

# 24,000ha of division's forests to become protected zone

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Pune: The Pune forest division is declaring approximately 24,000 hectares of forest area as a conservation reserve (CR) to protect wildlife and plant species within from human encroachment.

The decision in this regard has been taken in a meeting held in Mumbai, attended by senior forest officials including Dattatray Bharne, the state minister of forest.

Rahul Patil, deputy conservator of forest, Pune division, said they have prepared a preliminary map of the areas. "We will soon submit the proposal to the state and central government authorities to get statutory sanction," he said.

Declaration as a CR brings the zone security under the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972. Any development projects proposed here need clearance under the Forest Conservation Act, and from the state and national boards for wildlife, bringing in a measure of control.