

Site Inspection Report by RO Ranchi

(FC Proposal No. FP/JH/RAIL/36506/2018)

The regional office Ranchi is in receipt of an online FC proposal by M/S Central CoalFields Limited (CCL) on PARIVESH for diversion of 120.61 Ha of forest land in Chatra South Forest Division (Chatra District, Jharkhand) for construction of railway line and railway siding for evacuation of coal from the existing & upcoming mines in the very vicinity.

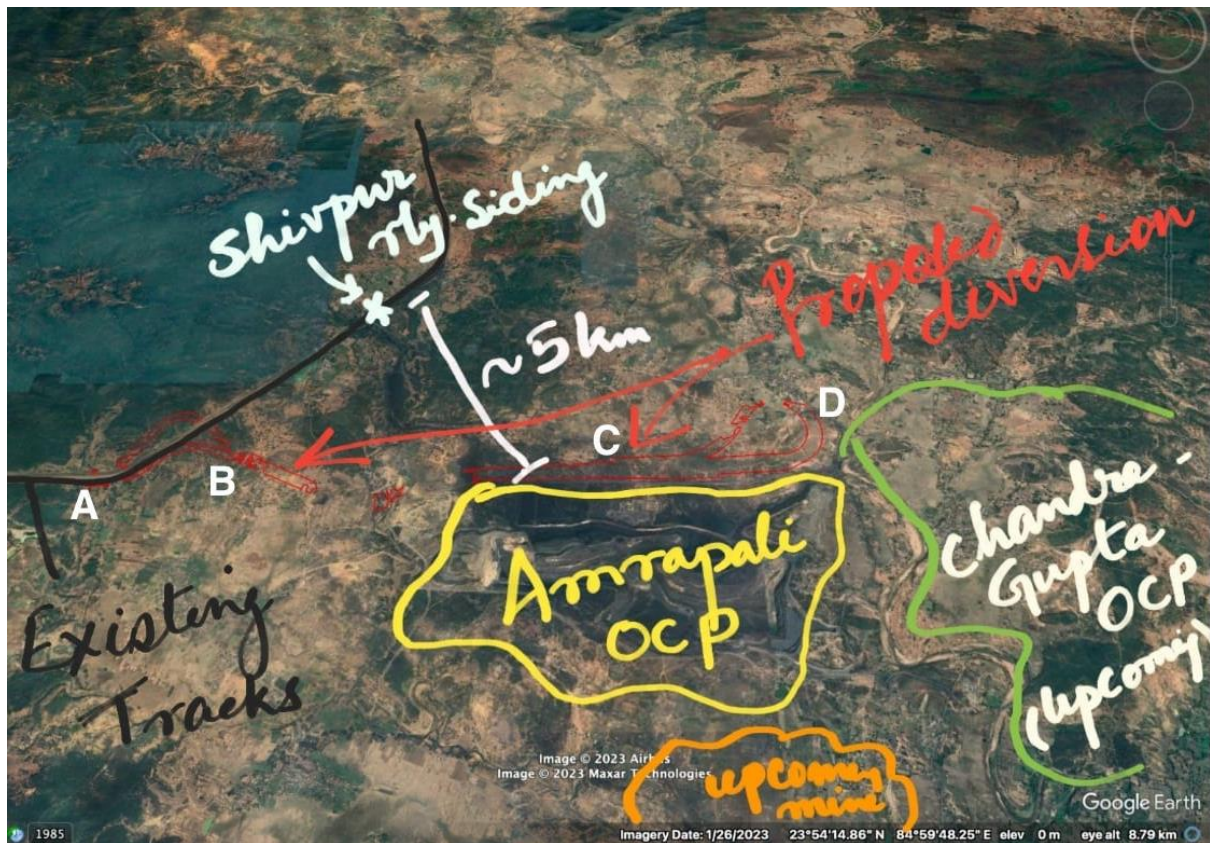
The proposal was examined at Regional Office and site Inspection in accordance to the provisions of applicable FC Rules 2003 as well as Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules 2023 was conducted by representative of Regional office Shashi Shankar, AIGF on 15-18 dec 2023.

During the site inspection the following representatives/ officials were present:-

- Sri Mukesh kumar, IFS DFO Chatra South
- Sri A.K. Singh, GM, CCL
- Sri P.K. Sinha, PO, CCL
- Sri Om Prakash, E&F officer, CCL
- Sri Monu, E&F officer, CCL
- Sri Laltu Kumar, Forester
- Sri R.S. Vohra, JGM , Rites Ltd
- Sri Minal Kanti, Railways surveyor and other officials from SFD & U/A

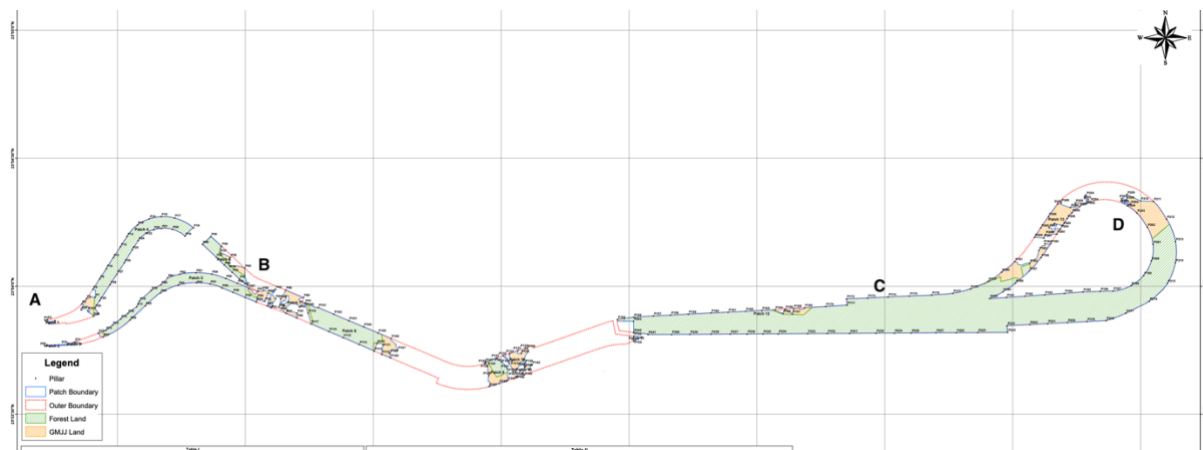
The proposed forest land is intended for diversion for laying of railway tracks of around 9 km length and hence is mostly linear in shape. Envisaged railway siding which is proposed on these tracks would reduce the extent of coal transportation by road, a condition that has been imposed in the Environment Clearance obtained for coal mining in Amrapali OCP. The mines of Amrapali OCP (operational with production capacity 25 MTPA), Chandragupta OCP(upcoming, proposed capacity 15 MTPA) & NTPC OCP (upcoming) shall use this proposed railway siding. At present the produced coal is road transported to Shivpur railway siding which is around 5 kms from nearest point of Amrapali OCP, 15 km from Chandragupta OCP and ~ 15k m from NMDC OCP. Ministry vide its letter dated 5th July 2019 has allowed such proposals to be considered as linear proposals and being dealt separately considering the fact that such projects are eco- friendly method of coal transportation as they reduce the extent of coal transportation by roads that is usually un-environment friendly especially to locals. Also, as this supplementary linear project has come up after the commencement of original Mining in the vicinity therefore, it is treated as a standalone linear project and is being processed as such.

The situation of the proposed forest land vis-a-vis the mine areas are depicted in the following imagery.



The site inspection of the area was done along with the DFO Chatra South and User Agency representatives.

The proposed railway track/siding is in contiguation to the Amrapali OCP lease boundary exactly north to it. The proposal involves 120.61 Ha of forest land which includes 103.23Ha Protected Forest (PF) and 17.35Ha GMJJ which is under administrative control of state Revenue Dept. The non-forest land required for the proposal is 39.49Ha. The distribution of PF, GMJJ and Non-forest land involved in the proposal is depicted in the following diagram.



The proposed railway lines at their left end distribute themselves from the existing Manatu-Shivpur line at Banalat village (A) then runs leftwards (up-side) and rightwards (downside) from the existing line. The leftwards line crosses the existing line from below and then merges with right ward line at (B) as per the proposed plan. The

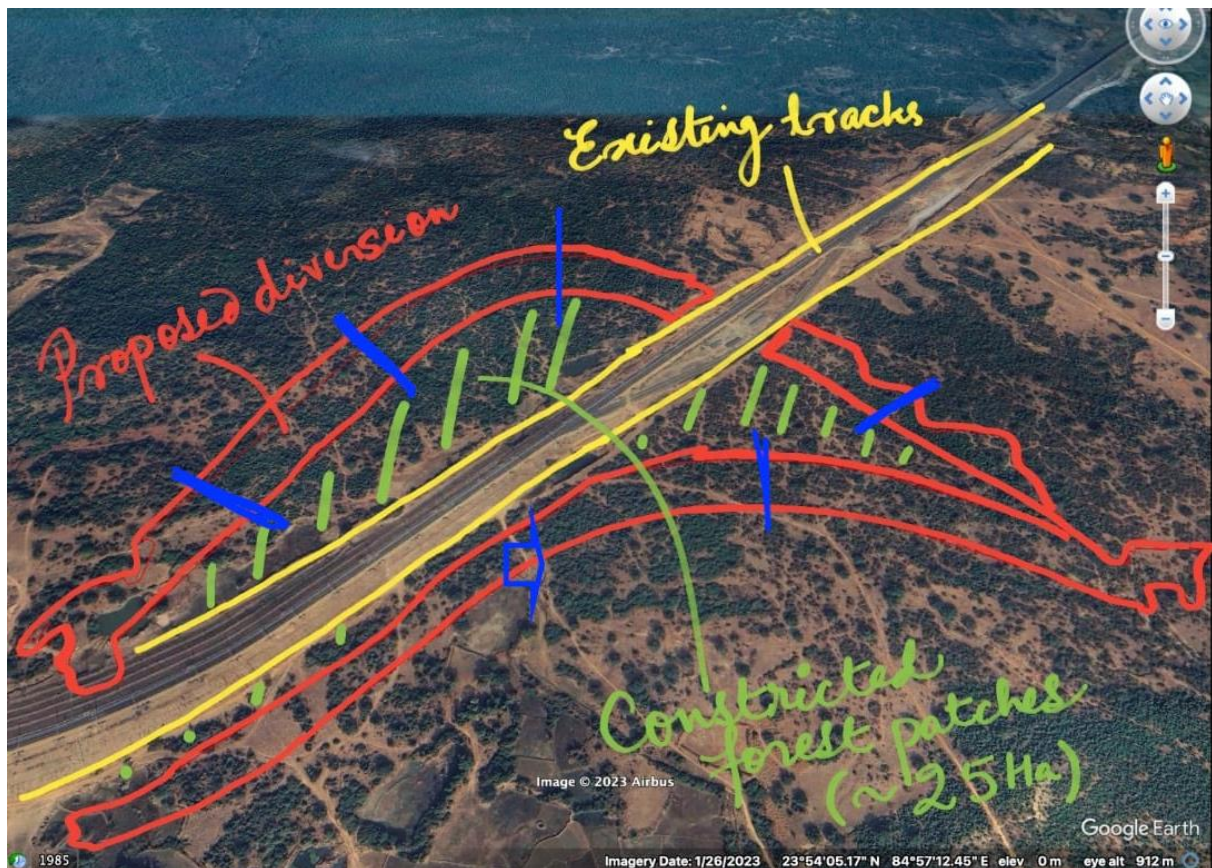
proposed line then crosses the Amrapali OCP along side its northern boundary with Silo and siding at (C) and then makes a rail round about at (D).

During inspection it was observed that no work in violation has started in forest area by user agency and the proposed area does not form part of any ecologically or culturally protected/restricted area. The DFO and forest staff present there apprised that elephants occasionally have visited the area but it is not frequented by their visit.

It was seen from the field visit that few forest areas would get constricted in between the tracks at point A & D. Such forest areas would be isolated from rest of forests for all practical purposes. Therefore, it was asked from DFO and other U/A representatives to envisage the fate of these prospective isolated patches. The visiting team of RO opined that these isolated patches shall be specifically maintained by forest department at the project cost. U/A was asked to provide sufficient numbers of underpasses (Shown in Blue color in the following imageries) in these areas so that wild animals can access these entrapped patches without risking to cross the railway lines. Further, U/A was asked to incorporate these constricted patches as additional CA areas which otherwise is lost because of this project. Around 25Ha at 'A' and about 50Ha at 'D' is the approximate quantity of forest land likely to be trapped due to this project;

The situation is depicted in following photographs: -

At Point A&B:



At point C&D:



Further, it is observed that there would be some fragmented pieces of forest left in the north of the proposed area (as shown in the imagery above). Around 50Ha of such left-over forest land would be very difficult to manage by forest department if left unchecked. From above photo it is evident that habitations are very near to it and sprawling. This area too should be especially protected by forest department at project cost.

Further, in process of railway track laying in this undulating forest area where railway tracks are to underpass exiting railway lines and numerous underpasses for wildlife passage are to be incorporated, muck generation is imminent. The debris generation and utilization plan is still in phase of preparation. The user agency present there informed that Wildlife Conservation Plan along with mitigative measures and Muck Disposal Plan shall be submitted before the issuance of final approval. Same assurance was provided towards FRA compliances. There are no habitations in forest area that would be displaced therefore, there is no RR Plan required in relation to proposed forest.

During the visit, it was informed by the concerned DFO that a temporary road from Honhe to Shivpur is being used by user agency to transport the coal to the present railway siding at Shivpur. This road also is located in forest area and the Final FC approval (dated 09/01/2023; FP/JH/ENCRH/150436/2021) for the road is valid for five years only till the extant railways siding construction is complete after which the road should be dismantled and merged with the adjacent forest area. Therefore, this proposal by user agency is essential for observance and compliance of EC as well as FC conditions both.

The visiting RO Team after inspecting the proposed diversion area found the project in consonance with the concept of environment conservation as the project is likely to reduce road-coal transportation of staggering 45-50 MTPA coal likely to be

produced from the adjoining mines, provided, certain mitigative measures as suggested in this report (reiterated below) are implemented during project construction/operation phase i.e.:

- Provision of underpasses to the constricted forest patches
- Additional CA to these prospective isolated and fragmented forest patches at project cost (amounting around 125-130Ha) with additional watch and ward for ensuring their safekeep
- Preparation and implementation of Site Specific WL Conservation plan
- Muck Disposal plan implementation as well as soil and moisture conservation plan
- Any measure that is incorporated in the Working Plan for the area proposed.

Observations on the CA area:

Thereafter, the Site visit to the proposed Compensatory Afforestation (CA) area was undertaken. Although, with the new Rules-2023 becoming operational from 1st December 2023 and with the Rule No. 16 (8) requiring the processing of earlier proposals too as per the provisions of new Rules, the CA DFL site visit was futile (Rule 13 of VS&SR 2023 provides for non-forest land towards CA for such proposals). Yet, on the request of DFO and UA representatives the CA DFL submitted along with this proposal was visited. Later, ministry too vide its letter dated 27th Dec 2023 has made it clear that any proposal should not returned back due to changed requirement of CA lands and corresponding changes can be incorporated in in-principle approval if the proposal is otherwise complete.

The Compensatory Afforestation (CA) against the above proposal is proposed on around 241.221 ha. of Degraded Forest Land (DFL) in Chatra, districts. The entire CA land is comprised in 04 discrete patches located in various forest blocks of different Mauzas (Villages). This report is based on field observation and interaction with officials of UA/concerned state authorities and GIS analysis of the areas, the brief of them are listed below:

CA land (CA Site)	Brinda	Sasai	Bargaon	Kadhamdiri
Area (ha.)	71.600	54.993	80.008	34.620

1. It is found that proposed CA land is more or less suitable for plantation except Bargaon CA patches. The details Forest cover information of CA land are as follows:

Forest cover information obtained from DSS of the CA land (Area in ha.)

FCM	MDF	VDF	NON FOREST	OPEN FOREST	Total area (ha.)
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CA land	Brinda	01.00	00.00	60.00	11.00	72.00
	Sasai	00.00	00.00	55.00	00.00	55.00
	Bargaon	10.00	44.00	08.00	18.00	80.00
	Kadhamdiri	06.00	00.00	22.00	07.00	35.00
Total area (ha.)		17.00	44.00	145.00	36.00	242.00

CA land area estimated using DSS is 241.221 ha. The forest cover of the CA area reveals that corresponding area falling under VDF, MDF, Non Forest, and Open Forest category are 44.00 ha., 17.00 ha, 145.00 ha., and 36.00 ha. respectively.

2. The identified Brinda, Sasai and Kadhamdiri CA lands are mostly barren land and covered with Scrub/bushes, suitable for plantation except some small patches of vegetation.
3. No encroachment was observed in CA lands during the field visit. Very small water bodies (approx. 0.5 ha.) has been observed within Brinda CA Patches.
4. During field visits, the dominance of Sal forest in Bargaon CA patches has been seen. Therefore, the demarcated CA land of Bargaon is not acceptable for CA plantations except some forest blank pocket areas. Ocular estimation showed that only 30-40 Ha forest area can be taken up for CA in this 80 Ha patch as good Sal rich vegetation thrives in most area within it.
5. It is also observed that there are small discrete CA polygons (kml/area) containing an area of about 0.612 ha near Kadhamdiri CA site.



From the above, it is evident that the net area of the proposed CA DFL were not apposite for CA plantation. Therefore, in addition to these CA patches, it would have been

necessary to add more CA DFL area of about 62 hectares in earlier scenario. A few photographs of the proposed CA DFL taken during the field inspections are below:







Signature

Name and Designation of Inspecting Officer:


2/1/24

(Shashi Shankar)
Assistant Inspector General of Forests
RO, Ranchi