



Northern Ridge Gets Reserved Forest Tag

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New Delhi: The Northern Ridge, spread over 137 hectares and located near Delhi University, has been declared a “reserved forest”. The process had been pending for nearly three decades. The tag of reserved forest gives legal protection to ridges and allows for steps to conserve them better.

A senior forest official said the department has been actively taking up the matter of getting the tag for ridges in Delhi. Parts of the south-central and southern ridges are already in the process of becoming reserved forests.

An area is declared “reserved forest” after it is notified under Section 20 of Indian Forest Act. However, preliminary notification is done under Section 4 of the Act.

A forest official said, “In the case of Northern Ridge and parts of other ridges, the notification under Section 4 was done in 1994. After preliminary notification, a forest settlement officer is appointed to settle the rights or claims made on the land. An area gets the reserved forest tag after it is notified under Section 20, declaring it encumbrance- and encroachment-free. No new claim or right can be made to it in future.”

The official added that permanent fencing of the boundary of the area is done to ensure that no encroachment takes place.

Ishwar Singh, principal chief conservator of forests, said, “The Northern Ridge and six villages located in Southern Ridge were notified as reserved forest recently. The notification under Section 20 is in the pipeline for parts of areas situated in South-central Ridge and Southern Ridge.”

Another official added about 10 villages in Southern Ridge are in the process of getting notified under the Act.

Sohail Madan of Bombay Natural History Society and a member of Ridge Management Board said the declaration of the ridge as a reserved forest was the “first and an important step in the long journey of its protection”.

Besides, the environment and forest department has also appointed the divisional commissioner (revenue) as the appellate authority to hear appeals against orders passed by the forest settlement officer under the Act.

The forest department has been acting on NGT orders after a petition was filed to demarcate Southern Ridge. The tribunal had last year directed that for areas that are not encroached and have been demarcated and handed over to the forest department, the final notification under Section 20 of the Indian Forest Act should be issued forthwith.

Delhi has four ridges — Northern, Central, South-central and Southern — with a total area of about 7,777 hectares.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/northern-ridge-gets-reserved-forest-tag/articleshow/89166441.cms>