



## **Suppressing growth of invasive species, planting native trees: Delhi forest dept likely to accept proposals for eco-restoration**

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As part of compensatory plantation against felling trees in Delhi, the Forest Department is now likely to accept proposals for “eco-restoration” – suppressing growth of invasive species of trees and planting native ones.

When trees are cut in Delhi, 10 times the number of trees that are felled are to be planted as compensatory plantation under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act (DPTA).

The Forest Department is now set to accept proposals for eco-restoration, though this “may not result in any addition or increase in green cover/forest cover in Delhi,” according to the minutes of a recent meeting of the Tree Authority.

The meeting was held on August 30 under the chairmanship of the Principal Secretary, Environment and Forest, and was attended by officials including the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, a representative of the Divisional Commissioner, and the Director of the Horticulture wings at the NDMC and MCD.

A senior official in the Forest Department said that eco-restoration involves suppression of invasive species and allowing native species to grow “so that the ecosystem services of existing trees of alien species keep giving their ecological services to the extent that is required for that area till the native species come up.” This process is underway in parts of the Ridge in Delhi, where the vilayati kikar (*Prosopis juliflora*), a ubiquitous invasive tree in Delhi that dominates most of the city’s forest land and tends to suppress the growth of other species, is being pruned and native species are being planted alongside.

This means that compensatory plantation can now be taken up in existing green areas, through the process of eco-restoration.

The Tree Authority’s decision would now have to be approved by the [Delhi](#) government, the official said. The official pointed to two reasons for the decision. “We need to not only improve the area under green cover or increase the number of plants, but we also need to improve the quality of green cover. This tries to address the problem of quality of green areas. There are also many areas where land-owning agencies have patches dominated by vilayati kikar. But they are unable to take up plantation in those areas,” the official explained.

The Forest Department will now ask land-owning agencies to identify land for eco-restoration, going by the minutes of the Tree Authority’s meeting. The DPTA makes the provision for a Tree Authority and its duties include “preservation” of trees and carrying out a census of existing trees.

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