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Bengaluru's last standing grasslands at Hesaraghatta declared conservation reserve

Niranjan Kaggere (https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Toireporter/Author-Niranjan-Kaggere-479264376.Cms) / Oct 7, 2024, 23:48 IST



Bengaluru: More than a decade after experts recommended the declaration of Hesaraghatta, on the northwestern fringes of Bengaluru, as a conservation reserve, the chief minister-headed State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) on Monday approved the proposal and decided to notify the 5,010 acres of area around

Hesaraghatta as the 'Greater Hesaraghatta Conservation Reserve' (GHCR).

Poll

Was Mohan Bhagwat's mandir-masjid jibe aimed at Yogi Adityanath?

- No
- Yes

Ever since the proposal was made to the state govt in 2013, it had stirred up political controversy and was held up by successive regimes. However, a few locals and conservation activists, who had sought the Karnataka high court's intervention in the matter, have finally managed to safeguard the last standing savannah (grassland) ecosystem of Bengaluru. Hesaraghatta will be the 15th conservation reserve of the state.

The SBWL deliberated the issue in detail. After carefully going through the proposals and being convinced by the forest officials' explanation about the positive aspects of declaring the region as a community reserve, CM Siddaramaiah approved the proposal. Forest minister Eshwar Khandre told presspersons it was a long-pending demand from all sections of society. "There was a movement by citizens demanding the notification of Hesaraghatta as a conservation reserve. But today, the state govt has taken a major decision to declare the region as a conservation reserve," he said.

The 5,010 acres of GHCR will comprise 356 acres of pristine and unique grassland of Hesaraghatta, 383 acres of Byrapura Lake, 165 acres of Byatha Lake, 1,356 acres of Hesaraghatta Lake, and 2,750 acres of land under the control of the

veterinary and animal sciences department. "The SBWL resolved to declare it as a conservation reserve under Section 36 (A) of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972," Khandre explained.

Highlighting the unique ecosystem of Hesaraghatta and its impact on the water security of the IT city, a committee of experts comprising Mahesh Bhat, Seshadri KS, and Ramki Sreenivasan had recommended to the state govt way back in 2013 to declare it as a GHCR. However, subsequently, the proposal whipped up controversy with local leaders opposing the move, fearing it would affect development activities in nearby villages.

Even though successive govts kept deferring the proposal and, in 2021, rejected it owing to political pressure, a few activists, angered by the state govt's move, filed a PIL plea before the high court. The court directed the govt to reconsider the proposal in 2021, and the matter was referred again to the SBWL in 2022. In fact, five of the six gram panchayats which share the jurisdiction passed resolutions opposing the move. However, CM Siddaramaiah is said to have directed forest officials to convince the villagers and clarify the myths about the move and its impact.

"I'm happy with the SBWL decision, and the govt must now come up with a management plan allowing all villagers to carry out animal husbandry activity in the region," said Bhat.

Flora & fauna in the area

- * Native plants (including grasses): 39 species
- * Invasive plants in grassland: 4 species
- * Tree species (planted recently): 12 species
- * Mammals: 10 species
- * Reptiles: 5 species
- * Birds: 133 species
- * Amphibians: 1 species
- * Spiders: 3 species
- * Butterflies: 14 species



End of Article

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