



Policy to Manage Sacred Groves

Why in News?

Recently, in a judgment [the Supreme Court](#) told the Union government to **create a comprehensive policy** for the [management of sacred groves](#) across the country.

Key Points

- **Supreme Court's Recommendation:**
 - The Union government was urged to spearhead efforts for the protection of sacred groves through the [Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change \(MoEF&CC\)](#).
 - While wildlife and habitat management has been primarily the responsibility of State governments, the Court emphasized the importance of preserving sacred groves as part of cultural and traditional rights.
- **Action Plan for Sacred Groves:**
 - The MoEF&CC was tasked with developing a plan for a **nationwide survey of sacred groves, including identifying their area and extent.**
 - The Union government was directed to **issue strict instructions to prevent the reduction of sacred groves due to deforestation or land use changes.**
 - The boundaries of the groves must be marked but remain flexible for future growth.
- **Court's Directives for Rajasthan:**
 - The Court directed the Rajasthan government to map sacred groves using both on-ground and satellite methods.
 - These groves should be classified as forests and granted legal protection under the [Wild Life \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#), regardless of their size.
- **Empowerment of Traditional Communities:**
 - The Court suggested empowering traditional communities, especially under the [Forest Rights Act, 2006](#), as custodians of sacred groves.
 - These communities should be given authority to regulate harmful activities to preserve their legacy of stewardship and promote [sustainable conservation](#).

Sacred Groves

- Sacred groves are **forest patches traditionally protected by local communities** due to their **religious and cultural importance.**
- These groves also play a **significant role in conserving local biodiversity.**
- Sacred groves are commonly found in **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.**