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Finally, Muniya notified a conservation reserve

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Nagpur: Five months after the state board of wildlife (SBWL) approved 11 conservation reserves (CRs), including three from Vidarbha, the government issued final notification of Muniya Conservation Reserve. The decision was taken by chief minister Uddhav Thackeray as chairman of the SBWL at its 16th meeting held on December 4, 2021. Apart from Muniya, the other two conservation reserves included Mogarkasa outside Pench Tiger Reserve and Mahendri in Warud in Amravati district. Thackeray had approved 10 conservation reserves, most of them in Western Maharashtra. Notifications of Mogarkasa and Mahendri were not issued as areas of both the conservation reserves are being revised. The Mogarkasa proposal was for 37.70 sqkm while Mahendri was for 67.48sqkm. Mogarkasa acts as a cushion for tigers dispersing from Pench. "There was some mismatch in preparing the Mogarkasa proposal and hence the area is being revised. There was a controversy over whether to make Mahendri a sanctuary or a conservation reserve. It was decided to first declare it a it a reserve and then a sanctuary," said officials.

The 96 sqkm Muniya has been carved from Butibori and North Umred forest range under the Nagpur division. Of total area, 60.82 sqkm is reserve forest and 35.18 sqkm is protected forest. The area consists of 24 compartments of Butibori and 15 compartments of North Umred ranges. "The decision is going to be an important milestone in further safeguarding and strengthening the critical corridor between Umred-Karhandla-Paoni wildlife sanctuary and Bor and Tadoba-Andhari tiger reserves. There will be now responsibility sharing and better coordination," said Ravikiran Govekar, CCF and field director, Pench. The initial proposal to declare Muniya a reserve was first submitted by Vijay Ghugey, president, Nisarga Vidnyan Mandal in September 2007. On April 22, 2008, TOI was the first to report about it. It has taken 14 years to come to fruition. "The proposal was based on surveys conducted by us then. A fresh survey needs to be conducted to ascertain the flora and faunal diversity in Muniya to prepare a wildlife management plan. There are over 18 villages on the fringes of Muniya and there is huge biotic pressure, which needs to be eased by sensitizing locals," said Ghugey

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