

9,000-hactare land available in Yamuna floodplains for plantation: Delhi forest dept

Synopsis

The forest department said it has conducted a detailed analysis of the land available for plantation in the Yamuna floodplains, considering the Centre's project to rejuvenate 13 major rivers, including the Yamuna, through forestry intervention.



The Union Environment Ministry had, in March, released the detailed project reports (DPRs) for the rejuvenation of the 13 rivers.

Land measuring around 9,000 hectares is available in the [Yamuna](#) floodplains, which could be used for raising plantation suitable to the river ecology and compensatory afforestation for projects of national importance, the [Delhi Development Authority \(DDA\)](#) has been informed by the [city forest department](#).

The DDA has repeatedly raised the issue of "shortage" of land for greening activities in the national capital.

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project to rejuvenate 13 major rivers, including the Yamuna, through forestry intervention.

The Union Environment Ministry had, in March, released the detailed project reports (DPRs) for the rejuvenation of the 13 rivers.

The DPRs focus on protection, afforestation, catchment treatment, ecological restoration, moisture conservation, livelihood improvement, income generation and ecotourism by developing riverfronts and eco-parks.

According to the Centre, the activities proposed in the DPRs will help increase the green cover, reduce soil erosion, recharge the water table and aid carbon dioxide sequestration, in addition to benefits in the form of non-timber forest produce.

"As per the directions of the chief secretary, a detailed analysis of the land available for plantations in the Yamuna floodplains has been done, taking into consideration the prescription of the DPR for forestry intervention for the rejuvenation of the Yamuna and O-zone," read a forest department communication to the DDA.

Land measuring at least 5,532 hectares is available in the O-zone. Overall, the available area in the Yamuna floodplains is around 9,000 hectares, it said.

The department asked the DDA to provide inputs on the analysis, considering the "acute need for land for compensatory afforestation and plantation, and transplantation, which often hinders the progress of important projects of national importance".

It said the 9,000 hectares of land in the river floodplains is in addition to 2,480 hectares of land, which has been encroached upon or developed since 2009.

According to forest department officials, Delhi's green cover can be increased from 23 per cent at present to 25 per cent by 2025 if suitable plantation is raised in the river floodplains.

Raising the issue of land scarcity in Delhi, the DDA had earlier asked the forest department to revise the compensatory plantation scheme guidelines and bring down the number of saplings to be planted for every tree felled from 10 to two.

The land-owning agency had also written to the Union Environment Ministry, requesting it to allow compensatory afforestation for all projects undertaken in Delhi and the neighbouring states in view of the shortage of land in the capital.

According to the guidelines issued under the Forest Conservation Act, compensatory afforestation is to be done on suitable non-forest land, equivalent to the area proposed for diversion, at the cost of the user agency.

A senior DDA official said under the Master Plan of Delhi, it was decided to set aside 15 per cent of the area for recreational land use under which all parks, green belts and forests are maintained.

"Against the 15 per cent area identified for recreational green use, the total forest and tree cover in the capital is now over 23 per cent, according to the latest State of Forest Report," the official said.

Most of the recreational green areas identified under the master plan are already saturated with plantations. Other vacant land parcels available in small patches are required for basic developmental needs of the citizens of Delhi, officials said.



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