

Site inspection report of District Forest Officer, Kanniyakumari Division, Nagercoil

The field inspection was carried out along with NHAI officials on 12.08.2015 and 17.11.2015. An area of 0.88 ha has been sought in 2 bits of Therkkumalai West R.F. for the purpose of laying 4 lane road (NH/47B – Nagercoil – Kavalkinaru) by NHAI.

A new alignment is proposed by NHAI for this portion of the 4 lane road, instead of widening the existing 2 lane road between Nagercoil & Kavalkinaru citing reasons of crammed traffic and heavy built up area flanking the existing road. Moreover the NHAI officials opined that widening of existing road will not be able to meet the required standards as per IRC for NH and may cause considerable land acquisition, laborious work, huge cost, profound dislocation & relocation of people and disturbance to the public at large. The proposed alignment traverses the Therkkumalai West R.F. at two locations along the boundary seeking diversion of an extension of 0.88 ha in two bits i.e. Bit I (0.60 ha) and Bit II (0.28 ha). The officials of NHAI have certified that various alternative have been considered before finalizing this proposal and no suitable alternative along non-forest land is available which is also endorsed by the District Collector.

The Therkkumalai West R.F. supports dry-deciduous to dry scrub/thorn forests with a crown density <0.4. *Acacia planiferons*, *Acacia leucophloea*, *Morinda tinctoria* and *Albizzia amara* are the predominant vegetation with associate shrub species like *Randia*, *Zizyphus*, *Dodonia* and *Cymbopogon* grass sp. The area falls in Therkkumalai West RF which is part of Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary. There are no reports of unique/endangered fauna and flora identified from this area.

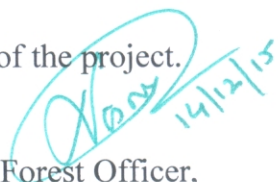
During my field inspection along with NHAI officials, some discrepancy was noticed in calculation of area and hence the concerned Range Officer (Range Officer, Boothapandy) was directed to survey the area. Subsequently the area was surveyed and it was identified that the total area marked on the ground was 0.94 ha

instead of 0.88 ha, as proposed by NHAI. On subsequent deliberations with the NHAI, the area was jointly surveyed on 17.11.2015 and the area on the ground was re-fixed in order to limit the proposed area as to 0.88 ha and a new surveyed sketch was drawn.

The Range Officer has enumerated all standing trees in the area and a list showing 286 miscellaneous trees of short and slender nature has been submitted. Although diversion is less than one hectare and as such does not require any compensatory land, if diversion is approved, the loss of 286 trees needs to be suitably compensated by planting with taller saplings ten times the trees removed, with adequate tree guard protection, along the proposed road (NH.47 B) as avenue at the cost of Highways Department ensuring adequate undertaking. A condition may also be imposed that the user agency has to erect a retaining wall between the Reserved Forest boundary and road over a distance 450 mt. along which the road passes in the Reserved Forest limit, so as to avoid/limit instances of wildlife traversing the road / road kills in future. This would also help to arrest soil erosion from the Reserved Forest and subsequent soil sedimentation in the road during rainy season.

In view of the socio-economic benefit accruable and the importance of the project, the proposal of diversion of 0.88 ha from Therkkumalai West R.F. may be considered and may be referred to Central Government for prior approval, the proposed area being part of Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary.

The proposal is recommended considering the importance of the project.


District Forest Officer,
Kanniyakumari Division,
Nagercoil