetlands... The pollutants and subsequent contamination of the wetland has telling effects such as disappearance of native species, dominance of invasive exotic species (such as African catfish, water hyacinth, etc.), in addition to profuse breeding of disease vectors and pathogens."

Ruin wetlands, lose ecosystem Wetland cannot be put to economical use like drying up the lake bed and constructing buildings because it loses its ecosystem and becomes economically unviable in the long run. That is why one has town planning and zoning of city areas. For too long, there has been a conscious effort to ruin these wetlands and cause environmental degradation. With money and energy being spent on climate change issues, the government should now wake up MK Ramesh, advisor to Climate Change Leading to Treaty in [Paris](#) 2015