

TAMILNADU FOREST DEPARTMENT

From

To

Thiru. Srinivas R. Reddy, I.F.S.,
Principal Chief Conservator of
Forests (Head of Forest Force),
Forest Headquarters Building,
Guindy - Velachery Main Road,
Guindy, Chennai - 600 032.

The Additional Chief Secretary to
Government,
Environment, Climate Change and
Forests Department, Secretariat,
Chennai - 600 009.

Ref.No.HOTNFD/1049/2025-TS4, dt: 15-04-2025**Madam,**

Sub: Forests - Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan)
Adhiniyam, 1980 - SMTR, Madurai circle - Srivilliputhur
WL division - Proposal for diversion of 0.027 ha of forest
land for construction of steel bridges in 3 locations to
the pilgrimage who visit the temple across river streams
on the path via Thaniparai to Sundara Mahalingam
temple of Sathuragiri Hills across Saptur RF in favour of
Executive Officer, Arulmigu Sundara Mahalingam
Swamy temple, Sathuragiri - reg.

- Ref:
1. Online application uploaded by Executive Officer,
Arulmigu Sundara Mahalingam Swamy temple,
Sathuragiri, Proposal No. FP / TN / Others / 45291 /
2020 on 23.04.2020.
 2. Part-II uploaded by Deputy Director, SMTR,
Srivilliputhur on 24.04.2023.
 3. Part-III uploaded by Chief Conservator of Forests &
Field Director, SMTR, Madurai on 10.05.2023.
 4. EDS raised by Nodal Officer on 05.06.2023 and
28.10.2024.
 5. EDS reply uploaded by Chief Conservator of Forests
& Field Director, SMTR, Madurai on 12.10.2023 and
24.01.2025.

I wish to state that in the reference 1st cited, the Executive
Officer, Arulmigu Sundaramahalingam Swamy temple, Sathuragiri has
furnished online application u/s 2 of Van (Sanrakshan Evam
Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for the above proposal under Proposal

No. FP/TN/Others/45291/2020.

1) Brief details of the project are given below:

- i. The User Agency has uploaded the proposal in the prescribed format, Form-A: Part-I under Section 2 of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 for diversion of fresh forest area in Parivesh 1.0 module.
- ii. Name of the project reported as, construction of steel bridges in 7 locations across river streams from Thaniparai to Arulmigu Sundaramahalingam temple located in Saptur RF of Srivilliputhur Wildlife Division in Madurai District. But the Deputy Director has recommended for the construction of steel bridges in 3 locations only.
- iii. Proposal number of the project reported as, FP/TN/Others/45291/2020.
- iv. Legal status of the user agency is, State Government. Name of the User Agency is, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department.
- v. On behalf of User Agency, Executive Officer, Arulmigu Sundara Mahalingam Swamy Temple, Sathuragiri, Office at Agraharam Middle Street, Watrap - 626132 has uploaded the forest clearance proposal.
- vi. Location of the forest area reported as, Saptur village of Madurai District. Total forest land required for the project reported as 0.06 ha with a total of 7 locations, whereas the Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, SMTR, Madurai has recommended 0.027 ha with a total of 3 locations only. Non-forest area required in the project reported as 'Zero' ha. Some of the details previously uploaded could not be modified, due to portal issues.
- vii. Component wise break up details of forest area required for the project reported as follows:

For construction of steel bridges in 3 locations with a total extent of 0.027 ha, at Mangani odai (width - 25 m, area - 0.009 ha), Elumbu odai (width - 20 m, area - 0.007 ha) and Sangili parai odai (width - 30 m, area - 0.011 ha) on the path via Thaniparai to Sundara Mahalingam temple of Sathuragiri Hills across Saptur RF in Madurai District.

- viii. The user agency has reported that the project or activity is site specific, hence alternative was not examined.
- ix. The user agency has uploaded a note containing justification for locating the project in forest area stated as follows:

There are three approach pathways available. The devotees are climbing up the hill from Thaniparai, Vazhaithoppu and Varusanadu Uppuparai. Hundreds of pilgrims visit this temple on the occasions of Adi Amavasai, Pradosham, full moon and new moon days. During Adi Amavasai, a festival will be celebrated in which about 2 to 3 lakhs devotees have the darshan. When it rains, people will find it difficult to climb on the steep rocky areas. To make the path safe for trekking, HR & CE Department has decided to construct iron bridges over the streams wherever necessary. Seven locations are identified for construction of steel bridges for the easy movement of the devotees (but the Deputy Director has recommended for 3 locations only). The area requested for construction of steel bridges is the minimum requirements for public usage. The above pathway for the temple is the only shortest distance without affecting the forest area and animals.

- x. The user agency has reported that displacement of people due to the project is not involved.
- xi. Details of Cost-Benefit analysis for the Project reported as, 'No'.
- xii. Status of Environmental Clearance reported as, 'No'.
- xiii. The user agency has reported that project or part thereof is located in the Protected Area or their eco sensitive zone. Status of approval of the Standing Committee of National Board for the Wildlife (NBWL) is, application was submitted in Proposal No. WL / TN / Others / 512274 / 2024 and is under process.
- xiv. Applicability of special provisions in Scheduled Areas reported as, No.
- xv. Status of settlement of rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 on the forest land proposed to be diverted reported as, 'Yes'. The User Agency has uploaded the certificate on settlement of rights under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, 2006, issued by the District Collector, Madurai.
- xvi. Details of land identified for Compensatory Afforestation reported as, 'Not applicable'.

xvii. The user agency has furnished following documents under additional information details section.

- a. District Collector's certificate on the non-availability of alternate non-forest land for the above project.
- b. Project location on google earth map.
- c. Certified related to No catchment area treatment plan in the approved plan.
- d. Certified that no work in violation of the Forest Conservation Act 1980 has been carried out and the area required is barest minimum.
- e. Undertaking to bear the cost of Compensatory Afforestation / Penal Compensatory Afforestation / Maintenance of Plantation / Protection of plantation for the proposed diversion of forest land as fixed by the Forest Department.
- f. Undertaking to pay the Net Present Value which will be fixed as per the guidelines of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India as fixed by Forest Department in future.
- g. Undertaking to pay the additional Net Present Value which will be fixed as per the guidelines of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India as fixed by Forest Department in future.
- h. Undertaking to agree to pay the cost along with any escalation for exploitation of trees if any available in the alignment path, for the proposed diversion of forest as fixed by the Forest Department.
- i. Undertaking letter for making Lease rent charges.
- j. Undertaking to agree to pay the cost for felling of trees, if any.
- k. Technical drawings of steel bridges.
- l. Commissioner, HR & CE letter to Joint Commissioner, HR & CE, Madurai.
- m. Gazette Notification of Saptur RF.
- n. Area requirement statement for the project.
- o. Reply letter with application for NBWL / SBWL (WL / TN / Others / 512274 / 2024).

2) **In the Part II** of Form-A uploaded in the web portal, the Deputy Director, SMTR, Srivilliputhur and the Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, SMTR, Madurai have reported the following details:

i) Forest area diversion of 0.027 ha of forest land in Madurai District for construction of steel bridges in 3 locations across river

streams on the path via Thaniparai to Sundara Mahalingam temple of Sathuragiri Hills across Saptur RF has been recommended. Eco-class of forest area reported as Eco-Class '3', with density of forest area reported as '0.7'. Species wise and girth class wise enumeration of tree details reported as, 'zero'. Some of the details previously uploaded could not be modified, due to portal issues. Hence, the area recommended by the Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, SMTR, Madurai may be accepted.

ii) Brief note on vulnerability of the forest area to erosion reported as, "Since the project is intended to implement on the banks of streams, there will be some amount of erosion. However, if banks are stabilized erosion can be minimized".

iii) Significance of the forest land proposed for diversion reported from Wildlife point of view reported by the Deputy Director, SMTR, Srivilliputhur is as follows:

- a. Details of wildlife present in and around the forest land proposed for diversion reported as, "Tiger, Elephant, Nilgiri Thar, Grizzled Giant Squirrel, Common Langur, Leopard, Dholes, Slender Loris, Indian Gaur, Sambar, Chital, Jungle Cat, Small Indian Civet, Common Palm Civet, Brown Palm Civet, Common Mongoose, Stripe necked Mongoose, Sloth Bear, Ruddy mongoose, Mouse deer, Barking deer, Wild pig, Indian Pangolin, etc."
- b. Whether forms part of national park, wildlife sanctuary, biosphere reserve, tiger reserve, elephant corridor, wildlife migration corridor etc., reported as, "Yes". Details and comments on the impact of Project on such areas reported as, "Project have minimum impact on the ecosystem with the current flow of pilgrims. Hence, even after implementation of the project number of days of pilgrimage and number of pilgrims need to be restricted at current levels."
- c. Whether the forest land proposed for diversion is located within eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of the Protected Area notified under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 reported as, "No".
- d. Whether any national park, wildlife sanctuary, biosphere reserve, tiger reserve, elephant corridor, wildlife migration corridor etc., is located within 1 Km. from boundary of the forest land proposed for diversion reported as, "Yes". Details and comments on the impact of Project on such areas reported as, "Project have minimum impact

on the ecosystem”.

- e. Whether any rare / endangered / unique species of flora and fauna found in the area reported as, “Yes”.
- f. There is no protected archaeological / heritage site / defence establishment or any other important monument is located in the area.
- g. Requirement of forest land as proposed by the User Agency is reported as unavoidable and bare minimum for the project.
- h. Whether any work in violation of the Act or guidelines issued under the Act has been carried out reported as, “No”.

iv) For the diversion of 0.027 ha of forest land, Compensatory Afforestation has been proposed in Degraded Forest Land identified in Saptur RF, Madurai District. KML file, DGPS map and SI Sheet map of the identified land and suitability certificate has been uploaded. The Compensatory Afforestation Scheme for planting 72 seedlings in 0.072 ha at a cost of Rs.2,30,330/- including 10-years maintenance is proposed.

v) The Deputy Director, SMTR, Srivilliputhur and the Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, SMTR, Madurai have uploaded the site inspection report and specific recommendation for the proposed forest diversion area.

The Deputy Director, SMTR, Srivilliputhur has recommended as, “It is recommended to divert 0.027 ha of forest land for construction of steel bridges across streams, Mangani odai, Elumbu odai and Sangili parai only, on the path via Thaniparai to Sundaramahalingam temple against 0.06 ha proposed by the user agency for forest clearance under Forest Conservation Act, 1980”, i.e., for construction of steel bridges in 3 locations with a total extent of 0.027 ha, at Mangani odai (width – 25 m, area – 0.009 ha), Elumbu odai (width – 20 m, area – 0.007 ha) and Sangili parai odai (width – 30 m, area – 0.011 ha), on the path via Thaniparai to Sundara Mahalingam temple of Sathuragiri Hills across Saptur RF in Madurai District.

The Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, SMTR, Madurai has recommended as, “The project site does not have any important

monuments, which has archaeological importance / heritage site / defence establishment etc. There is a great religious importance associated with the Sundaramahalingam temple at Sathuragiri and an important pilgrimage for people in Tamil Nadu”, with a total extent of 0.027 ha.

vi) In the Part-II of Form-A, the Deputy Director, SMTR, Srivilliputhur has recommended the forest area diversion for construction of steel bridges in 3 locations with a total extent of 0.027 ha, at Mangani odai (width – 25 m, area – 0.009 ha), Elumbu odai (width – 20 m, area – 0.007 ha) and Sangili parai odai (width – 30 m, area – 0.011 ha) on the path via Thaniparai to Sundara Mahalingam temple of Sathuragiri Hills across Saptur RF in Madurai District.

vii) In the Part-III of Form-A, the Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, SMTR, Madurai has recommended the forest area diversion for construction of steel bridges in 3 locations with a total extent of 0.027 ha.

3) As per the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 and the provisions of the said Adhiniyam, the authority to process the above subject proposal is the GoI, MoEFCC, RO, Chennai. The proposal forwarded by the Deputy Director and the Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director is sent herewith duly recommended by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Forest Conservation Act) / Nodal Officer of Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 subject to the following conditions:

- i. The legal status of the diverted forest land remains unchanged.
- ii. The demarcation of the proposed forest area shall be carried out by erecting 4 feet high cement concrete pillars duly numbered at an interval of 20 meters at the cost of the User Agency.
- iii. The Compensatory Afforestation (CA) shall be carryout in the Degraded Forest Land identified in Madurai District at the cost of User Agency.
- iv. The Degraded Forest Land identified in Madurai District for CA and the approved CA scheme shall not be changed without prior approval of the Central Government and the amount realized from the User Agency towards CA should not be left unspent.
- v. The Net Present Value shall be charged for the diverted forest land

measuring 0.027 ha from the User Agency as per the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 28.03.2008 and 09.05.2008 in IA Nos.826 in 566 with related IA's in Writ Petition (Civil) No.202/1995 and Ministry's guideline No. 5-3/2011-FC(Vol-I) dated 06.01.2022 and clarification issued vide letter dated 19.01.2022 and 22.03.2022.

- vi. Additional amount of the Net Present Value (NPV) of the diverted forest land if any, becoming due after revision of the same by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in future, shall be charged from the User Agency. The User Agency shall furnish an undertaking to this effect.
- vii. All the funds received from the User Agency under the project shall be transferred / deposited to CAMPA fund only through e-portal (<https://parivesh.nic.in/>).
- viii. The forest land proposed for diversion shall under no circumstances be transferred / sublet to any other agency, department or person without prior approval of the Central Government.
- ix. The layout plan of the proposal shall not be changed without the prior approval of the Central Government.
- x. No additional or new path will be constructed inside the forest area for transportation of construction materials for execution of the project work.
- xi. The User Agency shall provide fire wood preferably alternate fuel to workers working at the site to avoid damage / tree felling.
- xii. Disturbance shall be kept minimal by creating labour camps outside the forest area as far as possible and it will be the responsibility of the User Agency to ensure that the workers & staff engaged in execution of work do not destruct nearby forest flora & fauna.
- xiii. The total forest area in forest area utilized for the project shall not exceed 0.027 ha and the forest area diverted shall not be used for any purpose other than those shown in the diversion proposal.
- xiv. The User Agency shall obtain necessary permission from the SC NBWL. In case of rejection under Wildlife Protection Act 1972, then Stage-I approval accorded under FCA, 1980 will stand cancelled automatically. The State Government shall realize all levies only after obtaining of permission from SC NBWL.
- xv. The User Agency shall ensure compliance to provisions of the all

Acts, Rules, Regulations and Guidelines, for the time being in force, as applicable to this project.

- xvi. Any other conditions that the Central Government or DDG (Central) of Regional Office, Chennai may impose from time to time in the interest of afforestation, conservation and management of flora and fauna in the area, shall be complied by the User Agency.
- xvii. In the event of failure to comply with any of the above conditions the User Agency is liable for penal action as per the rules / guidelines issued under Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980.
- xviii. The User Agency has to pay the cost towards annual lease rent for the forest area diversion period as fixed by the Forest Department at the time of sanction along with any escalation for the forest land to be diverted for the above project in future for the entire project period.
- xix. Period of lease can be thirty (30) years. The User Agency has to apply renewal proposal before one year of expiry of lease with the State Forest Department.

4) Hence, I request that the above proposal may be recommended and forwarded to Government of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Regional Office, Chennai for obtaining In-Principle (Stage-I) approval for diversion of 0.027 ha of forest land for construction of steel bridges in 3 locations to the pilgrimage who visit the temple across river streams on the path via Thaniparai to Sundara Mahalingam temple of Sathuragiri Hills across Saptur RF in favour of Executive Officer, Arulmigu Sundara Mahalingam Swamy temple, Sathuragiri in Madurai District for a period of 30 years.

Yours faithfully

Signed by

Ramasubramanian.s

Date: 15-04-2025 09:38:55

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
(Forest Conservation Act) (FAC)

Copy to the Chief Conservator of Forests & Field Director, SMTR, Madurai.

Copy to the Deputy Director, SMTR, Srivilliputhur.

Copy to the Executive Officer, Arulmigu Sundara Mahalingam Swamy temple, Sathuragiri, Madurai District.

PART - IV

(To be filed in by the Nodal Officer)

Detailed opinion and specific recommendation of the State Forest Department for acceptance or otherwise of the proposal with remarks.

The online proposal is submitted by the User Agency is recommended for diversion of 0.027 ha of forest land for construction of steel bridges in 3 locations to the pilgrimage who visit the temple across river streams on the path via Thaniparai to Sundara Mahalingam temple of Sathuragiri Hills across Saptur RF, Madurai District in favour of Executive Officer, Arulmigu Sundara Mahalingam Swamy temple, Sathuragiri with Proposal No. FP/TN/Others/45291/2020.

The construction of steel bridges in 3 locations on the path via Thaniparai to Sundara Mahalingam temple of Sathuragiri Hills across Saptur RF is essential for public usage to the devotees of above temple. Hence, the above proposal is recommended.

Signed by

Ramasubramanian.s

Date: 15-04-2025 09:40:58

Nodal Officer
Forest Conservation Act,
Tamil Nadu