

## **MINUTES OF 49<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EXPERT COMMITTEE FOR DECLARATION OF THE ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE (ESZ) AROUND PROTECTED AREAS HELD ON 2<sup>nd</sup> MAY, 2022 THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING**

The 49<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Expert Committee on Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) was held under the Chairmanship of Shri Tanmay Kumar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2022 through Video Conferencing. The minutes of 48<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Expert Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 was also approved for declaring/submitting additional information of the ESZ around the protected areas. The list of the participants is Annexed.

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the members of the Expert Committee and other participants. After a brief introduction of the participants, the Chairman invited the attention of all State Governments/UT administrations and ask them to translate the boundaries of protected area and its Eco-sensitive zone on cadastral map and get it approved by Revenue and Forest authorities in the respective State/ UT. The map can be made available in the public domain for the ease of decision making. Subsequent to the deliberation on the issue, he invited the State Government representatives to present their proposals as per items listed in the agenda. Agenda-wise detail of deliberations is as given below.

### **Item No. 3.1: Baghmara Pitcher Plant Sanctuary, Meghalaya**

The draft notification for declaration of the ESZ around Baghmara Pitcher Plant Sanctuary, Meghalaya was published vide S.O. 2408(E) dated 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2021, for inviting stakeholders/public comments. The salient features of the notification are as follows:

Area of PA : 0.027 sq.km

ESZ Area : 0.2225 sq. km (3.6 ha on ground truthing)

Extent of ESZ : 0.2 meters to 857 meters

*[The minimum extent of Eco-sensitive Zone was justified by the State Government that 'the Sanctuary is located in the heart of Baghmara Town, it is surrounded by human habitations and horticultural plantations and therefore, there is hardly any area for establishment of Eco-sensitive Zone around the Sanctuary']*

The representative of Govt of Meghalaya, made a presentation on the proposed ESZ around Baghmara Pitcher Plant Sanctuary, Meghalaya. The State apprised that the area is very rich in Pitcher Plant (*Nepenthes khasiana*) species which are of ecological and medicinal significance. Besides, pitcher plant, many endemic flora and fauna are found in the Sanctuary. The committee noted that the comments received on the draft notification for ESZ around Baghmara Pitcher Plant Sanctuary were duly considered by the State Govt.

The Committee observed that the Protected area as mentioned in the Gazette Notification is 2.27 ha whereas as part of the presentation, the representative of the State Govt mentioned the area as 3.65 ha, to which the state justified that the as per the ground truthing done recently through new available technology the area comes out to be 3.65 ha. State clarified that the proposed amendment in area of PA from 2.27 ha to 3.65 ha is only with reference to the figure with no change in the existing coordinates of PA. On the issue of amended notification of PA in this regard, State clarified that amendment notification of PA has not been published yet.

In the absence of revised notification of the Sanctuary, Chairman asked the State for:

- i. Appropriate justification wrt the proposed amendment in the area of PA;
- ii. Written confirmation on the fact that there is no change in the coordinates of PA referred in the draft ESZ notification with reference to the proposed amendment in area of PA from 2.27 ha to 3.65 ha; and
- iii. In case of any variation in the coordinates of PA and ESZ as referred in the draft notification *vis-à-vis* the area proposed in the presentation fresh draft notification to be submitted to the Ministry for stakeholder consultation after notification of amendment to PA notification.
- iv. The proposed ESZ Map to be converted into the Cadastral Map signed by both Local DFO and Revenue Officer.

*Based on the deliberations held and presentation made, the Committee deferred the proposal for the clarification on the area of the Protected Area.*

### **Item No. 3.2: Nokrek National Park, Meghalaya**

The draft notification for declaration of ESZ around Nokrek National Park, Meghalaya was earlier published on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 but the validity of the notification lapsed on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2017 due to non-submission of additional

information. Later, the draft was re-notified on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2018 and again lapsed second time on 02<sup>nd</sup> May 2020 due to non submission of required information in time by the State Govt. Thereafter, on receipt of revised proposal the draft was again re-notified on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2021, for inviting stakeholders/public comments.

The representative of Govt of Meghalaya, made a presentation on the proposed ESZ around Nokrek National Park, Meghalaya. The salient features of the notification are as follows:

Area of PA : 47.48 sq. km  
ESZ Area : 224 sq. km.  
Extent of ESZ : 0.272 to 6.976 km

The representative of the State Govt. apprised that the proposed Eco-sensitive Zone around Nokrek National Park is situated at the tri-junction of East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills and South Garo Hills Districts. The Park also conserves, protect and provides shelter to endangered and threatened floral and faunal species including *Citrus indica Tanaka*, *Nepenthes khasiana*, *Paphiopedilum venustum*. The comments received on the draft notification were duly considered by the State Govt.

The committee members suggested that the commercial mining should be kept as prohibited activities. The State Government clarified that the mining is already under the prohibited category of activities. The committee observed that since the area supports endangered and threatened biodiversity, one expert in the field of flora and fauna should be there in the monitoring committee, to which the state clarified that an expert in biodiversity is mentioned in the monitoring committee in the draft notification which shall be retained as such. The proposed ESZ Map to be converted into the Cadastral Map signed by both Local DFO and Revenue Officer.

*Based on the deliberations held and presentation made, the Committee recommended for the finalisation of the draft notification for declaration of ESZ around Nokrek National Park with an area of 224 sq km and ESZ extent of 0.272 to 6.976 km.*

### **Item No. 3.3: Deepar Beel Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam**

The draft notification for declaration of the ESZ around Deepar Beel Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam was published vide S.O. 3494(E) dated 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2021.

The representative of Govt of Assam requested for the deferment of the proposal as the State Government have received a number of objections on the draft notification and a public consultation is required to be held. The proposed ESZ Map to be converted into the Cadastral Map signed by both Local DFO and Revenue Officer.

*The item was deferred for discussion on the request of the State Government.*

#### **Item No. 3.4: Rupi Bhabha Wildlife Sanctuary, Himachal Pradesh**

The draft notification for declaration of the ESZ around Rupi Bhabha Wildlife Sanctuary, Himachal Pradesh was published vide S.O. 2777(E) dated 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2021, for inviting stakeholders/public comments.

The representative of Govt of Himachal Pradesh, made a presentation on the proposed ESZ around Rupi Bhabha Wildlife Sanctuary. The salient features of the notification are as follows:

Area of PA :503 sq. km

ESZ Area :75.62 sq. km

Extent of ESZ :0 to 3.5 km

*[Zero extent of Eco-sensitive Zone towards three sides of the Sanctuary is because this Wildlife Sanctuary has important corridor/connectivity/ ecologically sensitive patches with Great Himalayan National Park and Pin Valley National Park on North and North Western side respectively. On North-Eastern side the Wildlife Sanctuary shares its boundaries with the proposed ESZ of Lippa Asrang Wildlife Sanctuary forming corridor for movement of Wildlife and on South and South Western Side the sanctuary closely aligns with the Sutlej river and its catchment, therefore it itself works as a corridor]*

The committee observed that towards the Southernmost part of the protected area, zero extent has been proposed to which the State justified that the area is left out as it is the catchment area of Sutlej River with agriculture fields and human habitation; they also clarified that no mining activity is carried out at this site. The committee advised the State Govt. to explore the possibility of adding the agriculture area in the proposed ESZ as no restrictions are imposed on agriculture activity in the notification. The committee also observed that the ESZ should be a closed loop around the protected area while in the present case at one point where the boundary of Wls adjoins proposed ESZ of another protected area of Lippa Asrang Wildlife

Sanctuary, it was kept open. The committee advised the State Govt. to mark zero extent in the map itself towards the adjoining WLS. The committee also noted variations in the monitoring committee in the draft notification and the one presented during the meeting to which the state clarified that the monitoring committee mentioned in the draft notification is correct and shall be retained. The committee asked the State Govt to explore the possibility of including more area to the Eco-sensitive zone and provide justification for zero extent in all directions. The proposed ESZ Map to be converted into the Cadastral Map signed by both Local DFO and Revenue Officer.

*Based on the deliberations held and presentation made, the Committee recommended the proposal for declaration of Eco-sensitive Zone around Rupi Bhabha Wildlife Sanctuary with an area of 75.62 sq. km and extent of zero (0) to 3.5 km subject to receipt of appropriate justification for zero extent from the State Govt for inclusion in the notification, in reference to above cited deliberations.*

### **Item No. 3.5: Nandini Wildlife Sanctuary, Jammu and Kashmir**

The draft notification for declaration of ESZ around Nandini Wildlife Sanctuary, Jammu and Kashmir was earlier published on 27th April, 2016 and the validity of the notification expired on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 due to lack of submission of requisite information by the UT Government for finalisation. Later, the draft was re-notified vide S.O. 2918(E) dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2021, for inviting stakeholders/public comments. The salient features of the notification are as follows:

Area of PA :33.34 sq. km

ESZ Area :45.47 sq. km

Extent of ESZ : 0.277 to 2.10 km

The representative of Govt of Jammu and Kashmir made a presentation on the proposed ESZ around Nandini Wildlife Sanctuary. The representative of the State Govt apprised that the Nandini Wildlife Sanctuary lies in the Shivalik range of sub-Himalayas and has been notified by the Government vide SRO NO: 137 dated 10-04-1990. This wildlife protected area is located about 28 kms North of Jammu town. The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway passes through a part of the sanctuary dividing it into two unequal halves. The comments received on the draft notification were duly considered by the State Govt.

The representative of the State Govt further informed that the notified ESZ area of Surinsar Mansar Wildlife Sanctuary overlaps with the Nandini Wildlife Sanctuary and some part of the proposed ESZ area of Nandini ESZ is part of already notified ESZ of Surinsar-Mansar WL Sanctuary . Accordingly, the new revised area and extent of the ESZ for Nandinin WL Sanctuary are 43.20 sq. km and zero(0) to 2.10 km, respectively. The proposed ESZ Map to be converted into the Cadastral Map signed by both Local DFO and Revenue Officer.

*Based on the deliberations held and presentation made, the Committee recommended the proposal for declaration of Eco-sensitive Zone around Nandini Wildlife Sanctuary for consideration at later stage with ESZ area of 43.20 sq. km and ESZ extent zero(0) to 2.10 km subject to receipt of written justification for the proposed amended along with corroborating maps, coordinates and list of villages.*

### **Item No. 3.6: Tal Chappar Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan**

The draft notification for declaration of the ESZ around Tal Chappar Sanctuary, Rajasthan was published vide S.O. 3721(E) dated 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2021, for inviting stakeholders/public comments.

The Government of Rajasthan vide its letter number F4(01)WLC/CWLW/2009/1123 dated 29.04.2022 requested for deferment of the proposal as State has received over hundred of the objections during the public consultation carried out on 28.04.2022 and the processing of the comments will take time. The proposed ESZ Map to be converted into the Cadastral Map signed by both Local DFO and Revenue Officer.

*Consideration of the proposal was therefore deferred on the request of the State Government*

### **Item No. 3.7: Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh**

The draft notification for declaration of the ESZ around Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh was published vide S.O. 4616(E) dated 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2021, for inviting stakeholders/public comments.

The representative of Govt of Madhya Pradesh made a presentation on the proposed ESZ around Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary. The salient features of the notification are as follows:

Area of PA : 2.34550 sq. km

ESZ Area : 0.810 sq. km

Extent of ESZ: 0 to 0.100 km

*[The extent was justified by the State Government as "According to the Indore Development Plan 2021, village Mundla Nayta, Sanawadiya, Mirzapur, Ralamandal were included in the development plan and thus the residential area around the Ralamandal Sanctuary Eco-sensitive Zone was kept only 100 meters extent"]*

The representative of the State Government appraised that Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary is situated at a distance of 12 km from the Indore City and that Eco-sensitive zone of the Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary encompasses the reserve forest block compartment number 260. The highest point of the Sanctuary bears at an altitude of 790 meters. The Sanctuary is divided into three zones namely Wildlife Zone (152.550 ha), Tourist Zone (55 ha) and deer safari zone (27 ha). The Sanctuary provides habitat to about 268 number of Wildlife species some of which are rescued. The management plan for Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary is in place from 2021-22 to 2030-31.

The committee noted that the comments received on the draft notification have been duly considered by the State Government. The proposed ESZ Map to be converted into the Cadastral Map signed by both Local DFO and Revenue Officer.

*Based on the deliberations held and presentation made, the Committee recommended for the finalisation of the draft notification for declaration of ESZ around Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary with area of 0.810 sq km and ESZ extent of 0.100 km uniform.*

### **Item No. 3.8: Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha**

The final notification for declaration of ESZ around Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha was earlier published vide Notification S.O.1601 dated 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 with ESZ extent of 560 meters to 2 km and ESZ area of 466.40 kms . The boundary of the protected areas has been rationalised by the State Govt and the revised notification for the PA to the extant has been published. The need was felt for re-notification of the ESZ notification also corroborating with

the revised PA notification. Accordingly, the re-draft notification was published vide S.O. 821 dated 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2022.

The representative of Govt of Odisha made a presentation on the proposed ESZ around Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary. The salient features of the notification are as follows:

Area of Protected Area : (Bhitarkanika National Park : 145 sq km, Gahirmatha Marine Wildlife Sanctuary : 1453 sq km , Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary : (673 sq km)

Area of ESZ : 497.67 sq. km

Extent of ESZ : 0.10 to 8.7 km

The representative of the State Govt appraised that the protected area has the largest population of saltwater crocodile in India, largest heronry in Asia, largest arribada (mass nesting) site of Olive Ridley Turtles in the World and largest cetacean habitat of the State of Odisha. The area is also one of the Ramsar Sites of India.

The State Government informed that as per the 1975 notification of the PA the area of Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary was 672 sq km which after rationalization in 2020 was revised to 674 sq km after excluding 52 villages from the previous notification and adding 54 new villages.

The committee asked for clarification on minimum extent of 0.10 km to which the State clarified that it is towards the Dhamra port of Gahirmatha Wildlife Sanctuary. The committee noted that the comments received on the draft notification have been duly considered by the State Govt. The proposed ESZ Map to be converted into the Cadastral Map signed by both Local DFO and Revenue Officer.

*Based on the deliberations held and presentation made, the Committee recommended for the finalisation of the draft notification for declaration of ESZ around Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary with area of 497.67 sq km and ESZ extent of 0.10 to 8.7 km km .*

### **Item 3.9- Any other matter with the permission of the Chair**

At the end, the chairman requested all the States/UT Governments to submit the information as sought by the Ministry earlier for declaration of ESZ, at the earliest.



The meeting ended with thanks to the Chair.

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**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**Members of the Expert Committee**

1. Shri Tanmay Kumar, Additional Secretary, Chairperson, MoEF&CC.
2. Dr. S. Kerketta, Advisor, Scientist G, ESZ-Division, MoEF&CC.
3. Shri Rakesh Kumar Jagenia, DIG, Wildlife Division, MoEF&CC
4. Dr. K. Chandra Shekar, Scientist-'E', GB Pant Institute of Himalayan, Environment & Development, Almora.
5. Shri Shiv Pal Singh, DIGF, National Tiger Conservation Authority, New Delhi.
6. Shri Sanjay K. Agarwal, Deputy Director, Forest Survey of India.
7. Dr. Sanjay Singh, Scientist 'D', ICFRE.
8. Dr. Vishesh Uppal, WWF, New Delhi.
9. Shri Shudhanshu S. Dash, Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata.
10. Dr. Sandeep Kumar Raut. Town Planner, Town & Country Planner, TCPO, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs.
11. Central Water Commission, Environment Management Directorate, New Delhi.
12. Dr. Hitendra Padalia, Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun.

**Ministry of Environment, Forest And Climate Change**

13. Shri W. Bharat Singh, Director (SC-'F'), MoEF & CC.
14. Dr. Shruti Rai Bhardwaj, Additional Director (Sc-E), MoEF&CC.
15. Dr. Veenu Joon, Joint Director (SC-'D'), MoEF&CC.
16. Ms. Ritu Narwaria, (Consultant), ESZ-Division, MoEF&CC.

**Officials of Government of Assam**

17. Shri M. K. Yadava, CWLW, Government of Assam.

**Officials of Government of Jammu & Kashmir**

18. Dr. Kumar MK, Regional Wildlife Warden, Government of Jammu & Kashmir.

### **Officials of Government of Meghalaya**

19. Shri S. M. Sahai, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (CC, R&T), Government of Meghalaya.

### **Officials of Government of Madhya Pradesh**

20. Shri S. Sen, APCCF Wildlife, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
21. Shri H S Mohanta, CCF Indore, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
22. The Divisional Forest Officer, Indore, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

### **Official of Government of Odisha**

23. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Wildlife, Government of Odisha.
24. The Regional Chief Conservator of Forest, Bhubaneswar Circle, Government of Odisha.
25. The Divisional Forest Officer, Bhitarkanika, Government of Odisha
26. The Divisional Forest Officer, Mangrove Forest Division, Government of Odisha

### **Official of Government of Himachal Pradesh**

28. Shri Rajiv Kumar, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Wildlife, CLWL Wildlife, Government of Himachal Pradesh.
29. Shri K. Thirumal, Chief Conservator of Forest, Wildlife, Government of Himachal Pradesh.
30. The Divisional Forest Officer, Spiti, Government of Himachal Pradesh.
31. The Divisional Forest Officer, Sarahan, Government of Himachal Pradesh.

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