

Soil conservation project planned in catchment areas

₹8-crore project to divide area into 21 watershed regions

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Covering around 11,000 hectares of land, the Department of Soil Survey and Soil Conservation will implement a major soil conservation project in the catchment areas of Kakkayam and Peruvannamoozhi dams in Kozhikode district.

The long-term project, estimated to cost ₹8 crore, will be implemented after dividing the project area into 21 watershed regions.

Inauguration

Minister for Agriculture V.S. Sunil Kumar will officially launch the conservation work under the scheme on February 22.

A reception committee comprising members of Chakkittappara and Koorachundu grama panchayats has been formed to make the inaugural event a success with the participation of farmers and other beneficiaries of the project.

Under the new scheme, the catchment areas within the forest and outside regions will be covered. Officials say nine proposed watershed projects will be confined to the forest land. Seven watershed projects are in agricultural land, which will benefit local farmers. The remaining five are partly in forest areas, they add.

The excess accumulation of soil in the reservoir area as a result of soil erosion is the main reason for introducing the new conservation scheme. According to



Long-term project: A view of the proposed area for implementing the soil conservation project near Kuttiyadi reservoir in Kozhikode district. ■ K. RAGESH

officials, it has been constantly affecting the storage capacity of both the dams. In the priority list, there are three watershed projects on the Kakkayam dam premises, which will be implemented at a cost of ₹2.58 crore under the supervision of Koorachundu panchayat.

Financial aid

As part of the new scheme, the Koorachundu grama panchayat has already received financial aid of ₹15 lakh for constructing retaining walls for the reservoir, water harvesting structures and disposal drains. The panchayat is expected to complete the first phase of works in two months.

The cooperation of the Chakkittappara panchayat will be sought for the implementation of four watershed

projects that come under their jurisdiction.

According to officials, the panchayat will be spending approximately ₹6 crore for the conservation schemes within their limits. The activities planned in the agricultural land mainly include the construction of laterite fencing, bio-fencing, rain water harvesting pits, coir geo-textile covering and large-scale planting of saplings.

In government land, the soil conservation works will be undertaken after e-tendering.

Construction of more check dams to reduce the chances of soil erosion is also under consideration. At present, there are 13 saddle dams in the reservoir area, which have been restored spending a separate fund by the Irrigation Department.