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# IISc launches portal for Western Ghats management

The Western Ghats region, according to the researchers, witnessed large-scale land cover changes during the past century due to unplanned developmental activities with industrialisation and globalisation.

Written by [Aksheev Thakur](#)

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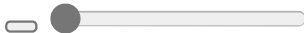


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The researchers have mapped a 1.6 lakh sq km area of Western Ghats spanning six states -- Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa, Kerala, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu -- for the portal. (Express Photo)

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IISc launches portal for Western Ghats management

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Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru on July 13 launched the Western Ghats Spatial Decision Support System (WGSDSS), a web portal that will help the forest department and biodiversity management committees to manage Ghats.

The researchers have mapped a 1.6 lakh sq km area of Western Ghats spanning six states — Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa, Kerala, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu — for the portal. The vulnerability of the regions in the Ghats has been classified into four categories of Ecologically Sensitive Regions (ESR) — very high ecological fragility, high ecological fragility, moderate ecological fragility, and low ecological fragility.

The researchers, TV Ramachandra, Bharath Setturu, Vinay S, M D Subash Chandran, Abhishek Baghel, and Bharath H Aithal, said that the portal was designed as part of their ongoing ecological research in the Western Ghats.

Ramachandra said that the ESR analysis of the Western Ghats depicts 63,148 square km area under very high ecological fragility, 27,646 square km under high ecological fragility, 48,490 square km as moderate, and 20,716 square km as ecological fragility.

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“WGSDSS has been designed as part of the ongoing ecological research in the Western Ghats by taking advantage of the recent advances in information and open source web technologies through the integration of spatial with the attribute information (bio, geo, climatic, ecological, environmental, and social variables) at disaggregated levels. This enhances governance transparency while meeting societal needs, which helps in the prudent management of ecologically and hydrologically vital Sahyadri hill ranges. Visualisation of ecologically sensitive regions at disaggregated levels (grids/village) would enable understanding of the current status, which are essential for effective decision making at decentralised levels (for example Biodiversity Management Committees) towards sustainable management of natural resources,” Ramachandra said.

Features such as Web Map Service (WMS) and Web Feature Service (WFS) are integrated into WGSDSS which would help in accomplishing effective dissemination of the ecological, socio, economic, biodiversity, and environmental information, according to the researchers.

“Ecological sensitivity or fragility refers to permanent and irreparable loss of extant life forms or significant damage to the natural processes of evolution and speciation with the alterations in the ecological integrity of a region. The comprehensive knowledge of the ecological fragility of a region is quintessential for evolving strategies for conserving the area, which entails identifying factors responsible for ecological sensitiveness, including landscape dynamics, and visualising future transitions to mitigate the problems of haphazard and uncontrolled development approaches,” he said.

The Western Ghats region, according to the researchers, witnessed large-scale land cover changes during the past century due to unplanned developmental activities with industrialisation and globalisation.

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“This necessitates implementing mitigation measures involving stakeholders to address the impacts through location-specific conservation measures. Framing conservation and sustainable developmental policies entail delineation of ecologically sensitive regions by integrating bio-geo-climatic, ecological, and social factors representing dynamics of socio-ecological systems, impacts, and drivers. Analyses of ecologically sensitive regions in the Western Ghats, one among 36 global biodiversity hotspots using temporal remote sensing data, highlight serious concerns on the status of forests and conservation options,” Ramachandra said.

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