



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

6th Floor, Vayu Wing
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jor Bag Road
New Delhi 110 003
Date: 08 Feb 2018

F.No. 6-4/2018 WL

To
The Principal Secretary
Kerala Forest Department
Vazuthacaud
Thiruvananthapuram 695 014

Sub: Minutes of the 47th Meeting of Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife- reg.

Sir,

The 47th Meeting of Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife was held on 25th January 2018 under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The following policies and proposals pertaining to your State were considered:

Monitoring Terms and Conditions Mentioned while Approving Projects

The DIGF(WL) briefed the Committee and stated that the Standing Committee of NBWL considers and recommends the developmental activities / projects inside the Protected Areas along with site specific mitigation measures to safeguard the interest of wildlife. During the field visits by different Committees constituted by the Standing Committee of NBWL, it has been observed that such projects were implemented without implementing some of the terms and conditions. In other words, the interests of wildlife conservation were ignored sometimes intentionally. The conservationists are of the view that the Protected Areas (PAs) have suffered due to sanctioning of the developmental projects inside the PAs in the recent years while the project proponents ignored the conditions mentioned for protection of wildlife while recommending the projects.

Dr. H S Singh, Member, NBWL was of considered view that there is a need to establish a mechanism of monitoring to ensure that the development activities / projects are taken up inside the Protected Areas only after implementing the terms and conditions. In the background of this fact, it is necessary to develop a format of the certificate from the Chief Wildlife Wardens of the States for each project for fulfilling the terms and conditions as mentioned in the approval before implanting the project. It should be mandatory for submitting the certificate for each such project by the State Chief Wildlife Warden in time so that the interests of wildlife are secured fully.

The Member Secretary, NBWL mentioned that in case of diversion of forestland for non-forestry uses and in case of Environmental Clearances a condition is being stipulated that annual compliance report of the compliance of the stipulated conditions shall be submitted by the user agency. Further in the green portal of the Ministry software is under development which will help in monitoring the implementation of terms and conditions stipulated in approval / recommendations given under the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, Environmental (Protection) Act 1986 and Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.

After discussions, the Standing Committee decided that in the online of approval / recommendations given under the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, Environmental (Protection) Act 1986 and Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 a condition should be stipulated that annual compliance report on the stipulated conditions shall be submitted by the user agency to the State CWLW.

Strengthening the Network of Protected Areas

The DIGF(WL) briefed the Standing Committee and stated that India has constituted about 4.9 % of the total terrestrial land and inland waters under the network of Protected Area (including MPA) under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 which is far below the Aichi Target of 17 % of the terrestrial land. Some of the states such as Uttar Pradesh (2.4 %), Rajasthan (2.8 %), Jharkhand (2.7 %), West Bengal (3.2 %), Bihar (3.4 %), Madhya Pradesh (3.5 %), Tamil Nadu (4.1 %) and some others have contribution less than the national average to the Network of Projected Area. These States may be requested to achieve the average national target (at least 5 % of their geographical area) under the four categories of Protected Area. *If it is not possible to declare area under National Park or Wildlife Sanctuary, adequate areas should be covered under Conservation Reserve and Community Reserve to achieve the target.*

Dr H S Singh stated that it may not be possible to achieve Aichi target of Protected Area by 2020 in India due to high population but the country should aim to reach at least the half of the target. The Member suggested to create more Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves with the participation of local people in the States / UTs to achieve Aichi target of Protected Area by 2020 in India due to high population but the country should aim to reach at least the half of the target.

After discussions, the Standing Committee recommended that Ministry would issue an advisory to States / UTs to make sincere efforts to declare more Conservation and Community Reserves and progress made in this regard would be reviewed by the Standing Committee periodically.

Creating Network of Marine Protected Areas

The DIGF(WL) requested Dr. H S Singh, Member, NBWL to brief the Standing Committee on the policy item.

Dr H S Singh stated that at present about 0.3 % of EEZ is under Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in India, which is far below the Aichi Target of 10%. Some of the critical marine area within Territorial Water of India can be considered for declaring as sanctuaries whereas a large marine area can be covered under Conservation Reserve. Conservation Reserve does not restrict activities such as fisheries, navigation, activities of Navy and other sustainable industrial development. In fact declaring area of EEZ or Continental Shelf under Conservation Reserve may strengthen sovereign power of the country. The imminent scientists, institutions may be engaged to identify such areas for considering for declaring MPAs.

After discussions, the Standing Committee recommended that the Ministry would issue an advisory to the States / UTs to make sincere efforts to explore possibilities of bringing more marine areas under Conservation Reserves to conserve and protect the marine biodiversity with peoples' participation.

Wildlife Passage Plan with a Proposal of Linear Projects (roads, canal and railway)

Dr. H S Singh, Member, NBWL while briefing the Standing Committee about this agenda mentioned that high speed and multiple lane roads, wide canals and railways lines not only cause deaths of animals however they also block wildlife movement completely thereby fragmenting the habitat. The nature of the linear projects

is changing fast, leaving no scope of movement of wildlife from one side to other. In some cases, it is impossible for wild animals and reptiles to cross high speed multiple lane roads or wide canals. Practically, such linear projects fragment habitats totally, blocking genetic flow of the fauna in the nature. Over a period, such projects cause loss or extinction of the wildlife. Any linear proposal for approval by the Standing Committee of NBWL should invariably contain a master plan for passage of the wildlife. Although WII, Dehradun has prepared the guidelines on mitigation measures for linear infrastructure passing through Protected Areas and some of the proposals mention passage plan however these are not adequate or perfect. The project proponent always tries to avoid such components in the plan to minimize expenditure, although the cost of the passage plan is small fraction of the total cost of the project. The size of wildlife passage should be adequate so that wild animal cross the site without fear and hesitation. The society still does not accord importance to wildlife which is against the principle of sustainable development.

In the background of this fact, every such proposal should contain one page passage plan with location of wildlife passages on map, duly examined on the ground and approved by the State Chief Wildlife Warden. The Director, Wildlife Institute of India intimated that the guidelines named "*Eco-friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts on Linear Infrastructures on Wildlife*" provides required modifications in the infrastructure designs to mitigate the impact of the infrastructure on the wildlife.

After discussions, the Standing Committee recommended that in future when user agencies involved in linear infrastructure development should take in to consideration the advisory made in the guidelines of the Wildlife Institute of India while designing the linear infrastructures inside the Protected Areas, notified ESZ area around PAs. Hence linear infrastructure proposals would be accompanied by an animal passage plan, if required, by the project proponent on the basis of these Wildlife Institute of India guidelines and in consultation with the State Chief Wildlife Warden.

Policy Framework on Wildlife-Human Conflicts

The DIGF(WL) stated that Prof R Sukumar, Member of NBWL has proposed a policy agenda wherein he desired to have a deliberation on policy framework on wildlife - human conflicts. It has been mentioned that the conflict has been escalating in recent years due to a complex set of factors including habitat transformation, land use change outside forests, adverse climate events, behavioral ecology of animals, etc. It has been requested that a sub-committee of members which can hold wider consultative meeting for preparing policy document on the framework of wildlife - human conflicts and frame the guidelines to implement Landscape Conservation.

After discussions, the Standing Committee recommended that the Committee chaired by the ADGF(WL) and comprising of representative of WII, representative of NTCA, two PCCFs of States where human - wildlife conflict is maximum and IGF(WL) as the Member Secretary, constituted in agenda item 47.3.3, would also hold wider consultation with different stakeholders and submit a report to the Ministry within two months for further consideration.

Policy Framework on Landscape Scale Conservation

The DIGF(WL) stated that Prof R Sukumar, Member, NBWL has proposed a Policy Agenda wherein he desired to have a deliberation on landscape level conservation. The member has stressed the need to shift from protected area centric approach to landscape based conservation. It has been requested that a sub-committee of members may hold wider consultation with different stakeholders for preparing policy document on landscape scale conservation.

After discussions, the Standing Committee recommended that the Committee chaired by ADGF(WL) and comprising of representative of WII, representative of NTCA, two PCCFs of States where human wildlife conflict is maximum and IGF(WL) as the Member Secretary constituted in Agenda Item 47.3.3 would also hold wider consultation on landscape scale conservation with different stakeholders and submit a report to the Ministry within two months for further consideration.

Review of procedure adopted by the State Board for Wildlife

It was briefed the Standing Committee that Section 6 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for constitution of the State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) with the Chief Minister of the State or Administrator of the UT as its chairperson. Section 7 provides that at least two meetings of the board should be held per year. However as per the Hon'ble Supreme Court's directions the proposals for development projects falling within Eco-sensitive Zones of the Pas shall also be referred to the NBWL through SBWL. This has increased the flow of proposals to the SBWL and NBWL. Keeping this fact in mind there is a need to adopt a mechanism which can ensure speedy disposal of the proposals by these boards. Unlike NBWL no provision has been made in the Act to constitute the Standing Committee to assist the SBWL. However, Section 7 (2) of The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 confers powers upon the State Board for Wildlife to regulate its own procedure (including the quorum). Some States have utilized this provision to adopt a mechanism to expedite the disposal of proposals. Further the ADGF(WL) mentioned that the States / UTs may use this provision to constitute the Standing Committee for State Board for Wildlife and other procedure related matters. Some Members were of the view that while utilizing the provision of the Act for expediting the disposal of the work it should be ensured by the State Government that regular meetings of the SBWL are held as per the provision of the Act.

After the discussions, the Standing Committee decided that an advisory may be issued to States / UTs to make use of this statutory provision under Section 7 (2) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for devising a mechanism which can expedite the disposal of the proposals and while such mechanism is devised it should be ensured that regular meetings of the SBWL, at least at the frequency prescribed in the Act, are held to discuss the outstanding policy issues related to wildlife in the stands. Hon'ble Minister, EF&CC will write to all State Chief Ministers and DGF&SS will write to all the CWLWs in this regard.

Strengthening of existing highways includes the change of surface of roads

The DIGF(WL) briefed the Standing Committee and mentioned that the Standing Committee in its 28th meeting had constituted a sub-committee chaired by Dr M K Ranjitsinh to frame Guidelines for roads in Protected Areas. Based on the recommendations of the Sub-Committee, Ministry issued Guidelines for roads in Protected Areas vide its letter dated 22.12.2014. In the said Guidelines it was mentioned that for resurfacing and strengthening of existing roads, project proposals need not be referred to the Standing Committee of NBWL. However, cases of widening of existing roads would need to be placed before the Standing Committee. It is clear that there exists a dichotomy between two.

After discussions, the Standing Committee was of the view that there appears to be no dichotomy in the guidelines. In case of resurfacing and strengthening the existing roads no additional land of the PA is required and therefore provision is made for not referring the proposals to the Standing Committee of the NBWL. On other hand in case of widening of the existing roads diversion of additional land of PA is involved. Therefore approval of the Standing Committee of NBWL has been made mandatory. However in view of recent developments in evolving of the mitigative measures for linear infrastructures inside PA done by the Wildlife Institute of India there is a need to review these guidelines.

Laying of ± 320 kv HVDC underground power cable from Vadakkancherri to Thrissur

The DIGF(WL) briefed the Standing Committee on the proposal and stated that the project involves the diversion of 0.098 ha forestland from the Peechi Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary for underground laying of power cable of 12" diameter of length of 490 m and width of 2 m from Vadakkancherri to Thrissur. The project would provide electricity to the households and for irrigation purpose in the region. He added that the State CWLW has recommended the proposal with the condition that the project proponent would construct rail fence barrier in the stretch that is falling in the Peechi Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary.

After discussions, the Standing Committee decided to recommend the proposal along with the conditions and mitigation measures stipulated by the CWLW with the condition that Wildlife Mitigation Plan will be prepared and implemented by the CWLW / State Government at the project cost and standard mitigation measures should be adopted by the user agency in consultation with the CWLW.

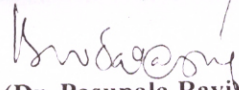
Construction of Jetty along the west bank of Mattancherry Channel in Fort Kochi for Indian Coast Guard

The DIGF(WL) briefed the Standing Committee on the proposal and stated that the project involves the construction of Jetty along the west bank of Mattancherry Channel in the Kochi Fort for Indian Coast Guard located at 3.3 km away from boundary of Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary. He added that the proposal requires the recommendation of Standing Committee as part of Environment Clearance. He added that the State CWLW has recommended the proposal without imposing conditions.

After discussions, the Standing Committee decided to recommend the proposal.

The above recommendation(s) are subject to the existing directives of Hon'ble Supreme Court and provisions of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

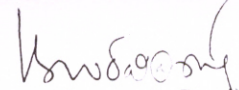
Yours faithfully,


(Dr. Pasupala Ravi)
Scientist C

E-mail: ddwlmef@gmail.com

Copy to

1. Chief Wildlife Warden, Kerala Forest Department, Vazuthacaud, Thiruvananthapuram 695 014
2. Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (C), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Regional Office (SZ), Kendriya Sadan, 4th Floor, E&F Wings, 17th Main Road, Koramangala II Block, Bangalore 560 034
3. Joint Secretary, IA Division, MoEF&CC
4. Inspector General of Forests, FC Division, MoEF&CC


(Dr. Pasupala Ravi)