

Printed from

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mangrove cover increases by 2.6sqkm in Karnataka

Jan 18, 2022, 04:15 AM IST

Mangaluru: While there has been a net increase of 17 sq km in the mangrove cover of the country compared to 2019 assessment report of Forest Survey of India (FSI), Karnataka stands third in the country after Odisha and Maharashtra in gains.

While Odisha gained 8 sq km and Maharashtra (4 sq km), Karnataka's gain was 2.57 sq km.

Karnataka's mangroves in the three coastal districts account for 12.61 sq kms and represent 0.26% of country's mangroves. West Bengal has the highest accounting for 42.33% at 2,114 sq km and Gujarat at 23.94% having mangroves of 1175 sq km. Third in the list is the Andaman and Nicobar Islands accounting 12.34% covering 616 sq kms.

What is significant for Karnataka is that, despite the low percentage of mangroves cover, the regeneration percentage is high. Forest Survey of India assesses the forest cover mapping of the country on a two-year cycle using satellite data. The main objective is presentation of the information on forest resources of the country at state and district level.

Of the 12.61 sq km, the largest tract is in Uttara Kannada at 10.47 sq kms, followed by Udupi at 1.69 sq km and Dakshina Kannada at 0.45 sq km. Interestingly, Udupi has the largest tract of moderately dense mangrove at 1.54 sq km and Uttara Kannada has 10.19 sq kms of open mangroves, the highest among the three districts. Dakshina Kannada has 0.09 sq km of very dense mangroves and the other two districts have none.

The current assessment by FSI shows Mangrove cover in the country is 4,992 sq km, which is 0.15 % of the country's total geographical area. Very dense mangrove comprises 1,475 sq km (29.55 %); moderately dense mangrove is 1,481 sq km (29.67 %) while open mangroves constitute an area of 2,036 sq km (40.78 %). There has been a net increase of 17 sq km in the mangrove cover of the country as compared to 2019 assessment.

The change compared to 2019 assessment is positive for all three districts in Karnataka gaining 2.57 sq km, with Uttara Kannada being the largest beneficiary at 1.97 sq km followed by Dakshina Kannada (0.45 sq km) and Udupi at 0.15 sq km.

Among the southern states, Goa has the highest mangrove cover at 27.34 sq kms but the regeneration in two years is 1.34 sq km. Kerala has the least mangrove cover at 9.36 sq kms and the assessment change in two years is 0.46 sq km.

The state of Forest Report has attributed the increase in mangrove cover mainly due to natural regeneration. Mangroves are important refuges of coastal biodiversity and act as bio-shields against extreme climatic events. Large populations, primarily rural, depend on Mangrove ecosystems for a wide variety of biomass dependent livelihoods.