

Miyawaki forest coming up on land around Red Hills reservoir

Water Resources Department ropes in voluntary organisations to increase the green cover and protect the ecology of the waterbody

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Water Resources Department, along with the voluntary organisations, is developing Miyawaki forest on that land that was recently cleared of encroachments around the Red Hills reservoir in Surapet. | Photo Credit: M. VEDHAN

The Red Hills reservoir, a main source of the city's drinking water supply, is steadily gaining patches of green cover around it.

In concerted efforts, the Water Resources Department, along with voluntary organisations, is developing Miyawaki urban forests on land retrieved from encroachers.

The initiative is being undertaken at the rear side of the lake and near the intake tower at Surapet, where nearly 55 native species of saplings have been planted. Officials recalled that encroachments were removed two months ago on five acres of land at Surapet. The green cover would protect the ecology of the reservoir and improve biodiversity.

Voluntary organisations and volunteers are encouraged to develop and maintain greenery in at least four places on the periphery of the lake. The department has about 600 encroachments to be cleared and plans to create a green belt on the land and develop it as an eco-tourism site.

S. Sameer of the Social Work Team Trust (SWOTT), engaged in reservoir restoration, said about 5,800 saplings, a mix of shrubs and canopy trees, had been planted at Surapet along with Say Trees, an NGO. Another 6,000 saplings are planned in second phase.

Another urban forest is being developed near the bund on G.N.T. Road and at Alamaram as well. About 20,000 seed balls had been planted. However, garbage dumping and sewage pollution continues in the lake. There is a need to construct flood protection wall along a stretch of Baby canal to stop encroachments and sewage outfalls near Padianallur. The surplus canal has encroachments near Naravarikuppam, Mr. Sameer said. While efforts are on to increase green cover around the lake, activists want sewage pollution to be arrested. They said the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority's ₹100-crore proposal to execute lakefront development in 10 lakes, including Red Hills, remains a non-starter.

S. Sundaramurthy, president, Puzhal Eri, Arafat Eri Padhukappu Makkal Iyakkam, said sewage pollution and encroachments continued near the lake despite inspection by

Avadi Corporation officials.

“We have completed 60% of work along with Exnora International to clean water hyacinth near Thirumullaivoyal. These steps will be of use only if sewage outfalls from Thirumullaivoyal and Venkateswara Nagar in Ambattur are plugged,” he said.

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