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**Environment**

# Bannerghatta National Park buffer zone to be reduced by 100 sq km, activists protest

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(/article/bannerghatta-national-park-buffer-zone-be-reduced-100-sq-km-activists-protest-92453)

A new notification by the Centre has proposed the reduction of the maximum buffer zone to 1 km from the forest boundary. The draft, if unopposed, will be formally notified after December 30.

Soumya Chatterjee (https://www.thenewsminute.com/author-articles/Soumya-Chatterjee) |

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Opposition has been mounting against the Centre's new draft proposal which plans to reduce the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) around the Bannerghatta National Park (BNP) by 100 sq km.

Two separate online petitions, started by United Bengaluru and Jhatkaa.org, talk about the importance of protecting the eco-sensitive zone and urge individuals to directly write to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change stating their objections before December 30. The United Bengaluru petition has received the support of more than 3,000 and the Jhatkaa.org petition has received 8,000 signatories.

Other than online signature campaigns addressed to the MoEF, United Bengaluru — a federation of NGOs and resident welfare associations in the city is also exploring approaching the courts for an intervention.

On November 5, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had published a new notification, which had marked the minimum buffer zone as 100 m and the maximum buffer zone as 4.5 km from the forest boundary. The new notification has now reduced the maximum buffer zone to a maximum of 1 km from the forest. The draft, if unopposed, will be formally notified after December 30.

Wildlife activists and environmentalists claim that the notification prepared by the union government, in consultation with the state government, had made the changes from the first draft owing to the interests of mining and real estate mafia who are set to be the biggest beneficiaries of this new draft.

**Read: Stop illegal mining near Bannerghatta, penalise violators: B'luru activists urge govt**  
**(<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/stop-illegal-mining-near-bannerghatta-penalise-violators-b-luru-activists-urge-govt-89028>)**

An IISc study conducted by leading scientist TV Ramachandra in 2015 had stated that the present buffer zones are biologically and hydrologically sensitive zones. Mining in the area creates bottlenecks for animals which means that they can't move around in their natural habitat and eventually



leading to man-animal conflicts and poaching. Another recent study by the Indian Institute of Human Settlements said that preservation of this ESZ was important in protecting the city from becoming a heat island.

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Until very recently, illegal quarrying in the buffer zone ran unabated to the with the tacit support of all major political parties before the intervention of the Karnataka High Court. In June, all the 10 mining companies were served closure notices and were slapped with steep fines.

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Bengaluru-based environmentalist Vijay Nishanth who had previously met Union Minister Harsha Vardhan on the same issue, told TNM, “The IISc study has clearly shown what damage the mining activity has done to the forest. The draft itself is illegal as the Supreme Court has directed that buffer zones have to be a minimum of 1 km from forest land. Moreover, it is an elephant corridor, how can state forest officials just okay this? We have also seen that days after the mining stopped, wild animals including elephants returned to the areas where the mining activity is prevalent.”

He added, “At no cost are we going to allow this draft to be okayed. We will see what action needs to be taken if the objections to the draft are not acknowledged. It is about the survivability of the city. With the rampant destruction of green cover inside the city, we at least need the national forest to be protected. We talk about protecting the Cauvery, but there are so many natural water streams from within the forest which ends up in the river.”

### **Read: Officials order closure of 10 companies near Bannerghatta after illegal mining exposed**

(<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/officials-order-closure-10-companies-near-bannerghatta-after-illegal-mining-exposed-82925>)

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