

SITE INSPECTION REPORT

The proposed project is Capacity augmentation to two lane with paved shoulder of NH 744 (old NH 2018) from Punalur to (45/000) to Kottavasal (81/000) in the state of Kerala. Inspected the project area on 13.12.17 and 01.01.2018 along with Divisional Forest Officer, Thenmala and field staff.

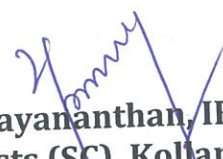
The proposed project is widening works in NH 744 Kollam - Thirumangalam interstate highway connecting Kerala and TamilNadu. The road is main life line connecting both the states in Southern part of Western Ghat. Generally the road experiences very heavy vehicular traffic throughout the year and peak during Sabarimala pilgrim season. The road is already existing tar road extensively used by the public to a average width of 8.00 m. The present proposal involves widening of road surface at various chainage points with construction of retaining wall and side protection walls. The proposed widening works in Thenmala Range lies in five locations with area requirement of 0.4225 Ha and three locations in Ariyenkavu Range with area of 0.0960 Ha, altogether 0.5717 Ha area is required for the above project. In the present proposal of widening of existing tar road 49 trees required to be felled with some locations requires deep excavation and cutting.

It is also observed that the road is passing through Shengotta gap separating Periyar Landscape and Agasthyamala Landscape, which is unique and significant with respect to movement of wildlife from one landscape to another landscape. Though the present proposal of widening may not much affect the flora and fauna of the area, however it may cause disturbance to the movement of animals from one landscape to another. Several studies identified connecting corridors (crossing structures) in the proposed road which may facilitate movement of animals from one landscape to another without much disturbance and also potential for restoring the Shengotta gap which is very useful for long term conservation. The user agency may explore the possibility of constructing

one such crossing structure in the proposed road which may serve important corridor restoration combined with mitigation of human wildlife conflict along with regular works.

The proposed area does not form part of protected area under Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. No protected archaeological / heritage site / defence establishment is located in the area. The requirement of forest land as proposed by the user agency is highly unavoidable and bare minimum and there is no other alternate option available. During my inspection, no work in violation of the FC Act or guidelines is seen carried out by user agency. Hence the project may be considered positively.




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Chief Conservator of Forests (SC), Kollam.
(Full additional charge)