

SITE INSPECTION REPORT

JIO DIGITAL FIBER UNDERGROUND OFC CABLE FROM HALSI - LONDA TO KARNATAKA/GOA BORDER

Introduction to the project

The project is for laying of Optical Fiber Cable from Halsi-Londa to Karnataka/Goa border through reserved forest areas of Karnataka in various villages of Belgaum and Uttar Kannada district. The total forest land required for the project in Dandeli Wildlife Division is 0.3496 Ha.

Ecology of Project Site

The project is located in Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary (DWS). DWS is known for its rich biodiversity. Major part of DWS is hilly terrain with many streams and nalas. The climate is marked by three seasons namely dry, wet and cold season. The dry season commences in February and lasts till May. The wet season starts from end of May and lasts upto end of October. The cold season starts from November and lasts up to January. The rainfall particularly during the Monsoon is heavy to very heavy. The average rainfall in Castlerock Range where the project area falls is between 5000-6000 mm.

The flora is represented by rich moist deciduous, semi evergreen and evergreen type of forests with different plant communities. The forest types represented are: South Indian Moist Deciduous Teak Forests (3B/C1), Southern Moist Mixed Deciduous Forests (3B/C2), West Coast Semi-evergreen Forests (2A/C2), Moist Bamboo Brakes (2B/E3), Cane Brakes (2B/E1). The region is known for its unique biodiversity with high degree of endemism. The list of highly threatened and endemic life forms occurring in these areas include Black panther (melanistic leopard), King cobra, Malabar pied hornbill, Ceylon frogmouth, Wroughton's free tailed bat (*Otomops wroughtoni*), Theobald's Bat (*Taphozous theobaldi*) etc. The other important fauna of this region include Tiger, common Leopard, Dhole, Jackal, Elephant, Gaur, Sambar Deer, Spotted Deer, Barking Deer, Mouse Deer, Sloth Bear, Hanuman Langur, Bonnet Macaque, Indian Giant Squirrel, Flying Squirrel, Pangolin, 272 bird species, reptiles such as Indian Gliding Lizard (*Draco dussumieri*), amphibians (29 species), butterflies, and other small cats. The largest Indian butterfly Southern Birdwing and the endemic Malabar Tree Nymph are found in good population.

The major communities inhabiting the project area are Konkan Kunbis and Konkan Marathas. Apart from the presence of several indigenous communities in the landscape, who live in tiny enclosures within the forests, the region also witnessed large scale agricultural expansion during the last century along with establishment of several river valley projects.

Impact of Project

The project area runs along the alignment of NH 4A within the right of way and does not require removal of any trees. Once the work is completed the area remains undisturbed and there are no lasting negative impacts of the project. The impacts are limited and restricted to the installation phase. Since the forest land required by the project (for laying pipeline) is open land and already under utilization for public highway the impact is minimal. Overall the impact of the project is minimal and can be mitigated by using trenchless boring technology (technical feasibility to be confirmed from the project proponent).

Recommendation

The project site was inspected by the undersigned on 17/01/2021 and 23/06/2021. The project will improve the mobile and internet connectivity of the region which is essential for its overall development. It is an important project with least impact on Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary. It is recommended that the forest land of extent 0.3496 Ha may be diverted for the project.

The following mitigation measures are proposed to protect the interest of wildlife during and after the execution of the project:

1. The work shall be restricted to day time hours i.e. between 6 AM to 6 PM.
2. No structures shall be allowed for housing labourers engaged in the construction activities for overnight stay at project site.
3. The implementing agency shall abide by the conditions laid down by the forest officials incharge of the project area in the interest of protecting and minimizing disturbance to wildlife during the work phase and after completion of the project.

Field Director



Kali Tiger Reserve