F. No. 6-30/2019-WL
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Wildlife Division)

2nd Floor, Vayu Wing,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi 110003.

Dated: 13th December, 2023

To
1. The Principal Secretary (Forests)
All States/UTs
2. The Chief Wild Life warden
All States/UTs
3. The PCCF, All States/UTs

Sub: Revised guidelines for seeking recommendations of the Standing Committee of National Board for Wild Life for activities in protected areas - reg.

Sir/Madam,

In supersession of the guidelines issued vide this Ministry's earlier letter of even number dated 21.07.2022, the undersigned has been directed to enclose herewith **revised guidelines** regarding submission of proposals for consideration of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life for ready reference.

2. This issues with the approval of the competent authority.

Yours faithfully,

Encl: as above

SUDHEER CHINTALAPATI
Digitally signed by SUDHEER CHINTALAPATI
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(Dr. Sudheer Chintalapati)
Scientist 'E'
Email: adwl-mefcc@gov.in

Copy to:
1. PPS to DFG&SS, MoEF&CC
2. PPS to ADG(WL), MoEF&CC
3. PPS to IGF(WL)/IGF(PE)/IGF(NTCA), MoEF&CC
4. PS to DIG(WL)/DIG(FC), MoEF&CC
5. Guard File

GUIDELINES REGARDING SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR WILDLIFE

Areas of ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, natural or zoological significance and reserve forests are notified as sanctuaries and National Parks for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wildlife or its environment by the State/Union Territories. Such areas are extremely important for conservation of biodiversity and ensuring the survival of its floral and faunal components. significant in terms from national point of view. Further, Eco-sensitive zones around sanctuaries and National Parks are notified to act as buffers and reduce direct impacts of developmental activities on these protected areas.

Activities involving use or diversion any part such areas should therefore be permitted only after taking into account the likely impact of the activity on the protected area.

As per the provisions contained section 5A of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA), the Central Government constituted the National Board for Wild Life (NBWL). In accordance with the section 5B of the Act, the NBWL constitutes its Standing Committee which exercises the powers delegated by the NBWL. The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life (SCNBWL) considers the proposals for developmental activities inside wildlife habitats and eco-sensitive zones under these delegated powers and orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

Ministry has issued several clarifications/guidelines from time to time for submission of proposals for consideration of the

NBWL/ Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life (SCNBWL). The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022 has come into force from 1st of April, 2023. These guidelines are being issued in supersession of the earlier guidelines.

1 ACTIVITIES INSIDE PROTECTED AREAS

Consideration and recommendations/approval of the NBWL / 5SCNBWL is required in following cases:

1.1 SANCTUARIES

Section 29 of the WLPA mandates consultation with the NBWL for undertaking any activity mentioned therein within areas notified as sanctuaries and those areas in respect of which the State Government has declared its intention by notification for constitution of such areas as sanctuaries due to coming into effect of provisions of section 29 of the WLPA as per section 18A (1) of the WLPA.

1.2 NATIONAL PARKS

Section35(6) of WLPA mandates consultation with the NBWL for undertaking any activity mentioned therein within areas notified as National Parks. Further, consultation with NBWL is mandatory for undertaking any activity mentioned in section 29 of the Act within those areas in respect of which the State Government has declared its intention by notification for constitution of such areas as National Parks due to coming into effect of the provisions of section 29 of the WLPA as per section 35 (3A) of the WLPA.

1.3 OTHER PROVISIONS:

Section 33 (a) of the WLPA provides for requirement of prior approval of the NBWL for construction of tourist lodges, including Government lodges, for commercial purposes, hotels, zoos which includes rescue centres and conservation breeding centres and safari parks inside a sanctuary. This proviso is also applicable on National Parks in accordance with Section 35 (8) of WLPA and in respect of those areas intended to be notified as sanctuaries or National Parks in view of provisions contained in sections 18A (1) and 35 (3A) of the WLPA.

1.4 ACTIVITIES WITHIN TIGER RESERVES AND LINKING AREAS:

The Protected Areas constituting a Tiger Reserve attract all the provisions applicable for National Parks or Sanctuaries. In addition, as per section 38-O (1) (g) of the WLPA, for approval of NBWL and advice by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) are required for activities within tiger reserve and in areas linking one Protected Area or tiger reserve with another Protected Area or tiger reserve for ecologically unsustainable uses, except in public interest.

1.5 ALTERATION OF BOUNDARIES:

In view of sections 26A (3), 35 (3) and 35 (5) of the WLPA, no alteration of the boundaries by the State Government of a sanctuary, National Park or area in respect of which the State Government has declared its intention by notification for constitution as a National Park shall be made except on a recommendation of the NBWL/SCNWBL. Further, in view of section 38W of the Act, no alteration in the boundaries of a tiger reserve can be made except on a recommendation of the NTCA and the approval of the NBWL/SCNBWL.

1.6 ACTIVITIES INSIDE ECO-SENSITIVE ZONES:

Notifications of Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ) specify the activities which are prohibited, regulated and promoted in the ESZ. Proposals for prohibited activities in the ESZ notification and the guidelines regarding declaration of ESZ issued by the Ministry dated 9.2.2011 (in view of order of Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 28.04.2023 in W.P. (C) No. 202 of 1995) should not be forwarded for consideration of the SCNBWL. For taking up any activity within an ESZ, if notified, or within 10 km zone of the boundary of National Parks or sanctuaries, if ESZ has not been notified, prior approval of the SCNBWL shall be required:

i. for construction and allied activities undertaken by and for Indian Railways and any of its subsidiaries/sister concerns; or
ii. if the activity/project is listed in the schedule of the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 as amended from time to time.

1.7 ACTIVITIES REFERRED BY OTHER AGENCIES:

There may be cases where chairperson of NBWL/SCNBWL or Hon'ble Supreme Court of India or any other statutory agency may desire examination of a proposal by the NBWL/SCNBWL. Such cases may be submitted by the State Government /UT Administration for consideration of NBWL/SCNBWL along with the recommendations of the SBWL.

2 PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED FOR CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL BOARD FOR WILDLIFE:

i. The User Agency shall submit the proposal online on PARIVESH portal of the Ministry mandatorily as communicated vide Ministry's letter F.No.6-137/2017 WL (pt.1) dated 22.11.2018 (**ANNEXURE I**). A User Manual of online submission and monitoring of Environmental, Forests and Wild Life Clearance at https://parivesh.nic.in. No proposal submitted for consideration of the NBWL/SCNBWL in physical form shall be entertained by the Ministry.

ii. The user agency can also track the movement of the proposal through different stages of processing through the online clearance system.

iii. The roles of various agencies involved in the process and actions required to be taken are provided in the manual. In case of difficulty, the details of concerned to be contacted have also been provided.

3. TIME LINES TO BE FOLLOWED BY VARIOUS AGENCIES INVOLVED IN PROCESSING THE PROPOSALS

Following time lines will be adhered by all the officials responsible for the activities indicated.

1	**DFO/Wild Life Warden**	i. Initial scrutiny in **5 days** of receipt of the proposal.
		ii. **15 days** after receipt of complete proposal for site inspection, consultation with Conservator of Forests/Chief Conservator of Forests/

		Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and forwarding to the Chief Wild Life Warden.
2	**Chief Wild Life Warden**	**15 days** from receipt of proposal for scrutiny and recommendation to the State Government for placing before the State Board for Wild Life (SBWL).
3	**Consultation with State Board for Wild Life or Standing Committee of the State Board for Wild Life and recommendation of State Government**	The activity involves decision of the State Government, consultation with SBWL and thereafter, recommendation of State Government to Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change enclosing the copy of the minutes of the SBWL or its Standing Committee as the case may be. Therefore, this stage may take up to **45 days (one and half months).**
4	**Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**	Initial scrutiny in **10 days** of receipt of the proposal.
5	**Consultation with Standing Committee of National Board for Wild Life**	In the upcoming Meetings of Standing Committee of National Board for Wild Life which are ordinarily convened once in **3 months**.

4. ACTIVITIES INSIDE CONSERVATION RESERVES OR COMMUNITY RESERVES

In continuation of the discussions in the 53rd meeting of the SCNBWL dated 25.02.2019, Ministry vide letter F.No.6-30/2019 WL (part) dated 30.01.2023 (**ANNEXURE II**) had clarified that projects/activities proposed to be located within Conservation Reserves or Community Reserves notified under the WLPA do not require consideration by the SCNBWL. In case, these protected areas form part of ESZs, guidelines in para 1.6 shall be applicable.

5. PROPOSALS FOR SURVEY WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT INSIDE NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES:

State Governments/Union Territory Administrations may consider prescribing rules under section 28 of the WLPA regarding safeguards to be followed while entering a notified sanctuary for survey/ investigation. In view of section 35 (3A) and 35(8) the Act, the provisions of section 28 apply in relation to a National Park as they apply in relation to a sanctuary. Ministry issued clarification in this regard vide letter F. No. 6-41/2021-WL dated 28.03.2022 (**ANNEXURE III**).

It may be noted that when invasive activities (such as destruction, exploitation, removal etc. from sanctuary or National Park) are involved, the permit for survey and/or investigation can be issued only after consideration by the SCNBWL. In case survey work and/or Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) studies are to taken up in areas involving a Protected Area, and are covered under section 29 or 35(6) of WLPA, then also the entire procedure, as prescribed paragraph 2 above needs to be followed.

6. MANDATORY SUBMISSION OF ANIMAL PASSAGE PLANS

A guidance documents namely, 'Eco-friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts of Linear Infrastructure on Wild Life' has been prepared by the Ministry. The Guidance document prescribes measures, both structural and non-structural to be adopted while designing linear infrastructure projects through wildlife habitats. In pursuance of the decision taken in the 47th meeting of the SCNBWL held on 25.01.2018, whenever, a linear infrastructure project is planned through a wildlife habitat, an animal passage plan shall be prepared by the User Agency in consultation with the Chief Wild Life Warden for submission along with the project proposal communicated to the States vide Ministry's letter F. No. 6-4/2018 dated 13.07.2018 (**ANNEXURE IV**).

7. PROPOSALS FOR TRANSMISSION LINES

i. In pursuance of the decision taken by the SCNBWL in its 54th meeting held on 18.07.2019, the use of insulated transmission line cables over the ground / or underground transmission line cables passing through the protected areas should be the first priority of the user agencies as communicated vide Ministry's letter F. No. 6-104/2019 WL dated 29.08.2019 **(ANNEXURE V).**

ii. As decided by the SCNBWL in its 66th meeting held on 31.12.2021, all the proposals for transmission lines shall be accompanied with a management plan for the area below the transmission lines. The management plan shall prescribe for species to the planted and maintained below the transmission lines, type and periodicity of maintenance etc.

Ministry had issued advisory to the States in this regard vide letter F. No.6-141/2021 dated 15.03.2022 **(ANNEXURE VI).**

8. COST OF MITIGATION MEASURES:

As decided by the SCNBWL in its 65th meeting held on 24.09.2021, measures to mitigate impacts of projects in protected areas and ESZs should be part of project proposals. Instead of imposing a fixed cost, mitigation measures and costs associated with such measures will be prescribed while recommending project proposals. Ministry issued advisory to the States in this regard vide letter F. No.6-82/2021WL dated 25.11.2021 (**ANNEXURE VII**).

9. BIO-DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

As decided in the 8th meeting of the SCNBWL held on 14.09.2006, proposals for use of area more than 50 ha within a sanctuary or National Park shall be accompanied with a bio-diversity impact assessment study report prepared by an agency accredited by the Government of India.

10. MINING PROPOSALS:

In view of the order of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India dated 26.04.2023 and 28.04.2023 in W.P. (C) no. 202 of 1995, mining within National Parks and sanctuaries and their notified ESZ and/or within an area of one kilometre from the boundary of such National Parks and sanctuaries whichever is more shall not be permissible.

11. USE OF INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY IN MITIGATION OF IMPACTS:

State/UT Governments shall endeavour to encourage user agencies to use innovative technologies and modern scientific tools while prescribing mitigation measures and monitoring the impact of developmental activities on wildlife habitats.

12. DELEGATION OF POWERS TO THE STATE BOARD FOR WILD LIFE

In pursuance of the decision of the SCNBWL in its 71st meeting held on 29.12.2022 to extend delegation of powers to SBWL, permits for underground laying of drinking water pipeline, optical fibre cables and power lines up to 11 kV within the allowed right of way of roads inside National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Tiger Reserves notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 may be granted by the Chief Wild Life Warden after recommendations of State Boards for Wild Life and approval of State/UT Governments without these proposals being referred for consideration of the SCNBWL subject to the following conditions:

i. The size of the trench will not exceed more than 2.0 m depth and 1.0 m width;
ii. The user agency agrees to make good the land after use/ maintenance;
iii. The user agency agrees to make good any loss to forest/ environment;
iv. The user agency seeks permission from the State Forest Department for carrying out any maintenance;
v. The diameter of drinking water pipeline shall commensurate with the width of the trench mentioned above;

vi. No civil structures will be built with the underground laying of drinking water pipeline, power lines and optical fibre cables;

vii. The user agency will have to submit NOC from the agency which holds the right to use the right of way;

viii. The State Government / Union Territories shall ensure that the length of the length of trench dug at a time does not exceed 500 m, filled up and compacted before digging next stretch of 500 m;

ix. The State Board for Wild Life shall also suggest the time frame for completing the work of underground laying of drinking water pipeline,power lines and optical fibre cables within the PAs after taking into account all the factors/issues involve in the work;

x. The user agency shall provide water supply points within the PAs if demanded by the Chief Wild Life Warden or in-charge of PA but not more than per sq.km;

xi. This delegation shall be valid till 31.12.2027;

xii. The State Government / Union Territories will submit a monthly progress report on the extent of the forestland diverted for such purposes to the Ministry as well as the concerned Regional Offices.

This was communicated vide Ministry's Letter F. No. 6-175/2017 WL (pt.) dated 07.02.2023 **(ANNEXURE VIII).**

13. SUBMISSION OF HOLISTIC LINEAR PROJECT PROPOSALS

As decided by the SCNBWL in its 71st meeting held on 29.12.2022 and as communicated vide Ministry's letter F.No.6-207/2022 WL dated 14.03.2023 (**ANNEXURE IX**), all State/UTs are required to

submit proposals for linear projects in a holistic manner and not in separate packages.

14. ECO-TOURISM PROPOSALS

The SCNBWL in its 63rd meeting held on 11.06.2021 had recommended 'Guidelines for Sustainable Eco-tourism in Forest and Wildlife Areas, 2021'. These guidelines were communicated to the States vide this Ministry's letter F. No. 1-57/2014 WL (part -8) dated 29.10.2021 (**ANNEXURE X**). The proposals for eco-tourism projects shall be designed in accordance with these guidelines.

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ANNEXURE-I

Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Wildlife Division)

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj
New Delhi 110 003

F.No. 6-137/2017 WL (pt.1)

Date: 22.11.2018

To

All Chief Wildlife Warden
State / UT Forest Department

Sub: Mandatory Online Submission of Proposals through PARIVESH Seeking for Wildlife Clearance from the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife- reg.

Sir,

Kind attention is invited to the above mentioned subject matter. In this context it is mentioned that the PARIVESH automates the entire process of submitting the proposals for non-forestry activities inside the Protected Area / within 10 KM from the boundary of Protected Area and tracking the status of proposals at every stage of processing. It has been noticed that State Governments are still forwarding proposals in the physical form. Therefore it is advised that no proposal in the physical form for seeking wildlife clearance submitted to the State Government / the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife by the project proponent after 1st December 2018 should be permitted.

Yours faithfully,

(Dr. Pasupala Ravi)
Scientist C
E-mail: ddwlmef@gmail.com

सत्यमेव जयते

F.No.6-30/2019 WL (Part)
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Wildlife Division

2nd Floor, Vayu Wing,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi 110003.

Date:30th January, 2023

To

1. The Principal Secretary (Forests), All States/ UTS
2. The Chief Wild Life Warden, All States/ UTS
3. The PCCF, All States/ UTS

Sub: Revised guidelines for seeking recommendations of Standing Committee of National Board for Wild Life for activities in protected areas- reg.

Sir/Madam,

Reference is invited to the Ministry's guidelines for seeking recommendations of Standing Committee of National Board for Wild Life for activities in protected areas issued vide letter of even no. dated 21st July, 2022.

2. In this regard, it is mentioned that the provisions 36A (2) of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 related to Conservation Reserve specifically provides that: "....sub-section (2) of section 18, sub-section (2), (3) and (4) of section 27, section 20, 32 and clauses (b) and (c) of section 33 shall as far as may be, apply in relation to the Conservation Reserve as they apply in relation to a sanctuary".

3. It is also mentioned that the Section 29, which provides for consultation with State Board for Wild Life for activities within a Sanctuary, and Section 35(6), which provides for similar consultation for National Parks, but with the National Board for Wild Life, are very specific for those categories of PAs. Such provisions do not exist in Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 in respect of the Conservation Reserve and Community Reserve and State Government were accordingly empowered to take necessary steps for protection and preservation of Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves.

SUDHEER CHINTALAPATI

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4. In this context, as per the revised Guidelines dated 21st July, 2022 (copy enclosed), projects/activities proposed to be located within Conservation Reserves notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 do not require consideration by the Standing Committee of National Board for Wild Life.

This issues with the approval of competent authority.

Yours faithfully,

SUDHEER CHINTALAPATI

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Date: 2023.01.30 17:55:01 +05'30'

(Dr. Sudheer Chintalapati)
Scientist 'E'
Email: adwl-mefcc@gov.in.

Copy to:

1. PSO to DFG&SS, MoEF&CC
2. PSO to ADGF (WL), ADG(NTCA), MoEF&CC
3. PPS to IGF(WL)/IGF(PE)/IGF(NTCA), MoEF&CC
4. Sr. PPS to DIG(WL), MoEF&CC

SUDHEER CHINTALAPATI

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(Dr. Sudheer Chintalapati)
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ANNEXURE-III

F. No. 6-41/2021-WL
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Wildlife Division)

3rd Floor, Jal Wing,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi 110003.

28th March, 2022

To,
1. The Principal Secretary (Forests)
   All States/UTs
2. The Chief Wild Life Warden
   All State/UTs
3. The PCCF
   All State/UTs

Subject: Survey and investigation works in Sanctuaries and National Parks regarding.

Sir/Madam,

The Ministry vide letter No. 6-10/2011-WL dated 19.12.2012 had communicated guidelines for seeking recommendations of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life (SCNBWL). Subsequent to the online integration, the Ministry vide letter no. 6-74/2012 WL (pt) dated 10.04.2015 had communicated revised Guidelines for seeking recommendations of SCNBWL for activities in Protected Areas to the States/UTs.

2. The Ministry vide letter no. 6-133/2014 dated 26.09.2014 (copy enclosed) had clarified the process to be followed for carrying out survey/investigation works in the protected areas.

3. It may be noted that as per Section 28 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (the Act),

(1) The Chief Wild Life Warden may, on application, grant to any person a permit to enter or reside in a sanctuary for all or any of the following purposes, namely: -

- *(a) investigation or study of wildlife and purposes ancillary or incidental thereof;*
- *(b) photography;*
- *(c) scientific research;*
- *(d) tourism;*
- *(e) transaction of lawful business with any person residing in the sanctuary.*

(2) A permit to enter or reside in a sanctuary shall be issued subject to such conditions and on payment of such fee as may be prescribed.

Section 28 is applicable on National Parks also as per 35 (8) of the Act.

4. It may also be noted that when invasive activities (destroy, exploit, remove etc from PA) are involved, the permit for survey and investigation can be issued only after consideration by the SCNBWL.

5. It is again requested that the Chief Wild Life Wardens may exercise the mandate provided in section 28 of the Act with all appropriate checks and conditions when any survey or investigation work for any development project is proposed within a protected area if it does not involve any invasive activity coming in the definition of section 29 of the Act. The State/Union Territory Governments may consider prescribing Rules under section 28 of the Act for application and safeguards to be followed for grant of permission to enter Protected Areas for survey/ investigation if no physical disturbance on the PA is contemplated.

Yours faithfully,

Encl: As enclosed

(Dr. Rajendra Kumar)
Scientist 'C'
Email: kumar.rajendra@gov.in

Copy to:

1. PPS to ADGF (WL)
2. PPS to IGF (WL)
3. PPS to IGF (FC)
4. IROs of MoEFCC

(25)

F. No. 6-133/2014 (Part)
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change
(Wildlife Division)

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jorbagh Road, New Delhi-110003
Dated: 26th September, 2014

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Sub: Reforms for making the wildlife clearance processes more efficient - guidelines reg.

With a view of bringing improvement in overall environmental governance in the country, one area of emphasis is on bringing in more efficiency in the processes related to clearances dealt in the Ministry. In this context, it has been proposed that as the requirement of permission from MoEF&CC for carrying out preliminary survey for projects in wildlife sanctuaries/ national parks is based on consideration of the task of survey as a non-forestry activity, there is scope of rethinking on this aspect and so it may be considered to authorise PCCF (WL)/ CWLW to give permission for survey in protected areas with the condition that no cutting of trees is involved.

In this context, it may be seen that as per section 28 of Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972, Chief Wildlife Warden, on application, grant a permit to any person *inter alia*, to enter a sanctuary for certain purposes including scientific research and transaction of lawful business, subject to prescribed conditions. The permit can be issued with approval of state government and consultation with the SBWL, only when invasive activities (destroy, exploit, remove etc from PA) are involved. Section 28 is applicable *mutatis mutandis* on National Parks under section 35 (8) of WLPA.

Keeping in view these facts, when any survey or investigation work for any development project is proposed within a protected area, and if it does not involve any invasive activity coming in the definition of section 29, it can be considered to permit the survey works with all appropriate checks and conditions. This step can save a series of steps of clearance for survey alone, if the same does not affect the normal management of the Protected Area.

It is advised therefore that the Chief Wildlife Wardens may exercise the mandate provided in section 28 and consider prescribing appropriate guidelines for application and safeguards to be followed for grant of permission to enter Protected Areas for survey/ investigation if no physical disturbance on the PA is contemplated.

M Srivastava

(M.L. Srivastava)
Deputy Inspector General of Forests (WL)
Tele:- 011-24695355

To

1. The Principal Secretary, Environment & Forests Department, All States/UT Govt.
2. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, All States/UT Govt.
3. The Chief Wildlife Warden, All States/UT Govt.

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ANNEXURE-IV

सत्यमेव जयते

Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Wildlife Division)

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jor Bag Road, Aliganj
New Delhi 110 003
Date: 13.07.2018

F.No. 6-4/2018 WL

To

All Chief Wildlfie Wardens
State / UT Forest Department

Sub: Mandatory Submission of Wildlife Passage Plan for all Linear Projects (roads, canal, railway)- reg.

Ref: Letter No.6-4/2018 WL dated 07.02.2018 from this office

Sir / Madam,

Kind attention is invited to the above mentioned subject and reference therein. In this context it is mentioned that the Standing Committee of NBWL in its 47th meeting held on 25th January 2018 recommneded that all the linear infrastructure projects seeking clearance from the Standing Committee of NBWL mandatorily contain Animal Passage Plan. However it is noticed that State Govts. are still forwarding proposals without Animal Passage Plan. Therefore it is advised that no proposal of linerar infrastructure projects submitted to the State Govts. by the user agency after 1st August 2018 should be forwarded to the Standing Committee of NBWL without the Animal Passage Plan prepared in consultation of the State CWLW on the basis of the guidelines named *Eco-friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts on Linear Infrastructures on Wildlife* of the Wildlife Institute of India.

Yours faithfully,

(Dr. Pasupala Ravi)
Scientist C
E-mail: ddwlmef@gmail.com

ANNEXURE-V

सत्यमेव जयते

Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Wildlife Division)

6th Floor, Vayu Wing
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jor Bagh Road
New Delhi 110 003
Date: 29.08.2019

F.No.6-104/2019 WL

To

1. All States / UTs Chief Wildlife Warden
2. All States / UTs Principal Secretary, Forest Department
3. Secretary, Ministry of Power
4. Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
5. Secretary / Principal Chief Engineer, Central Electricity Authority
6. Chairman & Managing Director, PGCIL
7. All Chairman & Managing Director, States / UTs Electricity Board

Sub: Requisition for Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force Constituted by the Ministry vide O.M.NO.1-29/2017WL (pt.3) dt.05/02/2019 for Suggesting Eco-Friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts of Power Transmission lines and other Power Transmission Infrastructures on Elephants and other Wildlife- reg.

Sir / Madam,

The Standing Committee of National Board for Wild Life in its 54th meeting held on 18th July 2019 through Video Conference under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change accepted the report of the Task Force constituted by this Ministry vide its O.M.NO.1-29/2017WL(pt.3) dated 05/02/2019 for Suggesting Eco-Friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts of Power Transmission lines and other Power Transmission Infrastructures on Elephants and other Wildlife. The Task Force recommended the following for implementation by the Electricity Supply Units, Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL), Central Electrical Authority (CEA), and State Electricity Boards (SEBs).

(1) Immediate rectification of sagging transmission lines and cable of existing transmission line in the protected areas by the Electricity Supply Utilities, PGCIL, CEA, and SEBs.

(2) Joint inspection of every transmission / distribution line passing through the protected areas or passing through the vicinity of protected Areas (which are frequented by wild animals) by officials of Electricity Department and Forest Department would be undertaken regularly, at least thrice a year once before onset of monsoon and once after monsoon so as to identify potential problem stretches.

(3) Forest Department shall inform the concerned power supplier / line owner of the area about every electrical accident occurring in and around forest area involving human / animals which in turn shall submit an accident report in Form A (Form for reporting electrical accidents) as given in the Intimation of Electrical Accidents (Form and Time of Service of Notice) Rules, 2005 duly completed in all respects to Electrical Inspector of the Appropriate Government. All electrical accidents should be investigated by Electrical Inspector and suitable measures should be taken as proposed in the investigation report.

(4) To prevent death of animals in the forest areas due to electrocution by the distribution lines, the distribution companies shall preferably use **ABC (aerial bunched cables) or underground**

cable. In case of the overhead lines, the clearance above ground of the lower conductor of 11 kV / 33 kV overhead lines should be as per CEA Regulations.

(5) Rule 59(3) of the CEA (Measures Relating to Safety and Electric Supply) Regulations, 2010 (as Amended) would amend as follows:

In case of laying of transmission lines of 33 kV and below passing through habitated urban or rural areas, any forest area other than National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserve, Community Reserve, Eco-Sensitive Zones around the protected areas and Wildlife Corridors, **underground cable or aerial bunched cables or covered conductors** shall be used.

Further new Section would be added as Rule 59(4) reading as below:
In case of as in case of laying of transmission lines of 33 kV and below passing through protected areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserve, Community Reserve), Eco-Sensitive Zones around the protected areas and wildlife corridors, **underground cable** should be used. In cases where these areas are aquatic and marine in nature, **aerial bunched cables or covered conductors** would be used as alternative to the underground cables.

(6) Right of Way (RoW) for 11 kV transmission lines can be optimized keeping in view the corridor requirement for the future by adopting suitable alternative of multi-circuit / or multi-voltage lines. Conductors of appropriate size shall be selected considering power flow requirements and other system considerations in consultation with neighboring transmission and generation utilities. For transmission lines of 400 kV or higher voltage class, bundle conductors (minimum two conductors per phase for 400 kV AC and four conductors per phase for 500 kV DC and 765 kV AC shall be used for satisfactory performance of transmission lines from corona and interference aspects. The conductors may be of type aluminum conductor steel reinforced, all aluminum alloy conductor or other new technology conductors depending on system requirements and should avoid base conductors.

(7) The existing transmission lines should be replaced retrospectively with **insulated cables / or underground cables on priority basis** by Electricity Supply Units, Power Distribution Companies and Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd.

(8) A sub-committee consisting of one representative from CEA, DIG(FC) and DIG(WL) would examine Right of Way (RoW) requirements for laying of transmission lines in the protected areas.

(9) Early planning and rigorous Environmental Impact Assessment are two principal requirements for reducing wildlife mortality due to transmission lines, as well as minimizing the risks of costly power outages. A nationwide strategy should be developed and supported to undertake the long-term planning of electricity grid networks as a priority. Planning should include the use of state-of-the-art wildlife protection equipment, and **burying low to medium-voltage transmission lines below ground where feasible.**
Burying transmission lines effectively removes the problem of wildlife electrocution. Environmental Impact Assessment is an invaluable tool to inform decision making, helping to ensure that transmission lines are appropriately routed and designed.

(10) The routing of transmission lines and shifting transmission structures should be done collaboratively, involving the electricity supplier company, government bodies, conservation agencies, land owners and other interested and affected parties, culminating in one or more memoranda of understanding.

(11) Birds frequently collide with the earth wires (less visible wire) installed at the top of transmission lines, as it is less visible and smaller in diameter. Removal of the earth wire would reduce bird collisions however this is rarely a viable option since the earth wires protect the power-line installation from lightning strikes. This is only possible in areas where there is very low lightning and to a limited extent. Where the earth wires cannot be removed, line marker devices / bird

reflectors should be used in sufficient numbers to deflect the birds to take alternate path. Marker devices are available in several colours and are visible to birds from a long distance. Many types of marker devices are available, such as spheres, swinging plates, spiral vibration dampers, strips, flight diversion, bird flappers, ribbons, tapes, flags, and crossed bands.

(12) Line markers should be as large as possible. The spacing between them should not be more than 5 m to 10 m. Marker devices should be chosen to contrast as much as possible with the background colours, and importantly, should be visible at night, for most bird collisions are said to occur at night.

(13) There is a need to set up reinforced electric poles fitted with spikes to prevent elephants rubbing against them and lifting of sagging overhead power lines. This is yet to be done in many protected areas. Also **insulate overhead wires across all elephant habitat and elephant movement zones and remove / dismantle all defunct solar powered fences.**

After discussions the Standing Committee accepted the recommendations (1) to (10) and (13) of the Task Force and suggested to initiate implementation of the recommendations and ***also the use of insulated transmission line cables over the ground / or underground transmission line cables passing through the protected areas should be the first priority of the user agencies***.

Yours faithfully,

(Dr. Pasupala Ravi)
Scientist C

End: As above

Copy to

1. All Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Regional Offices, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
2. Inspector General of Forests, FC Division, MoEF&CC

(Dr. Pasupala Ravi)
Scientist C

ANNEXURE-VI

F. No. 6-141/2021 - WL
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Wildlife Division)

3rd Floor, Jal Wing
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi-110003

Date: 15.03.2022

To
To Principal Chief Conservator of Forests,
All States/Union Territories.

Sub: Management of lands of Protected Areas/forests under transmission line- regarding.

Sir/Madam,

The 66" meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life (SCNBWL) was held on 31.12.2021 under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The committee, inter alia, discussed management of lands under transmission lines passing through Protected Areas and forests.

2. Further, the Standing Committee also decided that in future, all proposals for laying transmission lines submitted for its consideration should be accompanied with a management plan for the area below the transmission line. Therefore, it is requested to kindly take appropriate action on the same while submitting the proposals to the Ministry for consideration by SCNBWL.

3. Minutes of the meeting have been posted online in the "PARIVESH" portal of this Ministry.

Yours faithfully,

(Dr. Rajendra Kumar)
Scientist 'C'
E-mail: kumar.rajendra@gov.in

Copy to: PPS to DGF & SS/PSO to ADGF (WL)/PPS to IGF (WL)

ANNEXURE-VII

6-82/2021 WL
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Wildlife Division

1st Floor, Agni Wing,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi - 110003.

Date: 25th November 2021

To
Chief Wild Life Wardens
All States/UTs

Sub: Cost of mitigation measures due to impact of developmental activities in National Parks, Sanctuaries, their Eco-Sensitive Zones, Tiger Reserves and Tiger Corridors - reg.

Sir,

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life, in its 65th meeting held on 24th September 2021, discussed issues relating to mitigation measures that are required to be undertaken to reduce the impact of activities inside **National Parks, Sanctuaries, Eco-**Sensitive Zones, Tiger Reserves and tiger corridors. The Committee observed that the cost imposed on user agencies for implementing mitigation measures is often not based on the impact of the activities proposed in the project. The Committee also observed that instead of imposing a uniform cost on all projects, it would be more appropriate if mitigation measures are suggested by the Chief Wild Life Wardens for each project.

The Committee, therefore, decided that measures to mitigate the impact of projects should be part of project proposals. The Committee further decided that instead of imposing a fixed cost, mitigation measures and costs associated with such measures should be prescribed while recommending project proposals.

In view of the above, it is requested that project proposals submitted to the Standing Committee for its consideration should be accompanied with details of mitigation measures. It is further requested that instead of imposing a fixed cost on the user agency, the Chief Wild Life Wardens should mention the estimated cost of implementing the proposed mitigation measures.

Yours faithfully,

(Rakesh Kumar Jagenia)
Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife)
Email – digwl-mefcc@gov.in

Copy to: PPS to IGF (WL), MoEFCC, New Delhi

Signed by Rakesh Kumar Jagenia
Date: 25-11-2021 19:45:02
Reason: Approved

ANNEXURE-VIII

F.No.6-175/2017 WL (pt)
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Wildlife Division)

2nd Floor, Vayu Wing,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bag Road, New Delhi 110003.

Date: 7th February, 2023

To,

1. Chief Secretaries all States/UTs
2. Principal Secretaries, Forest Departments, all States/UTs
3. Member Secretaries, State Boards for Wild Life and Chief Wild Life Wardens, all States/UTs

Sub: Delegation to State Boards for Wild Life in matters pertaining to the underground laying of OFC, power lines up to 11 kV and drinking water supply pipelines within right of way.

Sir,

The Standing Committee in its 46th meeting held on 8th December, 2017 had decided to delegate its powers for sanctioning proposals for underground laying of drinking water pipeline and optical fibre cables falling inside the Protected Areas (PAs) along the right of way of roads inside National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Tiger Reserves or any other Protected Area notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to the State Boards for Wild Life (SBWL) for five years. The Ministry issued an advisory to all states/UTs to this effect vide letter dated 13th February, 2018.

2. The matter was discussed by the Standing Committee in its 71st meeting held on 29th December, 2022. After discussions, the Standing Committee decided to extend delegation of powers to State Boards for Wild Life for sanctioning proposals for underground laying of drinking water pipeline, optical fibre cables and power lines up to 11 kV within the allowed right of way of roads inside National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Tiger Reserves or any other Protected Area notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 for a further period of five years.

3. Accordingly, permits for underground laying of drinking water pipeline, optical fibre cables and power lines up to 11 kV within the allowed right of way of roads inside National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Tiger Reserves or any other Protected Area notified under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 may be granted by the Chief Wild Life Warden after recommendations of State Boards

for Wild Life and approval of State/UT Governments without these proposals being referred for consideration of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life subject to the following conditions:

i. The size of the trench will not exceed more than 2.0 m depth and 1.0 m width;
ii. The user agency agrees to make good the land after use / maintenance;
iii. The user agency agrees to make good any loss to forest / environment;
iv. The user agency seeks permission from the State Forest Department for carrying out any maintenance;
v. The diameter of drinking water pipeline shall commensurate with the width of the trench mentioned above.
vi. No civil structures will be built with the underground laying of drinking water pipeline, power lines and optical fibre cables;
vii. The user agency will have to submit NOC from the agency which holds the right to use the right of way;
viii. The State Government / Union Territories shall ensure that the length of the length of trench dug at a time does not exceed 500 m, filled up and compacted before digging next stretch of 500 m;
ix. The State Board for Wild Life shall also suggest the time frame for completing the work of underground laying of drinking water pipeline, power lines and optical fiber cables within the PAs after taking into account all the factors/issues involve in the work;
x. The user agency shall provide water supply points within the PAs if demanded by the Chief Wild Life Warden or in-charge of PA but not more than per sq.km;
xi. This delegation shall be valid till 31.12.2027;
xii. The State Government / Union Territories will submit a monthly progress report on the extent of the forestland diverted for such purposes to the Ministry as well as the concerned Regional Offices.

4. The State Boards for Wild Life may further consider delegating the above powers to the Standing Committees of the State Boards for Wild Life once constituted after the commencement of Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022.

This issues with the approval of competent authority.

Yours faithfully,

(Dr. Sudheer Chintalapati)
Scientist 'E'
Email: adwl-mefcc@gov.in

Distribution

1. Secretary, Ministry of Telecommunications
2. DGF&SS, MoEF&CC
3. Member Secretary, NTCA
4. ADGF(FC), MoEF&CC
5. Director, WII, Dehradun
6. Director, GEER Foundation, Gandhinagar, Gujarat
7. Prof. R. Sukumar, Member, NBWL
8. Dr. H.S. Singh, Member, NBWL
9. Pr. Secretary, Forest Department, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh
10. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force, All States/UTs

Copy to

1. PS to Hon'ble MoEF&CC
2. PPS to Hon'ble MoS, EF&CC
3. PPS to Secretary, MoEF&CC
4. PPS to DGF&SS, MoEF&CC
5. PSO to Addl. DGF(WL), Member Secretary, NBWL
6. PPS to IGF(WL)/PPS to IGF (FC)/PPS to JS, IA (Policy/ PS to DIG(WL)/PS to JD(WL)

(Dr. Sudheer Chintalapati)
Scientist 'E'
Email: adwl-mefcc@gov.in

ANNEXURE-IX

F.No.6-207/2022 WL
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Wild Life Division)

2nd Floor, Vayu Wing,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bag Road, New Delhi 110003.

Date: 14th March, 2023

To,

1. The Principal Secretary (Forests), All States/UTs
2. The PCCF, All States/UTs
3. The Chief Wild Life Warden, All States/UTs

Sub: Submission of linear project proposals - decision of 71st meeting of SC-NBWL held on 29th December, 2022 - reg.

Sir/Madam,

It is observed that the proposals for linear projects for the consideration of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life are submitted in piecemeal manner which in turn leads to the non-disclosure/non appraisal of the full and cumulative impact of their projects.

2. In view of the decision taken in the 71st meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life held on 29th December, 2022 the undersigned is directed to request that the proposals for linear projects should be submitted in a holistic manner and not in separate packages.

This issues with the approval of competent authority.

Yours faithfully,

(Dr. Sudheer Chintalapati)
Scientist 'E'
Email: sudheer.ch@gov.in

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Copy to:

1. PS to Hon'ble MoEF&CC
2. PPS to Hon'ble MoS, EF&CC
3. PPS to Secretary, MoEF&CC
4. PPS to DGF&SS, MoEF&CC
5. PSO to Addl. DGF(WL), Member Secretary, NBWL
6. PPS to IGF (WL)/PPS to IGF (FC)/PPS to JS, IA (Policy)/PS to DIGF (WL)/PS to JD (WL).

(Dr. Sudheer Chintalapati)
Scientist 'E'
Email: sudheer.ch@gov.in

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ANNEXURE-X

F. No. 1-57/2014 WL (part-8)
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Wildlife Division

First Floor, Agni Wing,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi - 110003.

Dated: 29th October 2021

Principal Secretary (Forests),
All States/Union Territories.

Sub: Guidelines for sustainable eco-tourism in forest and wildlife areas-2021

Sir,

Forests and wildlife are inseparable elements of environmental integrity and therefore, a participatory approach towards building the intricate interface between humans and forests is imperative.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has prepared the 'Guidelines for sustainable Ecotourism in forest and wildlife areas-2021'. The undersigned is directed to enclosed a copy of the said guidelines for ready reference (**Annexure).**

The States/Union Territories may take further action, as appropriate, in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

29.10.21

(Rakesh Kumar Jagenia)
Deputy Inspector General of Forests (WL)
Email: digwl-mefcc@gov.in

Encl: As above.

Copy to:

1. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force (HoFF), All States /Union Territories.
2. The Chief Wild Life Warden, All States/ Union Territories.
3. Inspector General of Forests, Forest Conservation Division, MoEFCC, New Delhi.
4. PSO to ADGF (WL)/PPS to IGF (WL), MoEFCC, New Delhi.

Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Guidelines on Sustainable Eco-Tourism in Forest and Wildlife Areas 2021

1. BACKGROUND

Forests and wildlife are elements of nature and inseparable parts of the environment. Because of the intricate nature of interface between nature and human beings, nature conservation entails interactions with people as a central concept. Such interaction includes not only the forest fringe dwellers but also those who are living away from the forests for the purpose of creating experience for the visitors. Eco-tourism may be developed in and around designated sites in forest and wildlife rich areas and ex-situ conservation areas, and such designated sites may include sites of biological, geographical, geo-physical and eco-heritage importance such as mangroves, sacred groves, mudflats, beaches, streams, wetlands, waterfalls, rivers, hills, caves, etc.

Eco-tourism has the potential to create significant opportunities for building public awareness and mass movement towards conservation of nature and natural resources while expanding overall returns to the economy, improving skill base, creating new knowledge and green jobs, and improving the livelihoods of the local communities.[1] On the other hand, eco-tourism if not practiced in a science-based manner may adversely affect nature on a permanent basis. The Guidelines on Sustainable Eco-Tourism in Forest and Wildlife Areas 2021 (hereinafter referred to as the Guidelines or the Eco-Tourism Guidelines), therefore, lays the framework for practising and promoting sustainable eco-tourism by maximising outputs that support nature and natural resources in their original forms while minimising any negative externalities arising out of interactions between people and nature.

The Guidelines recognise that besides the popular sites located in Protected Areas, which presently number over 900 across the country, many potential eco-tourism sites are located in public, community and private forests outside the Protected Areas as well. These Guidelines shall be applicable to ecotourism sites falling in all forest and wildlife areas irrespective of the ownership of the land.

2. GOAL

The overall goal of these Guidelines is promoting better understanding of nature and wildlife conservation while generating income and opportunities for the local communities in an ecologically, culturally and economically sustainable manner.

3. OBJECTIVES

The Guidelines seek to achieve the following objectives:

i. Promote low impact nature tourism which ensures ecological integrity of the eco-tourism sites and its environment;

ii. Promote biodiversity, traditional ecological knowledge and heritage values of India's wilderness;

iii. Promote engagement of local communities in nature tourism in a manner that enriches local economy and encourages sustainable use of indigenous materials through financially viable value chains thereby helping such local communities become "***AtmaNirbhar***"

iv. Promote partnerships amongst stakeholders for mobilising resources and developing and promoting nature tourism, as well equitable sharing of benefits.

v. Enhancing potential of India as a global eco-tourism destination.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF ECO-TOURISM

(i) Eco-tourism planning: Eco-tourism shall be promoted on the basis of science based planning. The plan shall form part of the duly approved Working Plan or Management Plan or Conservation Plan of the forest or wildlife area as the case may be, and shall include the carrying-capacity analysis based description of the eco-tourism site, time, duration, route, mode of travel and number of persons for visitations, and any support infrastructure needed. Wherever feasible, the eco-tourism plan will also be dovetailed with the *Gram Panchayat* Development Plan. The Protected Area (PA) manager along with a third party shall determine the carrying-capacity of eco-tourism site by taking into account the wide diversity of environmental, physical, social and economic criteria of development and management of eco-tourism sites as well as institutional capacities of their managers. The Eco-tourism plan needs to also factor in aspects of control of plastic pollution, waste management, noise pollution, sewage treatment and disposal, etc. The Eco-Tourism guidelines issued by the National Tiger Conservation Authority shall be applicable to Eco-tourism in Tiger Reserves in the country.

(ii) Eco-tourism zonation: The eco-tourism plan shall appropriately demarcate the eco-tourism zone upon assessment of management requirements of the target wildlife, the habitat or the geographical entity, and their behavioural and ecological characteristics. The eco-tourism zonation shall particularly ensure that the ecological integrity of the site, including breeding areas of wildlife and tribal habitations particularly PVTGs remains protected. The zonation shall also ensure that safeguards provided in the Forest Rights Act, 2006 are fully respected.

(iii) Resource mobilisation and community participation: The local community shall be the key stakeholder of eco-tourism. Central government will provide for participatory frameworks that encourage resource mobilisation by a group of stakeholders in development, operation and maintenance of eco-tourism zones. These frameworks shall ensure that equitable benefits flow from eco-tourism accrues, besides resource investors, to local communities, tribals and other traditional forest dwellers including by way of enhanced livelihood opportunities. Further, keeping in view that most eco-tourism sites are located in remote places and small-scale operators predominate, suitable programme may be taken up by the Central Government to facilitate eco-tourism operators to access incentives allowed to the tourism sector in a timely and adequate manner.

(iv) Eco-tourism site development: The Eco-tourism site shall be developed only in eco-tourism zone and in eco-friendly manner. While developing support infrastructure for eco-tourism it shall be ensured that the natural profile and ecological integrity of the ecotourism site including its biodiversity value is maintained. Any ecotourism facility or structure on forest lands shall be subject to the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980. However, no permanent structure shall be made /constructed to create ecotourism facility/structure, but temporary structures/facility made predominantly of natural material of local origin may be allowed in Protected Area or on forest land. Such ecotourism facility/structure shall be part of the approved Working Plan/Management Plan/Working Scheme. Home stay managed by local communities on non-forest land shall be promoted. States may develop benchmarks/ standardized criteria based on site specificity, for adoption of best practices in eco-tourism including sustainable ecological management of the site, customer satisfaction, harmony with local culture and design, local construction material used, employment types, environmental education facilities. Further, safety measures, especially for managing fire, flood, landslide, needs to be inbuilt into the ecotourism site development plan and adequate system needs to be in place for efficiently managing such disasters.

(v) Inter-sectoral synergy: The central government will work towards prioritisation of action with regard to developing eco-tourism sites across the country and improving the way in which action on eco-tourism is coordinated with other sectors and synergies are exploited in the best possible manner. Regulations should be streamlined wherever possible and processes and procedures should be simplified while taking into consideration the objectives of relevant sectoral policies.

(vi)Promoting eco-tourism entrepreneurship: Concerted action will be taken for expanding entrepreneurship opportunities for stakeholders engaged in eco-tourism with due priority to the members of local communities and those whose livelihoods have been impacted because of actions such as closure of the Protected Area for forest product extraction. The focus will be on increasing productivity, boosting the skills and competencies of stakeholders at all levels, and the needed structural changes will be supported and strengthened. Start-ups will be supported through training, coaching, financial support and other benefits including through the incubators established under various government programmes.

5. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The following are the broad framework for implementation of the Eco-tourism Guidelines:

Strategy i: Identification of potential sites: Each State may identify sites for eco-tourism through a participatory process involving stakeholders, particularly the local communities, and make a priority list for development of such sites. Area managers will initiate eco-tourism planning based on carrying-capacity analysis, including identification of eco-tourism zones, identification of potential partners, categorisation of infrastructure support that may be allowed, funding sources, and training and capacity building needs of the partners through a multi-stakeholder dialogue process. Spatially cluster approach to eco-tourism infrastructure will be promoted to larger blocks of contiguous habitats so as to minimise adverse ecological impacts on a larger area. An indicative list of potential eco-tourism sites is at Annexure I. However, States/UTs may develop ecotourism sites which has high potential.

An Eco-tourism Plan shall be prepared for every eco-tourism site. The Plan shall be approved and prepared for sites under various controls as follows:

i. For Sites within forest/protected areas: The Eco-tourism Plan for the areas falling inside the notified forest/protected areas shall form part of duly approved Working Plan/Management Plan/ Working Scheme.

ii. For Sites falling within Eco-sensitive Zones: All new Eco-tourism activities or expansion of existing tourism activities within the Eco-sensitive Zone (on non-forest land) shall be as per the Tourism Master Plan for the Eco-sensitive Zone. The Eco-tourism Master Plan shall be prepared by Department of Tourism in consultation with State Departments of Environment and Forests. The Tourism Master Plan shall form a component of the Zonal Master Plan and until the Zonal Master Plan is approved, development for tourism and expansion of existing tourism activities shall be permitted by the concerned regulatory authorities based on the actual site specific scrutiny and recommendation of the Monitoring Committee. Hotel/resort or commercial establishment construction shall be taken up inside the Eco-sensitive Zone as per the ESZ notification of the National Park/Sanctuary.

Strategy ii: Funding support: Compatible funding instruments that cater to the specific challenges of the eco-tourism sector, particularly the small and geographically fragmented nature of enterprises, is key to sustainable eco-tourism promotion. Financial institutions may be encouraged to develop targeted financial instruments for the eco-tourism entrepreneurs at the local level. Public funding for eco-tourism promotion, monitoring and innovation may be made available, including for non-repayable loans and guarantees, start-up grants and marketing of eco-tourism places.

Strategy iii: Usage of Information Technology: The role of digitalisation both as a driver and an enabler of eco-tourism shall be recognised. In particular, digitalisation will be used to facilitate new eco-tourism products, such as virtual tours, competitive exploration, etc., services, business processes and models. National and sub-national projects will be launched to undertake analysis of the needs of various partners and users (visitors) of eco-tourism projects, and develop scenarios for eco-tourism support for the future, and active steps will be taken for transfer of knowledge to partners including by making such knowledge public wherever feasible. In recognition of the fact that partners (e.g. service providers) in eco-tourism are mainly small entities, and their limited capabilities of using digital services combined with possible use of multitude of digital platforms and inability to create economies of scale, pose significant challenge. National and sub-national level data integration platforms to analyse visitors behaviour and preferences will be developed, and additional sources such as social media engagement, newsletter statistics, booking data, media and marketing reports, etc will be used.

Strategy iv: Capacity building: Despite wider and growing attraction to eco-tourism, the challenges emanating from the field such as geographically fragmented and small nature of sites, small business structure and high seasonality and the consequent visitor number fluctuation, are significant. On the other hand, it offers significant entrepreneurial and labour market opportunity for the local communities. With increased numbers of eco-tourism sites the eco-tourism sector may become a supplier of low return exchangeable standard products making private investment in eco-tourism less attractive. The capacity of field functionaries of different stakeholders, especially the eco-tourism site managers and the local communities, will be steadily built to innovate and meet the present and future challenges of the sector, and international best practices as suited to local conditions will be internalised. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and other such institutes will be encouraged to develop specific programmes for local communities and small operators engaged in eco-tourism.

Strategy v: Benefit sharing: Community-based tourism will be promoted as a preferred form of eco-tourism. While eco-tourism will create new wage employment and private entrepreneurial income for the respective stakeholders, fair and equitable benefit sharing of common eco-tourism revenues with the local community is key to sustainability. Given the diversity of stakeholders, scale of operations and geographically fragmented nature of eco-tourism sites, appropriate mechanisms for sharing of benefits with the local eco-development committees / forest protection committees will be developed by the respective State Government for different types of eco-tourism sites falling on government lands. Such benefit sharing mechanisms shall recognise that the local community has the highest stake in eco-tourism and the revenue generated has to be also ploughed back for development and maintenance of the eco-tourism sites. Transparent mechanism for revenue collection from common eco-tourism activities user charges, entry fees, concessions, fines and penalties, etc. through a Foundation established at the appropriate local level, and sharing of revenue with stakeholders, particularly local communities, has served as best practise in many parts of the world and the same duly incorporated by the respective State governments. Considering that

eco-tourism is mostly a seasonal activity, the Eco-Tourism Plans should include measures to reduce financial overdependence of the local community on eco-tourism, and the same should be supported by the district level plan approval committees. Such measures may include capacity building of the communities with respect to processing and marketing of bio-cultural products to ensure that communities remain attached to preservation of local ecology. The Central government will support development of such mechanisms through sharing of international experiences and coordination with participating states and national entities in case the stated eco-tourism enterprise covers sites across States and/ or national entities are involved.

Strategy vi: Education and outreach: For effective use of the eco-tourism potential of the area, effective communication plan covering all eco-tourism sites of a State will be drawn by the State Governments with the help of expert organsiations. The Plan, among other relevant information, will include information to the tourists on the eco-system services and intangible benefits provided by the area. The communication plan will include measures to promote partnerships between the eco-tourism project and socially responsible companies. Use of modern technologies such as electronic visual tools and well equipped modern interpretation centre at the eco-tourism site will be encouraged through this Plan to encourage self-learning by visitors. The Plan will also lay emphasis on appropriate signages for generating awareness among the visitors regarding the safety and risk factors in the eco-tourism zone and safety protocol and information material on the area for the visitors. The Central government will support the outreach of States' eco-tourism potential for international tourists in a programmatic manner.

Strategy vii: Monitoring: Each eco-tourism plan will invariably include a dynamic monitoring mechanism, covering multiple biological parameters to monitor stress on wildlife vis-a-vis number and patterns of tourist visitation and their level of satisfaction, involvement of local people, scope for improvement in flow of eco-system services, etc. The monitoring will also include mechanisms to ensure that rigorous practices are in place to prevent biological invasion, disease transmission, and air, water, noise or light pollution. The States Governments/UT Administrations shall endeavour to maintain service level quality standards through appropriate certification/rating protocols.

The States shall endeavour to initiate a ranking system for the respective ecotourism sites.

There shall be regular monitoring by the State Governments and Union Territories on the implementation of the guidelines spelt out in the Guidelines for Sustainable Ecotourism in forest and wildlife areas-2021.

District, State and National level monitoring committees comprising of representatives of relevant stakeholder departments, the local communities, civil societies, and the corporate organisations will be constituted to oversee the implementation of this Guidelines including mobilisation of the required technical, financial and human resource support for eco-tourism plans.

Strategy viii: Review: The National level eco-tourism monitoring committee will review the Eco-Tourism Guidelines every three years and make recommendation to the Central Government.

***

[1]Wherever 'local community' has been used in this Guidelines, it will mean to include Schedule Tribe and other traditional forest dwellers as per Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, which is referred hereinafter as FRA 2006 in short.

Annexure I

Potential Sites in India for Ecotourism (Illustrative)

S.No.	State/ UT Administration	Name of Protected Area
	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	
1		Mahatama Gandhi Marine (Wandoor) NP
2		Mount Harriett NP
3		Ross Island WLS
	Andhra Pradesh	
4		Coringa WLS
5		Pulicat Lake WLS
	Arunachal Pradesh	
6		Itanagar WLS
	Assam	
7		Orang NP
8		DeeporBeel WLS
9		Hollongapar Gibbon WLS
10		Pabitora WLS
	Bihar	
11		Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary
	Chandigarh	
12		City Bird WLS
13		Sukhna Lake WLS
	Chhattisgarh	
14		Kanger Valley NP
15		Pamed Wild Buffalo WLS
	Goa	
16		BhagwanMahavir WLS
17		Dr. Salim Ali Bird (Chorao) WLS
	Gujarat	
18		Gir National Park & WLS &Gir Landscape
19		Marine (Gulf of Kachchh) NP
20		Barda WLS
21		Girnar WLS

22		Jessore Sloth Bear WLS
23		Kachchh Desert WLS
24		NalSarovar Bird WLS
25		Thol Lake WLS
26		Wild Ass WLS
	Haryana	
27		Sultanpur NP
28		Morni Hills (Khol-Hi-Raitan) WLS
29		Nahar WLS
	Himachal Pradesh	
20		Great Himalayan NP
31		Dhauladhar WLS
32		Kalatop-Khajjiar WLS
33		Kibber WLS
34		Manali WLS
35		Pong Dam Lake WLS
36		Renuka WLS
	Jammu & Kashmir	
37		Dachigam NP
38		Gulmarg WLS
	Laddakh	
39		Hemis NP
40		Changthang WLS
	Jharkhand	
41		Dalma WLS
	Karnataka	
42		Bannerghatta NP
43		Kudremukh NP
44		Cauvery WLS
45		Daroji Bear WLS
46		Pushpagiri WLS
	Kerala	
47		Eravikulam NP
48		Silent Valley NP
49		Thattekad Bird WLS
	Lakshadweep	
50		Pitti Island Bird Sanvtuary
	Madhya Pradesh	
51		Madhav NP
52		National Chambal WLS

53		Pachmarhi WLS
	Maharashtra	
54		Sanjay Gandhi (Borivilli) NP
55		Lonar WLS
56		Thane Creek Flamingo WLS
	Manipur	
57		Keibul-Lamjao NP
	Meghalaya	
58		Balphakram NP
59		Nokrek Ridge NP
	Mizoram	
60		Phawngpui Blue Mountain National Park
	Nagaland	
61		Intanki NP
	Punjab	
62		Harike Lake WLS
63		Beas Conservation Reserve
	Odisha	
64		Bhitarkanika WLS & NP
65		Chilika (Nalaban) WLS
66		Gahirmatha (Marine) WLS
67		Nandankanan WLS
	Rajasthan	
68		Keoladeo Ghana NP
69		Desert National Park Sanctuary
70		Mount Abu WLS
71		National Chambal WLS
	Sikkim	
72		Khangchendzonga NP
73		Maenam WLS
	Tamil Nadu	
74		Gulf of Mannar Marine NP
75		Vedanthangal WLS
76		Point Calimere WLS
	Telangana	
77		KasuBrahmananda Reddy NP

	Tripura	
78		Clouded Leopard NP
79		Trishna WLS
	Uttar Pradesh	
80		Katerniaghat WLS
81		National Chambal WLS
82		KachuaWLS
	Uttarakhand	
83		Gangotri NP
84		Nanda Devi NP
85		Valley of Flowers NP
86		Kedarnath WLS
	West Bengal	
87		Gorumara NP
88		Jaldapara NP
89		Neora Valley NP
90		Singalila NP

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