



To,

Date:13.07.2021

Mr. Brijesh Kumar, IFS,
Principal Secretary (E&E) to Government,
Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment
Bengaluru – 560001.



Sub: Citizen's demand Stay on felling of Trees in Singanayakanahalli Lake

Dear Sir,

The Government of Karnataka recently announced that 6316 fully grown trees on the banks of the Singanayakanahalli would be felled to develop the lake into a feeder lake for several lakes in the vicinity and to feed treated water for irrigation. This decision by the Government was without providing adequate time for proper public consultation.

In response, Namma Bengaluru Foundation (NBF) led a team of Urban Conservationists, Citizen Scientists, Artists, Citizen Activists, Wildlife enthusiasts, Wildlife photographers visited the Singanayakanahalli lake. This group was led by Vinod Jacob, General Manager, NBF, Vijay Nishanth, Urban Conservationist and other volunteers who studied the area.

The group was pleasantly surprised to note that banks of the lake has evolved into an ecologically diverse area in a self-sustaining manner. They were astonished to find the thick dense forest like foliage and full-grown trees which are over 25-30 years old with various birds, bird nests, moths, and butterflies. They also spotted peacocks which is a schedule 1 wildlife species on the ground. They also found a few endangered species of birds in the area. This forest has been inhabited by all of them and has become a lively habitat. This area also has a large grassland where cattle from the neighbouring villages graze. A couple of years back the forest department had taken interest in this land and planted Pongam saplings amidst the natural flora which is visible.

On 24th June 2021, Namma Bengaluru Foundation along with experts met the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) Mr Sanjay Mohan IFS, B Venkatesh, IFS. Chief Conservator of Forests CCF & Deputy Conservator of Forest Mr Ravi Shankar and submitted a memorandum requesting them to give citizens 3 months' time to assess & give reports on the project. Following a petition filed by NBF, DCF Ravishankar extended the time to file objections by another 20 days & assured physical public consultation process 3 months down the line.

On 2nd July 2021, Namma Bengaluru Foundation with experts met Sri Anant Hegde Ashisar Chairman - Karnataka Biodiversity Board and handed over the memorandum & requested him to look into the matter. The team requested him to organise a joint visit with all stakeholders before going ahead with the project. Mr Ashisar assured that he will look into the Hebbal-Nagawara Valley project where more than 6,316 trees will be axed to rejuvenate

Singanayakanahalli lake. He has also instructed the Karnataka Bio Diversity Committee members to inspect the lake and submit a report.

On 31 July 2021, NBF organised a webinar with Dr T V Ramachandra - Professor, Centre for Ecological Science, IISC & Dr Nandini N, Professor & Principal Investigator, Department of Environmental Science, Bangalore University who interacted with Lake Groups, Activists & citizens to discuss on how to save Trees and still rejuvenate Singanayakanahalli Lake. The outcome of the meeting is as below:

- The Karnataka Biodiversity Board should intervene and advise the minor irrigation department to ensure the mitigation of the environmental damages which could be caused due to axing of more than 6,316 trees to develop Singanayakanahalli lake.
- As per the environment norms, the project needs to present comparative assessment of alternatives with the environmental impacts. It appears the agency has not looked at alternative alignment options to minimise the damage to the environment. There is a need for the Karnataka Biodiversity Board to intervene and advise the implementing agency to ensure mitigation of the environmental damages
- It was suggested that there should be planting of location specific local tree species (saplings at least 2 -3 years old) in the buffer zones with the appropriate enclosures to prevent damages.
- There is presence of nutrients and heavy metals in the secondary treated water. This has disastrous health impacts. Options for integrating constructed wetlands for removal of nutrients and heavy metals should be considered.
- A joint field visit & meeting with Forest Department, Minor Irrigation, Karnataka Biodiversity Board and experts should be organised before taking up the project.

While Namma Bengaluru Foundation and its partners completely support the lake rejuvenation project, but it should not be at the cost of destruction of the trees and the greenery. Namma Bengaluru Foundation and its citizen groups, volunteers strongly urge the DCF BBMP and Forest department to investigate this matter of concern and arrive at a consensus to save these trees and the natural habitat. The citizens of Bengaluru are distraught with the rapid concretization of the city and axing of thousands of trees which will be an ecological disaster. This ecosystem has supported the nearby villages for many generations. The trees are protecting the catchment area which has been recharging the groundwater for decades.

We request and appeal to the concerned Departments to refrain from taking any action and initiate a proper full-fledged public consultation of three months, considering the pandemic, and give the citizens time to come out with their complete detailed study of the area with technical advice from experts and to submit their report on this project.

Your Sincerely,

Best Regards,

Vinod Jacob.

General Manager