

SITE INSPECTION REPORT OF THE REGIONAL OFFICE, DEHRADUN IN RESPECT OF PROPOSAL INVOLVING DIVERSION OF 106.16 HA OF RESERVED FORESTS LAND IN FAVOUR OF DIRECTOR CORBETT TIGER RESERVE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSED TIGER SAFARI AT PAKHRO IN THE BUFFER ZONE OF CORBETT TIGER RESERVE UNDER THE FOREST (CONSERVATION) ACT, 1980 IN THE STATE OF UTTARAKHAND.

Name of the Inspecting Officer – Shri. T. C. Nautiyal, IFS, DIG(F), Regional Office (NCZ), MoEF&CC, Dehradun.

Site inspection of the above mentioned proposal was carried out on 31.08.2020 with the officials of State Forest Department and representatives of the User Agency. The following Officers were present during the inspection:

Officials from the State Forest Department Uttarakhand

1. Shri Rahul, IFS, Director Corbett Tiger Reserve
2. Shri Akhilesh Tiwari, IFS, DFO Kalagarh Tiger Reserve Division
3. Shri M.S. Mawadi, Range Officer Pakhro range
4. Shri Dharmanand Dhyani, Range Officer Kalagarh Tiger Reserve Division
5. Shri Kishor Nautiyal, Range Officer Dugadda, Lansdowne Forest Division

1. Legal status of the forest land proposed for diversion.

Legal status of the land proposed for diversion is Reserve forest.

2. Whether proposal involves any construction of buildings (including residential) or not. If yes, details thereof.

Yes, the proposal includes construction of buildings over an area of 1.7 ha however, the Director CTR has expressed his willingness to confine all constructions in less than one hectare for the purpose of administrative building, veterinary section, parking, staff residential facility and other off-exhibit facilities etc. A few buildings for protection staff are already available on site.

3. Total cost of the project at present rates.

Total project cost given by the User Agency is Rs. 24.60 crores.

4. Wildlife

Whether forest area proposed for diversion is important from wildlife point of view or not.

The proposed area is in the buffer area of Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) and is included in the designated ecotourism area of the CTR. This tiger safari in the buffer zone of the CTR has been approved by NTCA. The detail site specific plan of the safari has been approved by the NTCA and CZA. Establishment of tiger safari will add to the tourism value of CTR and will also be helpful in reducing the visitor load of the Dhikala area on the Ramnagar side of the CTR. The proposal will also provide the wildlife rescue center in the area which is not there at present. Apart from the tiger and its prey base, the surrounding area also has leopards and elephants and therefore several incidents of man animal conflict are reported. The proposed Wildlife Rescue Center will greatly help in reducing man animal conflict in this part of the CTR. Therefore the area will remain useful with respect to wildlife conservation and major part of the vegetation will not be

disturbed in the establishment of the Tiger Safari. The proposed tiger safari will also be a focal point for education and awareness activity in the region which is sandwiched between CTR and Rajaji tiger reserve .

5. Vegetation:-

- i. The area proposed for diversion belongs to the Eco-Class –II. Major species are *Tectona grandis*, *Ailanthus excels*, *Aegle marmalos*, *Terminalia balerica*, *Syzigium cumini*, *Adena cardifolia*, *Holoptelia integrifolia*, *Albezia procera*, *Lagerstroemia perviflora*, *Bombax ceiba*, *Cassia fistula* and other miscellaneous species. In all there are 3620 enumerated trees but only 163 trees are proposed for felling which will be falling in the construction area of the reception and the admin building .
- ii. **Effect of removal of trees on the general ecosystem in the area.**

The area proposed for diversion belongs to the Eco-Class –III corresponding to forest density of above 0.6. . In all there are 3620 enumerated trees but only 163 trees are proposed for felling which will be falling in the construction area of the reception and the admin building and field staff quarters . These trees can further be minimized depending on the final layout .During the inspection it was noticed that there will be minimal felling on the access road falling inside the safari as the density of trees will allow the road to be built without much felling . This was agreed to by the Director CTR. Therefore the User agency may be advised to further minimize the felling of trees and keep it to only those trees that are falling in the construction area .

Background note on the proposal.

- i. The State Government of Uttarakhand has proposed to establish a tiger safari on the south western periphery of the Corbett tiger reserve falling in the Kalagarh Tiger Reserve division Lansdowne. This tiger safari in the buffer zone of the CTR has been approved by NTCA. The detail site specific plan of the safari has been approved by the NTCA and CZA. Establishment of tiger safari will add to the tourism value of CTR and will also be helpful in reducing the visitor load of the Dhikala area on the Ramnagar side of the CTR .The proposal will also provide the Wildlife Rescue Center in the area which is not there. At present, the major entry to Corbett tiger reserve is from the Ramnagar side of the CTR. During the tourist season the influx of visitors from Ramnagar side to Dhikala Eco-tourism Zone is very high and the animals also get disturbed to a great extent. Therefore, the proposed tiger safari which will be located close to Kotdwar will provide another location which can attract casual wildlife visitors who are interested in tiger sighting in particular. It is also pointed out that major geographical part of Corbett Tiger Reserve falls in the Pauri Garhwal Distt. but, it does not have any substantial tourism potential because there is no such opening in the district for allowing tourism activity. Keeping this in mind the Government of Uttarakhand has proposed opening of Corbett Tiger Reserve from the Kotdwar side also. The State Forest Department has already opened up a reception center close to Headquarters of Lansdowne Forest Division in Kotdwar. The proposed Tiger safari will be a further value addition for the prospective visitors. Further, Lansdowne Forest Division is a vital corridor between Rajaji Tiger Reserve and Corbett Tiger Reserve. There is substantial movement of animals specially elephants which move through village areas in and around Kotdwar town leading to man animal conflict. Establishment of tiger safari and wildlife rescue center in this area will be of great help in reducing man-animal conflict and raising awareness among affected population on wildlife conservation. The proposal will also provide an opportunity to the forest department to study wildlife and devise better strategies for wildlife management. Above all, the proposal will also generate employment possibilities for local youth in the field of wildlife/ adventure tourism and will attract them towards wildlife conservation.

- ii. The major objectives of this project are given as under:
- a. To promote wildlife conservation specially ex-situ conservation of endangered species.
 - b. Care and rehabilitation of injured, sick and orphan wild animals in the wildlife rescue center.
 - c. To collect and collate the scientific data on the biology, behaviour and health care of various species of wild animals which may be used for wildlife management.
 - d. To promote research and education on wildlife conservation.
 - e. To create amongst the visitors empathy towards wild animals specially tiger through appreciation and better understanding.
 - f. To promote wildlife/ adventure tourism.
 - g. To create the opportunities of employment / self employment.

h. Justification

Corbett Tiger Reserve is one of the best and the oldest National Parks of the country. However, traditionally the tourism is open in the eco-tourism zone of Dhikala which attracts large number of visitors which are also a source of disturbance due to large number of individuals/ vehicles entering the eco-tourism zone. There is a urgent need to divert casual visitors from this area to an alternative tourism zone which can safely provide tiger sighting to the visitors and also develop visitor infrastructure for alternative entry point to the Corbett Tiger Reserve. The proposed location of tiger safari is a perfect alternative for developing such infrastructure and attracting the visitors interested in wildlife tourism. The location will also be most suitable for development of Wildlife Rescue Center as it is on the periphery of CTR. This tiger safari in the buffer zone of the CTR has been approved by NTCA. The detail site specific plan of the safari has been approved by the NTCA and CZA. The proposal will open up new possibilities of engaging with the peripheral villagers which are most affected by wildlife. It will also provide variety of job opportunities to the peripheral population and will mitigate the hardships of man-animal conflict to a great extent.

6. Compensatory afforestation:-

Compensatory afforestation over 16 ha has been proposed over non-forest land in Lansdowne forest division Dugadda range above village Juva patti in Bungidhar near village Bangla. During inspection the area was not accessible as it was rainy season and approach road and paths were damaged however, the area is visible from a distance. The area is above the village on a hill slope and the density of tree growth is very sparse. Raising suitable plantation will involve developing a local nursery close to water source which is available in the nearby village. The area is not contiguous with any forest land but raising 16 ha forest land above the village may be beneficial in soil conservation, retaining moisture for the benefit of nearby villages.

Whether land for compensatory afforestation is suitable from plantation and management point of view or not.

A suitability certificate for raising compensatory afforestation over the identified area has been submitted by the DCFs in the proposal. During the inspection, the specific plot of land earmarked for compensatory afforestation could not be approached due to damaged road. The location was however clearly visible from the village site. The patch of land is at present not supporting substantial tree growth but will be an ideal plot for taking Compensatory Afforestation.

Whether land for compensatory afforestation is free from encroachments/ other encumbrances.

The DFO Lansdowne Division has certified that the land is free from encroachments and CA plantation can be taken up without any problems however seedlings will have to be carried either on headloads or on mules. The User Agency has submitted the KML/Shape files corresponding to the CA area.

Whether land for compensatory afforestation is important from Religious/ Archaeological point of view.

As revealed during the inspection and also informed by the User Agency, the land identified for CA is not important from Religious/ Archaeological point of view.

i. Land identified for raising compensatory afforestation is in how many patches, whether patches are compact or not.

The land identified for CA is in single patch of 16 ha but is not contagious to any forest land. It will however be in the interest of nearby village which will get the benefit of afforestation.

ii. Map with details

SOI topo-sheet, along with the satellite images of the sites identified for raising CA have been submitted in the proposal.

7. Whether proposal involves violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 or not. If yes, a detailed report on violation including action taken against the concerned officials.

Certificate related to no violations of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been provided by concerned Deputy Conservator of Forests. As such no violation of F(C), Act has been found on ground during field visit.

8. Whether proposal involves rehabilitation of displaced persons. If yes, whether rehabilitation plan has been prepared by the State Government or not. Details be furnished specifically if rehabilitation plan would affect any other forest area by translocating outstees in and around the said forest.

No rehabilitation is involved in the project.

9. Cost benefit ratio

Cost benefit analysis has been provided by the User Agency.

10. Recommendations of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests/State Government.

The Government of Uttarakhand has recommended the proposal without any specific condition.

11. Recommendations of Chief Wildlife Warden along with detail reasons.

Recommendations of the Chief Wildlife Warden have been appended separately.

12. Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Central) shall give detailed comments on whether there are any alternatives routes/alignments for locating the project on the non-forest land.

Comments of the Addl. PCCF (Central) have been amended separately.

13. Utility of the project. Numbers of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes to be benefited by the project.

The project will promote wildlife conservation, nature awareness, research and education and wildlife tourism. No specific data on schedule caste/ schedule tribe beneficiaries was available.

14. Whether land being diverted has any socio-cultural /religious value. Whether any sacred grove or very old grown trees/forests exists in the areas proposed for diversion.

As per information submitted in Part-II and the field visit, the area is not important from the socio cultural/religious view point.

Situation w.r.t. any P.A.

The area being diverted for tiger safari is part of the buffer area of Corbett tiger reserve in the Kalagarh Tiger Reserve Division.

15. Any other information relating to the project.

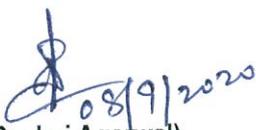
- i. Compliance of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 has been submitted in accordance with the MoEF&CC's advisory dated 5.07.2013.
- ii. After the establishment of tiger safari, the user agency should undertake plantation drive in the available area. With a view of ensure, the survival of plantation, the user agency should adopt special measures for the survivability of the plantation.
- iii. The User Agency should provide appropriate training to the local youth so that they may be involved in a variety of roles in the tiger safari and wilderness track specially as visitor guides.


(T. C. Nautiyal) 7.9.2020.
DIG(F)

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADDITIONAL PRINCIPAL CHIEF CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS (CENTRAL), REGIONAL OFFICE (NORTH CENTRAL ZONE), MoEF&CC, DEHRADUN.

The detailed observations on the proposal submitted by State Govt. of Uttarakhand have been recorded above in the field inspection report of DIG (F). The proposal is first of its kind in Uttarakhand and is likely to benefit wildlife conservation as well as local population around Kotdwar town located on the south western periphery of Corbet Tiger Reserve. The proposal is therefore recommended for diversion of forest land under F(C) Act 1980 subjected to following conditions.

1. The user agency should comply with the conditions imposed by NTCA and CZA for creation of Tiger Safari.
2. Wildlife rescue center should be optimally provided with required resources so that they can effectively intervene in situations of Man animal conflict in the region.


(Pankaj Agarwal)
APCC F (C)