

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

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jorbagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi - 110003.
Dated: 21st April, 2022

To,
The Addl. Chief Secretary (Forests),
Government of Odisha,
Bhubaneswar.

Sub: Proposal for non-forestry use of 349.709 ha forest land in favour of M/s Mahanadi Coalfields Limited for Siarmal Opencast Coal Mining Project in Sundergarh District (Odisha) – reg.

Sir,

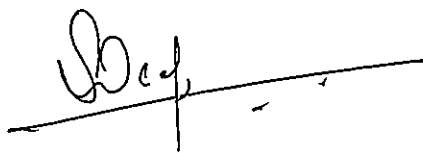
I am directed to refer to the Government of Odisha's letter No. FE-DIV-FLD-0118-2021-16201/ FE&CC dated 13.09.2021 on the above subject seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and letter no. 18581/9F(MG)-35/2021 dated 03.11.2021, 2466/9F(MG)-35/2021 dated 08.02.2022 and 5992/9F(MG)-35/2021 dated 22.03.2022 forwarding additional information as sought by the Ministry vide its letters of even number dated 5.10.2021, 24.12.2021 and 8.03.2022 and to say that the proposal has been examined by the Forest Advisory Committee constituted by the Central Government under Section - 3 of the aforesaid Act.

After careful examination of the proposal of the State Government and on the basis of the recommendations of the Forest Advisory Committee, and approval of the same by the competent authority of the MoEF&CC, New Delhi, the Central Government hereby accords 'in-principle' approval under Section - 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for non-forestry use of 349.709 ha forest land in favour of M/s Mahanadi Coalfields Limited for Siarmal Opencast Coal Mining Project in Sundergarh District (Odisha) subject to fulfilment of the following conditions:

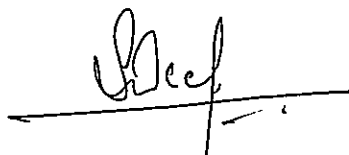
A. Conditions which need to be complied prior to handing over of forest land by the State Forest Department and compliance is to be submitted prior to Stage-II approval

1. Compensatory Afforestation:

- i. The cost of compensatory afforestation at the prevailing wage rates as per compensatory afforestation scheme and the cost of survey, demarcation and erection of permanent pillars, if required on the CA land, shall be deposited in State CAMPA account, through e-challan, by the user agency. The CA will be maintained for 10 years. The scheme may include afforestation of indigenous species with appropriate provision for anticipated cost increase for works scheduled for subsequent years;
- ii. The KML files of diverted area, the CA areas, the proposed SMC treatment area and the WLMP area shall be uploaded on the e-Green watch portal with all

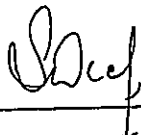


- requisite details prior to Stage II approval;
2. The User Agency shall transfer the funds towards the cost of Net Present Value (NPV) of the forest land being diverted under this proposal in accordance with the MoEF&CC's guidelines dated 6.01.2022 read with guidelines dated 19.01.2022;
 3. Compensatory levies to be realized from the User Agency under the project shall be transferred/ deposited, through e-challan, in to the account of CAMPA pertaining to the State concerned through **e-portal** (<https://parivesh.nic.in/>);
 4. Following activities, as per approved plan / schemes, shall be undertaken in the lease area by the User Agency under the supervision of the State Forest Department. Approved scheme/plan shall be submitted to the Ministry along with compliance of Stage-I approval:
 - i. Mitigative measures to minimize soil erosion and choking of stream shall be implemented within a period of three year with effect from the issue of Stage-II clearance in accordance with the approved Plan in consultation with the State Forest Department.
 - ii. Planting of adequate drought hardy plant species and sowing of seeds, in the appropriate area within the mining lease to arrest soil erosion in accordance with the approved scheme;
 - iii. Construction of check dams, retention /toe walls to arrest sliding down of the excavated material along the contour in accordance with the approved scheme;
 - iv. Stabilize the overburden dumps by appropriate grading/benching, in accordance with the approved scheme, so as to ensure that angles of repose at any given place is less than 28°; and
 - v. No damage shall be caused to the top-soil and the user agency will follow the top soil management plan.
 5. *Chattajornallah located in the area has been proposed to be straightened by the user agency. Also a number of mines are operational in the area which may cause threat to hydrological regime viz. Basundhara river and its rivulets, therefore, a study on hydrological regimes of the area will be undertaken in consultation with the Water Resource Department and the same shall be submitted along with considered opinion of Water Resource Department of the State on the proposed straightening of Chattajo rnallah and proposed mitigating measures before stage-II approval;*
 6. *A Soil and Moisture Conservation (SMC) work plan to mitigate the impact of the proposed mining activity on the local rivulets (nallah) shall be prepared by the user agency in consultation with the State Forest Department and the same shall be submitted along with Stage-I compliance. Cost of implementation of the provisions of the said Plan will be deposited into the CAMPA and the same shall be intimated to the Ministry before Stage-II approval;*
 7. User agency either himself or through the State Forest Department shall undertake gap planting and soil & moisture conservation activities to restock and rejuvenate the degraded open forests (having crown density less than 0.40), if any, located in the area within 100 meter from outer perimeter of the mining lease. The plan for plantation and SMC activities will be prepared and submitted to MoEF&CC before Stage-II Clearance;
 8. The User Agency shall prepare a list of existing village tanks and other water bodies with GPS co-ordinates located within five km from the mine lease boundary. This list is to be duly verified by the concerned Divisional Forest

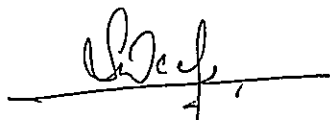


Officer. The User Agency shall regularly undertake desilting of these village tanks and other water bodies so as to mitigate the impact of siltation of such tanks/water bodies. A detailed approved plan for desilting of identified ponds and water bodies to be prepared in consultation with forest department and shall be submitted to MoEF& CC before Stage-II approval;

9. **Safety Zone Management:** Following activities, at project cost, shall be undertaken by the user agency for the management of safety zone as per relevant guidelines issued by the Ministry's guidelines:
 - i. User agency shall ensure demarcation of safety zone (7.5 meter strip all along the inner boundary of the mining lease area), and its fencing, protection and regeneration by erecting adequate number of 6 feet high RCC boundary pillars inscribed with DGPS coordinates with barbed wire fencing and deploying adequate number of watchers under the supervision of the. State Forest Department;
 - ii. Boundary of the safety zone of the mining lease, adjacent to habitation/roads, should be properly fenced by the user agency;
 - iii. Safety zone shall be maintained as green belt around mining lease and to ensure dense canopy in the area, regeneration shall be taken up in this area by the user agency at project cost under the supervision of the State Forest Department;
 - iv. Afforestation on degraded forest land to be selected elsewhere, measuring one and a half times the area under safety zone, shall also be done at the project cost under the supervisions of the State Forest Department. The degraded forest land (DFL) so selected will be informed to the MoEF& CC with shape files before Stage-II approval and afforestation will be done within three years from the date of Stage-II clearance and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved Plan in consultation with the State Forest Department; and
 - v. The State Government and the user agency shall ensure that safety zone is maintained as per the prescribed norms;
9. The cost of felling of trees shall be deposited by the User Agency with the State Forest Department;
10. *Site specific Wildlife Management Plan to mitigate the impact of project on wildlife of the area shall be prepared by the state Government in consultation with the PCCF & Chief Wildlife Warden of State at project cost and an approved copy of the same along with detail of deposition of funds into the CAMPA account shall be submitted to the Ministry along with Stage-I compliance;*
11. State Government shall complete settlement of rights, in term of the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, if any, on the forest land to be diverted and submit the documentary evidence, along with compliance of Stage-I approval, as prescribed by this Ministry's letter No. 11-9/1998-FC (Pt.) dated 03.08.2009 read with 05.07.2013, in support thereof; and
12. The compliance report shall be uploaded on e-portal (<https://parivesh.nic.in/>).
- B. **Conditions which need to be complied on field after handing over of forest land to the user agency by the State Forest Department but the compliance in form of undertaking shall be submitted prior to Stage-II approval**
 1. Legal status of the diverted forest land shall remain unchanged;
 2. The Compensatory afforestation over degraded forest land, double in extent to

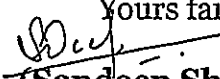


- the forest land being diverted i.e. 712.477 ha. shall be raised by the State Forest Department at the project cost within three years from the date of grant of Stage - II approval;
3. *Boundaries of forest land of 5.256 ha granted on patta, within the patch of 129 ha of degraded forest land proposed for CA, shall be demarcated and digitized and the same shall be submitted to the concerned IRO, along with digital Differential GPS map of 129 ha. The area shall be monitored regularly, on annual basis, to ensure no further encroachment beyond FRA patta land takes place in future;*
 4. At the time of payment of the Net Present Value (NPV) at the present rate, the user agency shall furnish an undertaking to pay the additional amount of NPV, if so determined, as per the final decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India;
 5. Trees should be felled in phased manner as per the requirement in the approved Mining Plan with prior permission of concerned DFO;
 6. The user agency shall explore the possibility of translocation of maximum number of trees identified to be felled and shall ensure that any tree felling shall be done only when it is unavoidable and that too under strict supervision of the State Forest Department;
 7. The User Agency shall undertake mining in a phased manner after taking due care for reclamation of the mined over area. The concurrent reclamation plan as per the approved mining plan shall be executed by the User Agency from the very first year, and an annual report on implementation thereof shall be submitted to the Nodal Officer, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, in the concerned State Government and the concerned Regional Office of the Ministry. If it is found from the annual report that the activities indicated in the concurrent reclamation plan are not being executed by the User Agency, the Nodal Officer or the concern Addl. Principle Chief Conservator of Forests (Central) may direct that the mining activities shall remain suspended till such time, such reclamation activities area satisfactorily executed;
 8. The User Agency shall comply with the Hon'ble Supreme Court order on re-grassing, and re-grass the mining area and any other areas which may have been disturbed due to mining to restore them to a condition which is fit for growth of fodder, flora, fauna, etc. in a timely manner;
 9. Period of diversion of the said forest land under this approval shall be for a period co-terminus with the period of the mining lease proposed to be granted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, as amended and the Rules framed there-under;
 10. The User Agency shall obtain the Environment Clearance as per the provisions of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, if required;
 11. No labour camp shall be established on the forest land and the User Agency shall provide fuels preferably alternate fuels to the labourers and the staff working at the site so as to avoid any damage and pressure on the nearby forest areas;
 12. The boundary of the diverted forest land, mining lease and safety zone, as applicable, shall be demarcated on ground at the project cost, by erecting four feet high reinforced cement concrete pillars, each inscribed with its serial number, distance from pillar to pillar and GPS coordinates;
 13. The layout plan of the mining plan/ proposal shall not be changed without the prior approval of the Central Government and the forest land shall not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the proposal;



14. The forest land proposed to be diverted shall under no circumstances be transferred to any other agency, department or person without prior approval of the Central Government;
15. No damage to the flora and fauna of the adjoining area shall be caused;
16. The User Agency shall submit the annual self-compliance report in respect of the above stated conditions to the State Government, concerned Regional Office and to this Ministry by the end of March every year regularly;
17. Any other condition that the concerned Regional Office of this Ministry may stipulate with the approval of competent authority in the interest of conservation, protection and development of forests & wildlife;
18. The user agency shall comply all the provisions of the all Acts, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, Hon'ble Court Order (s) and NGT Order (s) pertaining to this project, if any, for the time being in force, as applicable to the project; and
19. Violation of any of these conditions will amount to violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and action would be taken as prescribed in para 1.21 of Chapter 1 of the Handbook of comprehensive guidelines of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 as issued by this Ministry's letter No. 5-2/2017-FC dated 28.03.2019.

After receipt of compliance report on fulfilment of the conditions mentioned above, the proposal shall be considered for final approval under Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Transfer of forest land shall not be affected till final approval is granted by the Central Government in this regard.

Yours faithfully,
 Sd/-
(Sandeep Sharma)

Assistant Inspector General of Forests

Copy to:

1. The PCCF (HoFF), State Forest Department, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar
2. The PCCF & Nodal Officer (FCA), O/o PCCF, State Forest Department, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar
3. The Regional Officer (Central), Integrated Regional Office of MoEF&CC at Bhubaneswar
4. User Agency
5. Monitoring Cell, FC Division, MoEF&CC, New Delhi
6. Guard File