

Over 800 acres in Aarey milk colony likely to be declared as reserve forest

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The forest department plan will include rehabilitation of tribals within the areas declared as reserve forest. (File)

More than 800 acres in Aarey Milk Colony, adjacent to [Sanjay Gandhi](#) National Park (SGNP), may be declared as reserve forest, 200 acres more than the 600 acres proposed earlier. The colony in the western suburbs is spread over 3,000 acres.

On September 3, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had announced that a 600-acre land parcel in the colony would be declared as reserve forest. Following the announcement, on September 11, principal secretaries of forest and environment departments, Aarey administration, SGNP officials along with state Environment and Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray surveyed the areas in Aarey to be brought under protection.

Milind Mhaikar, principal secretary (forest), confirmed that the proposed reserve forest has been increased to 800 acres following the survey.

Under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, once this area is declared as reserved forest, the land will become unavailable for development. Section 4 of IFA means the government intends to declare the land as reserve forest by appointing a forest settlement officer (FSO). The officer will invite suggestions and objections from people, giving them 45 days, following which it shall issue a notification in the official gazette.

The area of the reserved forest excludes the land on which the controversial car shed for the 33.5-km-long underground Colaba-Bandra-Seepz Metro Line 1 corridor is to come up.

The forest department plan will include rehabilitation of tribals within the areas declared as reserve forest. It also plans to introduce eco-tourism and night safari.

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