

Modi govt plans to rejuvenate 13 rivers, hopes it'll boost forest cover & carbon sequestration 16 March 2022

New Delhi: The Ministry for Forest, Environment and Climate Change announced the “rejuvenation” of 13 major rivers Monday, which could increase the country’s forest cover by up to 7,417.36 square kilometers.

The detailed project reports (DPRs) of the 13 rivers were prepared by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) and released in a press conference Monday. Rivers that will form part of the project include the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej, Yamuna, and Brahmaputra in the Himalayan region, Luni in the inland drained category, and Narmada, Godavari, Mahanadi, Krishna, and Cauvery in the Deccan or Peninsular region. Together, these rivers cover 57.45 per cent of India’s geographical area.

The ICFRE plan looks at rejuvenating the rivers primarily by creating riparian forests, or planting trees along the river. According to the DPRs, a riparian forest functions “as the ‘natural buffers’ and ‘biofilters’ and supplement key processes such as the ‘self-regulation’ and self-purification.”

The government hopes these forests will increase the country’s scope to sequester carbon, by creating carbon sinks to absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide. According to the DPRs, the planned planting of trees for river rejuvenation will sequester 50.21 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent after 10 years, while after 20 years they are expected to sequester 74.76 million tonnes of CO₂e. CO₂ equivalent (or CO₂e) means CO₂ or any other greenhouse gas having the same global warming potential as CO₂.

In 2016, India had [pledged](#) to create a carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030. A study has [found](#), however, that India had overestimated the area available for the afforestation and forest restoration required to meet this goal.

Nonetheless, environment minister Bhupender Yadav expressed confidence Monday that the river rejuvenation projects would bring India closer to achieving its target. Under the Bonn Challenge, India had also [pledged](#) in 2015 to restore five million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

“If we implement the river rejuvenation project with a strong sense of commitment, then we can contribute to our goal of increasing our carbon sink,” he said, adding, “We also promised to restore degraded forests, and this scheme will aid us in restoring those lands.”

Source: <https://theprint.in/environment/modi-govt-plans-to-rejuvenate-13-rivers-hopes-itll-boost-forest-cover-carbon-sequestration/873921/>