

MINUTES OF 53rd MEETING OF THE EXPERT COMMITTEE FOR DECLARATION OF ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE AROUND PROTECTED AREAS HELD ON 7th MARCH, 2024 IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE.

The 53rd 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 07th March, 2024 in hybrid mode at Teesta Hall, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi. The list of the participants is Annexed.

The representatives from State of Odisha joined the meeting physically while the representatives of rest of the States namely Karnataka, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh joined through Video Conferencing.

Opening remarks by Chairman: At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Expert members, representatives from States of Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, West Bengal and other participants of the meeting. The Chairman asked all the State Governments to submit the kml/shape files of notified Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ's) and cadastral maps of the ESZ area of their respective States. The Chairman then requested the State Government representatives to present their proposals based on the items listed in the agenda of the meeting.

Agenda-wise deliberations: The agenda-wise deliberations and the decisions taken are as follows:

Item No. 3.1: Kamlang Tiger Reserve & Namdapha Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh:

The draft notification for declaration of ESZ around Kamlang Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh was published *vide* S.O. 2052(E) dated 2nd May, 2022. The proposal was considered in 50th Expert Committee meeting held on 07th February, 2023. In view of the Supreme Court order dated 03rd June, 2022 in the matter W.P(C) No.202 of 1995: T.N. Godavarman Vs UOI & Ors. regarding 1.0 km Eco-sensitive zone boundary, the State Govt. submitted a combined proposal for Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Namdapha Tiger Reserve *vide* letter dated 02nd May, 2023. Later, *vide* email dated 16th June 2023, State Govt. requested that an integrated proposal may be considered for above PA's. The draft notification for declaration of ESZ around Kamlang & Namdapha Tiger Reserve was published *vide* S.O. 4893(E), dated 10th November, 2023 as a single ESZ notification integrating Kamlang and Namdapha TR for inviting stakeholders/public comments. Following are the key features of the integrated proposal.

Area of Protected Area– Kamlang Tiger Reserve: 783 sq.km; Namdapha National Park & Tiger Reserve: 2230.245 sq.km

ESZ Area: 450.39 sq.km

ESZ Extent: ESZ extent from Zero to 11.92 km.

Zero ESZ towards the Eastern and Southern part of Namdapha NP & TR is because the boundary is over laying with Indo-Myanmar International Boundary

Sh. Damodar AT, DCF, made the presentation on the integrated proposal and informed that no comments have been received on the draft notification published. Further, there are no oil wells falling within the ESZ as informed by the State Govt.

Based on the deliberations held the Committee recommended the proposal for finalisation and urged the State Government representatives to proceed with expeditious preparation of the Zonal Master Plan of ESZ.

Item No. 3.2: Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka:

The draft notification for declaration of ESZ around Bhimgad WLS was first published on 08.01.2016 but got expired in July, 2017 due to non-submission of requisite documents/information by the State Government. The fresh proposal was published *vide* S.O. 3565(E), dated 9th August, 2023 for inviting stakeholders/public comments. Following are the key features of the draft notification:

Area of Protected Area: 190.4258 sq km

ESZ Area: 117.75 sq.km

ESZ Extent : 0 Km to 3.23 Km and.

(Zero extent as the sanctuary shares boundary with Kali (Dandeli Anshi) Tiger Reserve)

The proposal was deferred in 52nd ECM held on 27th December, 2023 as the State Government was asked to re-examine the issue of overlapping with draft ESA of Western Ghats in Karnataka and revert back to the Ministry with clarification. In addition to this clarification regarding the issue of name of villages mentioned in annexure was also required from the state.

CCF Belgaum, made the presentation on the proposal and provided following clarifications:

- a. As the ESZ area overlaps with the Western Ghats ESA, the division administration would be finally taking the action as per both the notifications and the activities would be regulated in such a manner that would ultimately support the cause of Forest and Wildlife conservation.
- a. Six villages viz., Warkadpatye, Dongargaon, Shirol, Nerse, Chapoli and Gavali contains only reserve forest.

- b. Interstate consultation with the Government of Goa is not required as the Western boundary of Bhimgad WLS is adjacent to the Bhagwan Mahavir and Mahadayi Wildlife Sanctuaries in the State of Goa for which ESZs are already notified. Towards Southern boundary of the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary is Anashi Dandeli National Park. As the Bhimgad Wild Life Sanctuary is bordering the Protected Area, ESZ is not proposed on this Side. Further, no Revenue areas are included under the draft ESZ from Goa side.

Based on the deliberations held the Committee agreed with the clarifications submitted by the State Govt and decided that the proposal can be recommended for finalization.

Item 3.3 : Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh:

The draft notification for declaration of the EZS around Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh was published *vide* S.O. 2078(E) dated 4th May, 2022, for inviting stakeholders/public comments. Following are the key features of the draft notification:

Area of PA : 748.761 sq. km

ESZ Area : 725.904 sq. km

ESZ Extent : 2 km to 15 kms

Earlier, the proposal was taken up in 50th ECM held on 07th February, 2023 wherein the committee agreed that the proposal is in order and can be finalized subject to receipt of official communication from the state Government on public comments received on the draft notification and submission of good quality map of PA and ESZ.

Sh. Uttam Kumar Sharma, Director, Project Lion, made a presentation on above mentioned proposal and informed that the response of the State Govt. on public comments have been submitted *vide* letter dated 05th March, 2024. He further mentioned that the activities proposed within the ESZ, are as per the ESZ Guidelines of 2011. The Committee suggested for looking into the possibility of integrating forest patch towards south-western part of the WLS into the proposed ESZ. The representative of the State Govt. justified that the said area will be taken into consideration while considering the proposal for corridors around Kuno National Park and Madhav National Park. Since the present draft notification was published on 4th May, 2022, it needs to be finalized at the earliest otherwise the draft will lapse its validity and revision of proposal may not be feasible in such a short span of time.

Based on the deliberations held the Committee agreed and decided that the proposal can be recommended for finalization and urged the State Government representatives to proceed with expeditious preparation of the Zonal Master Plan.

Item 3.4: Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary & Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha:

The final notification for ESZ around Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika and Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary was published *vide* S.O 1601 (E), dated 16th June, 2015 with an ESZ extent of 0.56 to 2.0km and an ESZ area of 466.40 km.

However, after rationalization of boundary of Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary issued by Govt. of Odisha *vide* No. 2289 dated 1st February, 2020 by deletion of 52 villages from the old sanctuary, area with an extent of 54.45 sq km and addition of 55.45 sq km of forest area to the sanctuary, a revised proposal was received from the State Government for declaring fresh ESZ. Based on the said proposal a draft notification was published on 23rd February, 2022. However, the State Govt. requested the Ministry to issue a corrigendum to the draft issued on 23rd February, 2022, modifying the list of villages as per a revised list submitted *vide* its letter dated 07th July, 2023. Based on the said request the draft notification was again published on 06th September 2023, in supersession of the earlier draft published on 23rd February, 2022. Following are the features of the draft notification

Area of Protected Area: Bhitarkanika National Park: 145 sq km; Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary: 673 sq km; Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary: 1435 sq km

ESZ Area: 497.67 sq km

ESZ Extent: 0.10 to 8.7 km

The proposal was considered in 52nd ECM held on 27th December 2023 and the Committee decided to defer the proposal as the State Govt. could not present the proposal properly through video conferencing. The State Govt. was asked to present the proposal physically in the next ESZ Expert Committee meeting.

The representative of the State Govt. presented the proposal. The discussions were held on the comments received on the draft notification. One of the comments specifically mentioned that the notification should also be published in Odia and Bengali language for better understanding of the local people. After deliberation committee agreed that the draft notification should be translated in Odia language by the State Govt. and published for seeking public comments from local people.

The committee decided to defer the proposal and asked the State Govt. to translate the notification in Odia language and publish it in order to seek public comments from locals within a time period of 30 days.

Item 3.5: Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan:

The draft notification was published on 04th March 2021, followed by the deferment of proposal due to non-submission of state's response to public/stakeholder's comments in

46th and 47th ECM and subsequently the draft notification got expired on 27th February, 2023.

The fresh draft notification was published on 02nd November, 2023 after due concurrence of the NTCA. Following are the important features of the draft notification:

Area of Protected Area: 1213.34 sq km

ESZ Area: 87.73 sq km

ESZ Extent: zero to 1.0 km from Sariska TR and zero to 24 km from Sariska WLS & Jamwa Ramgarh WLS

Sh. Rajesh Gupta, APCCF, Rajasthan informed the committee that the public comments received on the draft notification are under process and are currently being examined by the State Government. In view of this, he sought deferment of the proposal till the public comments are addressed by the State Govt.

Based on the deliberations held the Committee decided to defer the proposal on the request of the State Government of Rajasthan.

Item 3.6: Gorumara National Park, West Bengal:

The initial draft notification was published on 04th June, 2020, followed by the expiry of the same due to deferment of the proposal in 47th ECM held on 14th August, 2021 and previously on 42nd ECM because of the discrepancies in the list of villages and ESZ extent.

Based on the fresh proposal received from the State Govt., a draft notification was published on 16th November, 2023. Following are the salient features of the draft notification:

Area of Protected Area: 79.45 sq km

ESZ Area: 278 sq km

ESZ Extent: 1.0 to 17 km

The representative of the Govt. of West Bengal, made a brief presentation on the proposal and informed that Gorumara WLS is home to Great Indian One Horned Rhinoceros, one of the last populations of the species globally. The WLS also acts as a crucial corridor for the movement of Elephants. The committee also asked the State Govt. to submit the response on the objection raised by the local MLA regarding illegal constructions within the proposed ESZ of above WLS.

Based on the deliberations held the Committee decided that the proposal can be recommended for finalization subject to submission of response of the State Govt. on Public comments.

ANNEXURE

List of Participants

Members of Expert Committee

1. Shri Tanmay Kumar, Additional Secretary, Chairperson, MoEF&CC.
2. Dr. S. Kerketta, Scientist 'G', MoEF&CC.
3. Dr. S.C Garkoti, Ex- Advisor, Scientist 'G', MoEF&CC.
4. Shri Rakesh Kumar Jagenia, DIGF, MoEF&CC.
5. Shri P.K. Gupta, Scientist 'F', CPCB.
6. Forest Survey of India.
7. Shri K. A Subarmanian, Zoological Survey of India.
8. Dr. M Ramesh, Scientist 'F', Wetlands Division, MoEF&CC.
9. Dr. KS Kanwal, Scientist, GBPNIHE, Almora.
10. Dr. Hitendra Padalia, Head FED, IIRS, Dehradun.
11. Dr. Vishesh Uppal, WWF.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GOI

12. Dr. Ritesh Joshi, Scientist 'E' MoEF&CC
13. Dr. Veenu Joon, Scientist 'E', MoEF&CC
14. Shri Anil Thakar, Consultant, MoEF&CC
15. Ms. Ritu Narwaria, Consultant, MoEF&CC

Officials of Government of Arunachal Pradesh

16. The Chief Wildlife Warden, Government of Arunachal Pradesh
17. Shri Damodhar A.T., IFS, CFWL/Regional Wildlife Warden, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

Officials of Government of Karnataka

18. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forest Wildlife and Chief Wildlife Warden, Government of Karnataka.
19. The Chief Conservator of Forest Belagavi, Government of Karnataka.

Officials of Government of Madhya Pradesh

20. Shri Shubranjan Sen, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
21. Shri Uttam Kumar Singh, Director, Project Lion, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Officials of Government of Odisha

22. Shri Kedar Kumar Swain, Chief Conservator of Forest, Government of Odisha.
23. Dr. Sanjeet Kumar, Regional CCF, Bhubaneswar, Government of Odisha.

24. Sri Sudershan Gopinath Jadhav, Divisional Forest Division(Wildlife), Rajnagar,
Government of Odisha.

Officials of Government of West Bengal

25. Shri Debal Ray, Chief Wildlife Warden, Government of West Bengal.

26. The Chief Conservator of Forest(Wildlife), North , Government of West Bengal.
