

Natural springs at a low ebb in Wayanad

70% of natural springs in the district have vanished in four decades owing to anthropogenic interventions

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A study by the Department of Soil Survey and Conservation in Wayanad has found that nearly 70% of the natural springs in the district have vanished in the past four decades owing to anthropogenic interventions.

The study is being conducted on the basis of a base map (top of sheet) prepared by the Survey of India in 1972. The study is to assess the present status of upper-reach water sources, such as the origin of streams in forests and plantations, P.U. Das, district soil conservation officer, who is leading the study, said.

Interventions

Anthropogenic interventions such as deforestation, sand and granite mining, destruction of wetlands and paddy fields, and changes in crop pattern have sounded the death knell of the natural springs, Mr. Das said.

Wayanad, the northern tip



The heart-shaped natural pond on the Chembra peak in Wayanad district. A study reveals that nearly two-thirds of the natural springs in Wayanad district have vanished in four decades.

of the Deccan plateau, is spread over 1,63,570 hectares, including 24,919 hectares of paddy fields. However, 44% of the paddy fields

in the Kabani river basin have been irrecoverably lost after many in the farming community shifted to cash crops such as areca nut and

plantain. These paddy fields used to act as major reservoirs of natural springs, especially during monsoon.

Monocrop plantations of

teak, eucalyptus, and acacia established by the Forest Department after clear felling natural forests and construction of huge trenches on the

fringes of forests to mitigate man-animal conflict have also adversely affected the springs and streams.

The study finds that nearly 1,210 km of the 3,492-km green canopy, especially of bamboo groves, along the banks of rivers and streams in the district, has been destroyed during the period.

Apart from anthropogenic interventions, natural destruction of bamboo groves after massive blooming of the plant recently also caused loss of green canopy.

The study is being conducted as a part of executing an eco-restoration and water conservation project in the Kabani river basin.

The river basin has been divided into 21 micro-water-sheds and 40 employees of the department are engaged in the study. The State government has earmarked ₹10 crore for the execution of the project and the study report will be submitted to the government by the end of December, Mr. Das added.