

Himachal constructing forest ponds to conserve rainwater

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Shimla, May 2 (IANS): Forest ponds are being constructed in Himachal Pradesh to check the depletion of groundwater and to harvest rainwater, officials said on Sunday.

Under the Parvat Dhara scheme, the government has initiated rejuvenation of water sources and recharging aquifers through the forest department with an outlay of Rs 20 crore.

The department spent Rs 2.76 crore in 2020-21 for the construction of 110 big and small ponds, 600 check dams and 12,000 contour trenches along with plantation to store water and recharge the aquifers.

The work was started in 10 forest divisions that include Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Jogindernagar, Nachan, Parvati, Nurpur, Rajgarh, Nalagarh, Theog and Dalhousie.

Under the scheme, the cleaning and maintenance of existing ponds has been done. Also the construction of new ponds, contour trenches, dams, check dams and retaining wall to control the soil erosion has been done, a forest official told IANS.

The scheme aims to enhance the water level by retaining water for the maximum period. Efforts are also being made to improve the green cover by planting fruit-bearing plants. Special emphasis has also been laid on preventing fires in the forests, he said.

According to the official, the scheme would be implemented in other forest divisions with emphasis on soil and water conservation through plantation.

Himachal Pradesh has 33 wildlife sanctuaries and two national parks. According to official records, 27 per cent -- 15,433 sq km of the total 55,643 sq km -- of the Himalayan state is under forest cover.

The lush green valleys and snowcapped mountains of the state are home to 36 per cent of the country's species of birds. Of the 1,228 species that have been reported in India, 447 are in this state alone.