

Maharashtra: 409 ha of mangroves in Alibag a reserved forest

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As part of the forest department's campaign to bring all mangrove forests in Maharashtra under the purview of section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (IFA), 409 hectares (ha) of mangrove forests in Alibag taluka, Raigad district, were declared a 'reserved forest' via gazette notification on March 5



As part of the forest department's campaign to bring all mangrove forests in Maharashtra under the purview of section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (IFA), 409 hectares (ha) of mangrove forests in Alibag taluka, Raigad district, were declared a 'reserved forest' via gazette notification on March 5.

The move is in line with the Bombay high court's directive to the government, which instructs the latter to hand over all mangrove areas on state land to the forest department for better conservation. Declaring areas as reserved forest grants them legal sanctity, and protects biodiversity by outlawing activities such as foraging, hunting and harvesting of natural resources in the earmarked boundaries.

As per official estimates, there are 17,090 ha of mangrove forests in the entire state which are on government land. Of these, 10,632 ha have already been brought under the purview of the IFA in 2019, 2020 and 2021. A total of 2,066 ha of mangroves have been excluded from the purview due to community dependence on the land, officials clarified, while 4,392 hectares are "under process for declaration".

"This whole process starts by first declaring the mangrove site as a reserved forest under Section 4 of the Forest Act, which we had done even earlier, starting 2015. What follows, as per Sections 6 to 19 of the Forest Act, is the process of settlement of any rights that other parties may claim over the land. Following this, some portion of the land may be excluded from the final notification under Section 20," said Virender Tiwari, additional principal chief conservator of forests (mangrove cell).

Tiwari added, "In Alibag, we have settled all such claims and now 409 hectares are declared under Section 20, bringing the process to its final conclusion. There can now be no further accrual of rights to the land by any party."

However, a crucial step in this process -- handing over the land to the forest department -- also includes transferring possession of the land to the mangrove cell, which is pending by various government bodies.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/maharashtra409-ha-of-mangroves-in-alibag-a-reserved-forest-101615487015015.html>