

**Ministry of Environment & Forests  
(RE Division)**

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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRD(3<sup>rd</sup>) MEETING OF EXPERT  
COMMITTEE ON ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE**

The Third Meeting of the Expert Committee on Eco-sensitive Zone was held on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2013 in the Ministry of Environment & Forests under the Chairmanship of Shri Hem Pande, Addl. Secretary. The Wild Life Institute of India, Dehradun expressed their inability to attend the meeting. The list of participants is annexed.

2. At the outset, The Chairman welcomed all the Members of the Committee and also the representatives of the Government of Rajasthan.

3. The Chairman stated that recognizing the significance of Mount Abu as the only hill station in Rajasthan besides its ecological, natural and man-made heritage and in order to conserve and protect the area from ecological and environmental point of view necessitated the MoEF for declaration of Mount Abu as Eco-sensitive Zone. The Chairman thereafter asked Adviser(Dr. GVS) to brief the committee about the Notification, which will be followed by the presentation by the State Government on the Zonal Master Plan.

4. Adviser(Dr. GVS), MoEF informed that Ministry of Environment & Forests had issued a Notification on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 declaring Mount Abu and surrounding region in the State of Rajasthan as Eco-sensitive Zone. It covers the entire area of notified urban area limits including Mount Abu Municipal limits adjoining forest block areas. As per the provisions of the Notification, the State Government is required to prepare a Zonal Master Plan demarcating all the existing village settlements, types and kinds of forests, agricultural areas, green areas, lakes and other natural and man-made heritage sites within two years and submit it to the Ministry for approval. Once this Plan is approved by the Ministry, it will be a reference document for the Monitoring Committee and also the State Government for ensuring the compliance of the provisions of this Notification. It was also mentioned that the Notification has specifically provided that no change of land use from green usage to non-green usage shall be provided except limited conversion of agricultural land be permitted to meet the residential needs of the existing local residents and also no change of land use from tribal usage to non-tribal usage permitted without the prior approval of the State Government.

5. The Additional Town & Country Planner, Government of Rajasthan, along with their consultant, School of Planning and Architecture, New

Delhi attended the meeting. Dr. Meenakshi Dhote, Professor of Environmental Planning, School of Planning and Architecture, made presentation on Zonal Master Plan. The salient features of the Eco-sensitive Zone and the Zonal Master Plan were presented.

### **Salient Features of Eco-Sensitive Zone:**

- i) The ESZ lies within the Mount Abu sanctuary and is surrounded by reserve forests including Municipal area.
- ii) The Eco-sensitive Zone falls in bio-geographical zone 4B, which is semi-arid and characterized by shallow wetland eco systems, open and occasionally dense forests.
- iii) The Eco-sensitive zone is spread over an area of 47.30 Sq.Kms. out of which 21.41 Sq. KMs is the Mount Abu Municipal area.
- iv) The Mount Abu Eco-sensitive Zone consist of Mount Abu Town and 12 villages (Jawai, Oriya, Achagarh, Salgaon, Arna, Sanigaon, Goagaon, Hetamji, Delwara, Torna, Dhundai and Machgaon), out of which seven are within the Municipal limits and remaining five are located outside.
- v) The elevation within the Mount Abu Sanctuary varies from 300 m at the foot hills to 1722 m at Gurushikhar, the highest peak in the Aravallies. The altitudinal variations within the ESZ is from 700 m to 1700 m South to North; whereas the Town rests on the lager main plateau at 1150m.
- vi) The Municipal area has hills up to 1200 to 1400 m surrounding on all sides with openings near Nakki Lake and near the toll gate.
- vii) The predominant soil type is sandy loam.
- viii) The average depth of ground water varies 10-15m below ground level.
- ix) Due to presence of granite rock, the region is rich in fluoride content in water.
- x) The vegetation of the area is predominantly dry deciduous forest type with relict patches of dry tropical riverine forests. Mount Abu is the only place in Rajasthan where presence of orchids can be seen.

- xi) The area is rich in rare, endemic, endangered and medicinal plant species. *Lantana camara* found to be the worst invasive alien species along with *parthenium* and *prosopis*.
- xii) A large variety of mammals, birds, reptiles and fishes are found in this area, which includes rare animals such as Panther, Sloth Bear, Pangoline etc.

### **Salient Features of Zonal Master Plan:**

- i) The School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi was engaged by Department of Urban Development, Government of Rajasthan for preparation of Zonal Master Plan for Mount Abu Eco-sensitive Zone-2030 to address the characteristics and ecological impacts of various activities.
- ii) The Plan is prepared through surveys of the area and extensive consultation of official documents, maps and literature available on natural environment, heritage and cultural resources, demographic and socio-economic structure, tourism, housing, transport, infrastructural provisions and sectoral developmental policies and programs.
- iii) The vision of the Zonal Master Plan is to achieve sustainable development of Mount Abu Eco-sensitive area with enhancement of quality of life, socio-economic development and promotion of tourism, assuring resource conservation and ecologically sensitive planning.
- iv) The Plan aimed at a balanced and integrated development of the town duly meeting its specific requirements as a hill station and an effective tourist centre of the State.
- v) The socio-economic requirements and related physical infrastructure addressing minimal impact on ecology has been duly incorporated in the Plan.
- vi) The areas requiring protection and conservation, re-afforestation, horticulture and plantation have been specified.
- vii) The Sub-zonal Master Plans within the municipal area and outside municipal area and Tourism Master Plan have been integrated in the Zonal Master Plan.
- viii) The sustainable tourism plan through the nature based tourism (eco-tourism), heritage based tourism, adventure based tourism

has been prepared incorporating carrying capacity analysis taking into account the land and water availability.

- ix) In order to address tremendous increase of vehicular traffic entering Mount Abu, it is proposed to have multi-model transport interchange terminal at foothill at Abu road in an area of 15ha, which would provide an inter change between regional buses and local transport. The components of the proposed multi-model transport inter change was also presented during the meeting.

6. The floor was thereafter opened for discussion and the following points emerged.

- (a) The changes shown in the Zonal Master Plan-2030 in Vol.II should provide a column depicting the existing land use of the area so that one can appreciate the proposed changes. The MoEF has also clarified the proposed changes referred should have been only to the extent of the correction of errors in the land records.
- (b) The representative of the TCPO has provided their written comments/observations during the meeting, a copy of the same was provided to the State Government for consideration.
- (c) The representative of Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun has suggested that the ground truthing of the data provided in the Zonal Master Plan need to be validated by superimposing the same with the satellite imageries to be obtained from NRSA, Hyderabad. The State Government was requested to facilitate the same .
- (d) The representation of Shri Pragnesh Shah, Mount Abu regarding land use with respect to survey numbers 28, 29, 30 and 157-192 within Mount Abu Nagar Palika limit was placed before the Expert Committee. It was stated in the representation that the Zonal Master Plan 2025 for Mount Abu identified the said land use as residential zone and tourist facility zone. However, the Zonal Master Plan-2030 shows the land use as agricultural zone. The Committee suggested that such land use disputes should be examined and settled by the State Government as the land is State Subject and also the land records are maintained by them.
- (e) Further, the committee opined that the land being the State subject and the land records relating to land use are maintained by the State Government; therefore, the land disputes such as correction of errors, if any, in the land records pertaining to land use, are to be examined, corrected and settled by the State Government.

7. Based on the presentation made and discussions held, the committee appreciated the content of the Zonal Master Plan and work done by the State Government and their consultants in preparing the Zonal Master Plan. The Committee however emphasized the need for validation of ground-truthing of the data through satellite imageries from NRSA. The Committee suggested that the Zonal Master Plan should be reconsidered after submission of following information by the State Government:

- i. Validation of ground truthing of the data by the State Government using satellite imagery and then submit the draft zonal master plan for consideration by the Expert Committee.
- ii. The State Government of Rajasthan to examine the representation of Shri Pragnesh Shah and any other representation regarding correction of errors, if any, relating to land use as depicted in the Draft Zonal Master Plan of 2025 vis-à-vis Draft Zonal Master Plan 2030 with respect to survey numbers provided in the representation(s) and inform the same to the affected parties under intimation to the Ministry.

The Meeting ended with a Vote of thanks to the Chair.

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**ANNEXURE****LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

1.	Shri Hem Pande, Addl. Secretary, MoEF	Chairman
2.	Ms. Anjali Pancholy, Associate TCP	Member Representative
3.	Dr. Sheo Kumar, Scientist F, In-charge BGIR, NOIDA	Member Representative
4.	Dr. R.C. Sundriyal, GB Pant Institute of Himachal Environment & Development, Almora	Member Representative
5.	Dr. N.S. Bisht, Director, International Co-operation I.C.F.R.E, Dehradun	Member Representative
6.	Shri K.K. Garg, Regional Office, Lucknow	Member Representative
7.	Shri Vivek Saxena, DIG(WL), MoEF	Member Representative
8.	Shri Surendra Kumar, Joint Secretary, Department of Land Resource, Government of India	Member Representative
9.	Dr. G. Maheshwaran, Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata	Member Representative
10.	Shri Abhay Kumar Saxena, Assistant Director, Forest Survey of India, Dehradun	Special Invitee
11.	Dr. P.B. Rastogi, Director, IA Division, MoEF	Special Invitee
12.	Shri R.M. Bharadwaj, Sr. Scientist, CPCB	Member Representative
13.	Shri S.P.S. Kushwaha, Group Director, PPEG, IIRS, Dehradun	Member Representative
14.	Dr. G.V. Subrahmaniam, Advisor, MoEF	Member
15.	Dr. S.C. Garkoti, Director, MoEF	Member Secretary
16.	Dr. H. Kharkwal, Deputy Director, MoEF	
<b>Representatives of the State Government:</b>		
17.	Smt. Indira Choudhary, Addl. CTP, Govt. of Rajasthan	
18.	Dr. Sanjay Gupta, SPA	
19.	Dr. Meenakshi Dhote, SPA	
20.	Dr. Neha Tripathi, SPA	