

**Ministry of Environment and Forests
Wildlife Section**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife
(14th meeting) held on 4th May 2009 in Paryavaran Bhavan under the Chairmanship
of Hon'ble Minister of State(Forests and Wildlife.)**

A meeting of the Standing Committee of NBWL was convened on the 4th May 2009 in Room No. 403, Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi, under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister of State for Environment & Forests (Forests & Wildlife).

At the outset, Hon'ble Chairman welcomed all the members and informed that considering the urgency and strategic importance of border roads, this meeting had been convened. He appreciated the cooperation provided by both the official as well as the non-official members in the meetings of the Standing Committee of NBWL held in the past. The Chairman hoped that the delegates realize the strategic importance of the border roads, especially under the present circumstances when the country is facing threats to its national integrity from all quarters.

It was followed by discussions on the agenda items as follows:

Agenda item No. 1: Confirmation of minutes of the 13th meeting of Standing Committee of NBWL held on 12th December 2008

The Member-Secretary informed that the minutes of the 13th meeting of Standing Committee of NBWL held on 12.12.2008 were circulated to the members on 12th January 2009. He also informed that no comments have been received in this context. In view of this, the Committee unanimously confirmed the minutes of the last meeting without making any change.

Agenda Item No.2: Proposals for diversion of National Parks & Sanctuaries.

2.1. Diversion of 126 ha of forestland from Changthang Cold Desert Wildlife Sanctuary for construction of metallic road for transportation of men/material involving upgradation of existing katcha road form Karzok to Chumar, (Indo-China Border), J&K.

The Member-Secretary informed the Committee that the ITBP had sought clearance for construction of the five roads falling within the Chang Thang Cold Desert Sanctuary, viz;

- (a) Karzok to Chumar (126 ha)*
- (b) Charste to Point 4433 (53 ha)*
- (c) Koyul to Zarsar (144 ha)*
- (d) Phobrang to Marsimik La (27 ha)*
- (e) Phobrang to Charste (72 ha)*

The Standing Committee of NBWL in its 11th meeting held on 22nd May 2008 had considered the proposal and decided for a site inspection. The Site inspection was conducted by Dr. M.K. Ranjithsinh & Dr. Asad Rehmani, members, Standing Committee of NBWL, and the report was placed before the Standing Committee for its consideration during the 12th meeting held on 18th August 2008. After discussion, the Standing Committee had approved the recommendations of the Site Inspecting team in which 4 out of 5 proposed roads (excluding **Karzok to Chumar**) were recommended with certain conditions, viz:

- (a) Charste to Point 4433 (53 ha)*
- (b) Koyul to Zarsar (144 ha) (With changed alignment)*
- (c) Phobrang to Marsimik La (27 ha)*
- (d) Phobrang to Charste (72 ha)*

However, the ITBP had certain reservations pertaining to the **Karzok to Chumar road** which was not recommended by the Standing Committee and the **realignment of Koyul to Zarsar Road**, which was recommended by the Standing Committee with conditions.

This was followed by a brief presentation by the representatives of the ITBP. The Deputy Inspector General, ITBP, while making the presentation, mentioned that the

proposed road from Karzok to Chumar was very important from the point of view of national security. He informed that in the alternate road suggested by the Standing Committee of NBWL earlier, i.e Nyoma-Niddar-Kynso-Chumar, the road from Niddar to Salsal La remains cut off for long periods due to heavy snow during winter and the road stretch between Niddar & Kynso was also prone to severe damage by avalanche during the winter. Sticking to original alignment, would save 30 to 40 days of fair weather which is not available if the revised alignment is followed. In case of any aggression, time is of essence. Therefore, re-consideration of original alignment for construction of road from Karzok to Chumar was sought.

He also mentioned that Chumar has emerged as an area of strategic importance and therefore, the route from Karzok to Chumar assumed greater importance and that the proposed road was aimed at providing a viable alternate approach to Chumar in case of hostilities in Hanle to Chumar sub-sector.

Mr. Sada Kant, Joint Secretary, MHA, informed that the recommendations of the Standing Committee of NBWL in this regard had also been examined by other stakeholders also including Military Intelligence. However, the unanimous view was to keep the alignment as originally proposed by the ITBP for this road.

After the presentation, the members discussed the reservations made by the ITBP. Dr. M.K. Ranjitsinh informed that he had very good knowledge of the area in question and since there was an existing road already available which could be upgraded saving the one of the largest habitat for the congregation of the Bar headed geese. Therefore, he was not in agreement with the submissions of ITBP.

Dr. Divyabhanusinh Chavda reiterating the supremacy of country's defence, pointed out that mandate of the NBWL and its Standing Committee was conservation of flora & fauna. Therefore, if there were alternatives available, those should be considered favourably by the ITBP.

The Secretary (E&F) observed that in matters related to security of the country and border management, we should be guided by the advice of the ITBP and the concerned security and military agencies because they are in a position to best assess the tactical and operational requirements.

After detailed deliberations, the reservations of Dr. M. K. Ranjitsinh & Dr Chavda were taken on record. However, considering the defence needs of the country, the Committee recommended the proposal for construction of road from Karzok to Chumar, as originally proposed by the ITBP subject to the compliance of conditions proposed by the Chief Wildlife Warden, Jammu & Kashmir.

2.2. Diversion of 144 ha of forestland from Changthang Cold Desert Wildlife Sanctuary for construction of metallic road for transportation of men/material involving upgradation of existing katcha road form Koyal to Zarsar (Indo-China Border), J&K.

A brief presentation by the DIG, ITBP was made explaining the strategic importance and convenience offered in their original proposal for this road. It was informed that this road was necessary for the faster connectivity. It becomes very important when China has brought its roads up to the international border which is hardly 2 kms from the Zarsar outpost.

Dr. M.K. Ranjitsinh was of the opinion that the road may not be cleared till the Hanle to Zarsar road is diverted as suggested by the inspecting team. Mr. Sada Kant, Joint Secretary (Border Management), MHA assured the Committee to take necessary action to comply this condition. However, he requested not to make it a pre-condition for construction of Koyul to Zarsar road. He promised to take appropriate approvals to meet the conditions as suggested by the inspecting team which would take some time, say five to six months, due to procedural reasons.

After deliberations, re-considering the proposal, the Committee, taking a majority view, recommended the original alignment of the Koyul to Zarsar road in light of the strategic importance of the road and defence needs of the country as underlined by the ITBP and MHA. Considering the assurance given by the Joint Secretary, MHA, as indicated in the foregoing para, the Committee also de-linked the pre-condition of construction of Hanle to Zarsar road before construction of Koyul to Zarsar road, with the understanding that ITBP/MHA would fulfill the assurance at the earliest as it was of utmost importance for the conservation of the highly endangered species of Tibetan Gazelle.

2.3. Proposal for construction of border roads by ITBP passing through Chitkul Rakchham Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Member-Secretary informed the Committee about the proposal by ITBP for construction of border roads passing through the Chitkul Rakchham Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh. It was followed by a presentation made by the DIG, ITBP.

The Chief Conservator of Forests (WL), State of Himachal Pradesh, informed that the State Government has recommended the proposal subject to the condition that width of the road would be confined to only 6 meters. The ITBP personnel & the Joint Secretary, MHA, informed that width of road to be kept as 8 meters instead of 6 meters, as it was not enough for plying of heavy vehicles and ammunition.

Dr. Bibabh Talukdar, Member, observed that the proposal had been approved by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh in the capacity of the Chairman, State Board for Wildlife, as the Board had not been constituted yet and that the Government of Himachal Pradesh had informed that they would get the proposal ratified by the full State Board for Wildlife after its constitution. It was against the statutory requirement under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. It was mentioned that under Section 29 of the Act, State Government can divert land from Sanctuary only in consultation with the State Board for Wildlife.

Considering the compliance of the statutory requirement, this proposal was deferred till it is recommended by the duly formed State Board for Wildlife and matter regarding the width of the proposed road was also sorted out with the State Government.

2.4. Construction of Chumsule-Demchok Road in Ladakh region by ITBP

The Member-Secretary informed the Committee about the proposal for construction of Chumsule-Demchok Road in the Ladakh region falling in the Chang Thang Cold desert Sanctuary. The representatives of the ITBP, however, informed that this was not their proposal and therefore, the Committee unanimously decided to defer the matter to the next meeting.

2.5. Diversion of 56.680 ha of forestland from Askot Wildlife Sanctuary for construction of Gunji-Kutti-Jollingkong motor road marg, Uttarkhand by ITBP

The Member-Secretary informed the Committee about the proposal for construction of Gunji-Kutti-Jollingkong motor road passing through the Askot Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttarakhand. A brief presentation was made by the DIG, ITBP on the proposal. He also apprised the Committee of the strategic importance of the road for better discharge of duties for border protection. The project proponents informed that the proposal has already been cleared by Hon'ble Supreme Court subject to the recommendations of the Standing Committee of NBWL.

Member Secretary advised the project proponents to send a copy of the approval of the Hon'ble Supreme Court to the Ministry.

After detailed discussions, the Committee unanimously decided to recommend the proposal subject to the compliance of the conditions specified by the Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttarakhand.

2.6. Diversion of 53.607 ha of forest land from Askot Wildlife Sanctuary for construction of Sobla to Tedang motor marg, Uttarakhand by ITBP.

The Member-Secretary requested the project proponents to brief the Committee about the proposal for construction of Sobla to Tedang motor road passing through the Askot Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttarakhand.

A brief presentation was made by the DIG, ITBP on the proposal. It was informed that on the other side of the border, the Chinese had built motorable roads very close to the border post. Therefore, it was necessary to have appropriate infrastructure to meet the demands of any exigency.

After detailed discussions, the Committee unanimously decided to recommend the proposal subject to the compliance of conditions specified by the Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttarakhand.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

List of participants attending the 14th meeting of the Standing Committee of NBWL held on 4th May 2009 at Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi, under the Chairmanship of Shri S. Regupathy, Hon'ble Minister of State for Environment & Forests (Forests & Wildlife).

1	Shri Vijai Sharma, Secretary (E&F)	Member
2	Shri P.R. Mohanty, DGF&SS	Member
3	Shri M.B. Lal, Addl. DGF(WL)	Member-Secretary
4	Dr. M.K. Ranjitsinh	Member
5	Dr. Divyabhanusinh Chavda	Member
6	Dr. B. Talukdar	Member
7	Shri P.R. Sinha, Director, WII, Dehradun	Member
8	Shri.B.K. Patnaik CWLW, Orissa	Member
9	Shri Sobaran Lal, Deputy Director, Representing the CWLW, Uttarakhand	Member
10	Dr. R.B. Lal, IGF(WL)	Invitee
11	Shri Sada Kant, Joint Secretary (Border Management), Ministry of Home Affairs	Invitee
12	Dr. Anmol Kumar DIG(WL)	Invitee
13	Shri S.S. Harta, DIG, ITBP	Invitee
14	Shri Deepak Khanna, CWLW, Jammu & Kashmir	Invitee
15	Shri Sanjeeva Pandey, CCF(WL), Himachal Pradesh	Invitee
16	Shri Jigmet Takpa, CF(WL), Ladakh, J&K	Invitee
17	Shri A. Anbarasu, Deputy Secretary, MHA	Invitee
18	Shri P.K. Dudeja, Desk Officer, MHA	Invitee
