

## Maharashtra to ease, expedite procedure for mangrove land transfer to forest department

04 December 2020



Mangroves along Palm Beach Road, Nerul, Navi Mumbai.(File photo)

The Maharashtra government has decided to expedite and ease the transfer process of mangrove areas under the control of state agencies to the forest department.

During a review meeting held on Thursday by state environment minister Aaditya Thackeray with the revenue, forest, environment departments, and district administrations on the protection status of Maharashtra's mangrove forests, it was decided that the revenue and forest departments would work together to speed up protection of the salt-tolerant trees.

While the Maharashtra government has notified 15,312 hectare (ha) as reserved forest under the Indian Forest Act (IFA), 1,500 ha is yet to be transferred by the revenue to the forest department for better protection as per directives of the Bombay high court in September 2018. Additionally, state agencies need to hand over approximately 2,000 ha.

Agencies such as the Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority have to demarcate, identify, and transfer mangrove areas under their jurisdiction first to the revenue department, which will then verify their submissions and transfer areas to the forest department.

Thackeray said, "In some places, the revenue and forest department data does not match, and there have been isolated stretches, formerly identified as mangrove areas, which has been deleted since trees were not identified on them. So, to address this, we have decided that both departments (revenue and forest) should work in tandem and state agencies can hand over mangrove areas under joint supervision for speedy transfer and protection of such areas." From next month onwards, the entire process would be expedited, he said.

During Thursday's meeting, data were presented for four districts - Mumbai suburban, Thane, Palghar, and Raigad. For Mumbai suburban, data showed total mangrove area notified, as per the forest department record, was 3,948.5 ha while the same according to the revenue department was

3,723.4 ha. The revenue department claimed the entire mangrove land had been handed over to the forest department but the latter said 242 ha was yet to be handed over. An area of 27.48 ha was proposed for deletion while an inquiry into land rights settlement claims was pending across 1,750 ha by the sub-divisional officer.

State bodies such as Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation were yet to hand over mangroves under their jurisdiction. Similar discrepancies were identified for land transfer between forest and revenue department data for other districts.

“The idea is to get the undeclared mangroves under protection,” said Thackeray. He added that the first intent was to ensure all mangrove forests are protected under the IFA. “The confusion as to how much area belongs to which state agency will be clarified when all state bodies jointly study and assess each forest patch,” he said.

Thackeray added that it was decided on Thursday that the Mangrove Cell and the Mangrove Foundation should put together a mangrove protection plan. “Using environment compensation funds from various infrastructure projects... a plan must be formulated for expediting the process of declaration, checking the error margin of why deletion of mangrove area is taking place, and ensuring overall protection,” he said.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/maharashtra-to-ease-expedite-procedure-for-mangrove-land-transfer-to-forest-department/story-xGMmdKJGg56zhJb3G5kLaM.html>