

Lakes encroached or not? Government data says 372 encroached; revenue department says only 13

Bharath Joshi, ET Bureau Jul 29, 2015, 10.25AM IST (The Revenue Department)

BENGALURU: The [Revenue Department](#), the custodian of land records, has no clue how many lakes exist in Bengaluru urban district at a time when the ever-growing city is threatening their existence.

As a result, there is no clarity on how many lakes have been encroached in Bengaluru South Bengaluru, North, Bengaluru East and Anekal - a total area of 2,196 sqkm. There is, however, agreement that [Bengaluru City](#), spread over 710 sq km, has 210 lakes.

The Lake Monitoring Information System (LMIS) shows that Bengaluru urban district has 921 lakes. Of this, only 13 have apparently been encroached. In contrast, the district administration, holds that there are 852 lakes, of which 372 have been encroached. The state government's Bhoomi database points to 1,076 lakes.

Irrigation tanks were built over the centuries, creating a wetland ecosystem -lakes, ponds and rajakaluves (canals). Bengaluru and its surrounding areas, which are now part of the urban district, thrived on water from this system. Lakes around the city started to disappear as [real estate](#) prices skyrocketed.

For instance, in areas such as Anekal, a residential plot now costs Rs 10,647 per square yard.

The LMIS, an online portal which compiles data on lakes, has captured information on 15,165 lakes in the entire state. The next phase is about recording encroachments but authorities cannot find the right numbers for Bengaluru urban. "I have written to the district administration on the discrepancies in the numbers, asking them for the right numbers," said Subodh Yadav, managing director of the Karnataka Public Lands Corporation that runs LMIS.

The 1,076 figure from Bhoomi is historical data pertaining to Bengaluru district, said TV Ramachandra from the Centre for Ecological Studies, [Indian Institute of Science](#). "We need to use GIS effectively. But all that our bureaucrats can see in a lake is the prospect of making money," he said.

Only 45% of lakes in and around Bengaluru have been surveyed, said S [Suresh Kumar](#), former minister and member of the House Committee on Lake Encroachments.

"In the next one month or so, the exact status of lakes will be before the committee," he said.