

Coastal conservation study on track

Data will be useful in developing fisheries policies

Scientists from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) working on a project to evolve a conservation plan for biologically sensitive areas along the Indian coast have expressed satisfaction over their progress as the project completes the second of its three years.

The present phase of the study covers the coast between Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, and one of the key efforts has been to identify Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA) along the coast. Some of the EBSAs include Kovalam, the wedge bank off Kollam coast, Chettuva and the Gulf of Mannar.

This is the first time that a study of this nature is being undertaken in the country and one of the key problems was evolution of a proper methodology, said a senior scientist on Wednesday on the sidelines of a review meeting at CMFRI. While the existing methodologies were best suited to temperate and cold conditions, what was needed in India was a methodology for the tropical conditions.

The data, still under processing, will be useful in developing new policies, as well as help in marine spatial planning and ecosystem-based fisheries management, said the scientist. Stakeholders are given a key role in conservation efforts, with the knowledge of traditional fishermen being utilised in the study.

Former CMFRI principal scientist E. Vivekanandan told researchers at the review meeting that the data from the study would help recognise the biodiversity value of the areas in terms of the presence of species such as corals and birds. There are 14 scientists working on the project with K. Vinod, principal scientist at CMFRI, leading the team.