

## **MINUTES OF 54<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EXPERT COMMITTEE FOR DECLARATION OF ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE AROUND PROTECTED AREAS HELD ON 22<sup>nd</sup> MAY, 2024 IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE.**

The 54<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Expert Committee on Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) was held under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, and Forest & Climate Change on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2024 in hybrid mode at Mahanadi Hall, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi. The list of the participants is annexed.

Participants from State of Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh attended the meeting physically while participants from Rajasthan joined through Video Conference link.

**Opening remarks by Chairman:** At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Expert members of committee, representatives from the State Governments of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra and other participants of the meeting. The Chairman then requested the State Government representatives to present their proposals based on the items listed in the agenda of the meeting.

**Agenda-wise deliberations:** The deliberations held and the decisions taken are as follows:

### **Item No. 3.1: *Bhoramdev Wildlife Sanctuary, Chhattisgarh***

The draft ESZ notification around Bhoramdev Wildlife Sanctuary of Chhattisgarh was published on 08.04.2016 and was deferred in the 24<sup>th</sup> Expert Committee Meeting (ECM) held on 27.02.2017 as State Govt. sought time to process public comments received on the draft notification. However, the draft notification lapsed its validity on 05.10.2017 due to non-submission of additional information by the State Government.

Subsequently, based on the revised proposal of the State Government, the draft ESZ notification was re-published *vide* S.O. 4381(E) dated 09.10.2023 with an increased ESZ area from 109.882 sq.km to 179.317 sq.km having an ESZ extent of zero to 8.3 km. Following are the features of the draft notification:

**Area of Protected Area:** 351.24 sq km

**ESZ Area:** 179.317 sq.km

**ESZ Extent:** zero to 8.30 km

*(Extent of ESZ is zero on West & North West as it borders the Kanha Tiger Reserve of Madhya Pradesh)*

Earlier, the proposal was considered in 52<sup>nd</sup> ECM held on 27.12.2023 wherein it was deferred for consideration at a later stage on receipt of clarification from the State Government regarding ESZ extent and proposed mining activities in consonance with order of Hon'ble Supreme Court.

During the present meeting, APCCF, Chhattisgarh informed that they have undergone public consultation with 24 villages. During the public consultation, 4 Gram Panchyats have raised objections on the ESZ extent and asked for relaxation in certain activities. The representative of the State Govt. also informed that the views of the State Govt have not yet been finalized on this matter due to ongoing general elections. In view of the above, the State Govt. sought deferment of the proposal.

*Based on the deliberations held the Committee decided that the proposal to be deferred as the view of the State Govt. are not available on record.*

### **Item No. 3.2: Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan**

The initial draft notification was published on 04.03.2021, followed by the deferment of proposal due to non submission of state Government's response to public/stakeholders comments in 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> ECM and subsequently the draft notification lapsed its validity on 27.02.2023. Thereafter, the fresh draft notification was re-published vide S.O. 4766 (E) dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2023.

Following are the key features of the draft notification:

**Area of Protected Area:** 1213.34 sq km

**ESZ Area:** 87.73 sq.km

**ESZ Extent:** Zero to 1.0 km from Sariska TR and zero to 24 km from Sariska WLS & Jamwa Ramgarh WLS

Earlier, the proposal was considered in 53<sup>rd</sup> ECM held on 07.03.24 and was deferred on the request of the State Government of Rajasthan as the public comments received on the draft notification were under process and were being examined by the State Government.

During the meeting, the proposal was discussed in light of Hon'ble Supreme court's order dated 15.05.2024 which stated that the Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH) will be treated at par with the Protected Area and as such the mining activities will be prohibited within a radius of one kilometer from the boundaries of the Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH) of Sariska Tiger Reserve. The Committee sought views of State Govt. on above order. The PCCF, Rajasthan mentioned that they require time to examine the order and therefore sought deferment of the proposal.

*Based on the deliberations and in light of recent Supreme Court order dated 15.05.2024 the Committee deferred the proposal on the request of the State Govt.*

### **Item 3.3: Amendment in Doon Valley Notification, Uttarakhand**

Initially, Doon Valley Notification was issued vide S.O. 923(E) dated 01.02.1989. With advent of EIA Notification, 1994 followed by EIA Notification, 2006; the Doon Valley Notification underwent suitable amendment vide Notification dated 04.07.2005.

Thereafter, with CPCB's categorization of industries, the Doon Notification was again amended to refer to CPCB Categorization for

implementation purpose *vide* notification dated 06.01.2020. A notification was also issued *vide* number S.O. 2125 (E), dated the 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2007, whereby, procedure to be followed for all developmental proposals in the Doon Valley has been prescribed

The State Govt *vide* letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023 submitted the proposal for amendment. Further, as per the policy decision taken in the Ministry, the approval of Zonal Master Plan (ZMP) for the ESZs/ESAs are being delegated to the State Governments.

Therefore, in order to bring parity of the Doon Valley notification with other regulations on Eco-sensitive areas, the draft amendment has been proposed for dispensing with the requirement of approval of the Central Government in respect of the Tourism Plan, Grazing Plan, Master Plan of Development, Land Use Plan, Zonal Master Plan etc,

The said draft amendment was published on 21.12.2023 inviting public comments for sixty days.

During the meeting, the representative of State Govt presented the proposal on Doon Valley amendment to the committee. They apprised the committee that as per the amendment *"Tourism Plan, Grazing Plan, Master Plan of Development and Land Use Plan, and any other such Plan including Zonal Master Plan, Integrated Master Plan shall be prepared by the State Government with due involvement of all concerned State Departments such as Environment, Forest, Urban Development, Tourism, Municipality, Revenue, Public Works, Water Resources, Horticulture, Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, Pollution Control Board, etc., for integrating environmental concern into it and shall be approved by the competent authority in the State Government of Uttarakhand."*

The representatives of the State Govt informed the Committee that they have responded to the objections raised by the concerned applicants.

*Based on the deliberations held the Committee agreed and decided that the proposal can be recommended for finalization subject to receipt of confirmation from the State Government that they have replied to all the public comments received on the draft notification.*

### **Item 3.4 : Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary & Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary , Odisha**

The final notification for ESZ around Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika and Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary was published *vide* S.O 1601 (E), dated 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 with ESZ extent of 0.56 to 2.0km and ESZ area of 466.40 km.

However, after rationalization of boundary of Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary issued by Govt. of Odisha *vide* No. 2289 dated 01.02.2020 by deletion of 52 villages from the old sanctuary, area with an extent of 54.45 sq km and addition of 55.45 sq km of forest area to the sanctuary, a revised proposal was received from the State Government for declaring fresh ESZ. Based on the said proposal a draft notification was published on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2022. However, the State Govt. requested the Ministry to issue a corrigendum to the draft issued on 23.02.2022,

modifying the list of villages as per a revised list submitted vide its letter dated 07<sup>th</sup> July, 2023. Based on the said request the draft notification was again published on 06<sup>th</sup> September 2023, in super-session of the earlier draft published on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2022. Following are the important features of the draft notification

**Area of Protected Area:** Bhitarkanika National Park : 145 sq km,  
Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary: 673 sq km,  
Gahirmatha (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary: 1435 sq km

**ESZ Area:** 497.67 sq km

**ESZ Extent:** 0.10 km to 8.7 km

The proposal was considered in in 52<sup>nd</sup> ECM held on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and the Committee decided to defer the proposal as the representative of the State Govt. who joined the meeting virtually, was not having a presentation and required maps to present before the committee. The State Govt. was asked to be prepared and present their proposal in next meeting physically.

The proposal was again deferred during 53<sup>rd</sup> ECM wherein the committee asked the State Govt. to translate the notification in Odia language and publish it in local newspapers in order to seek public comments from locals within a time period of 30 days, as the same was sought in one of the public comments.

*In the present meeting also the committee decided to defer the proposal as Government of Odisha ,vide letter dated 20.05.2024 ,sought for the deferment of proposal till next ECM, as the circulation of Odia version of notification was under process.*

### **Item 3.5: Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary, Maharashtra**

The Final notification for declaration of ESZ around Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary was published on 11.02.2020 with ESZ extent of zero to 400 meters and the area of the Eco-Sensitive Zone was 591.52 square kilometers.

Subsequently, the State Govt. submitted a proposal for Rationalization of ESZ area in Patch no. 28 by excluding an area of 68.08 ha.

**Area of Protected Area:** 366.72 sq. km

**ESZ Area:** 591.52 sq. km

**ESZ Extent:** 0 - 400 m

The CWLW and Additional PCCF, Maharashtra presented the proposal for rationalization of ESZ boundary. During the discussion, the Committee asked the representative of the State Govt to share the detailed maps of proposal with all the Committee members for further facilitating the discussions and decision making.

The Committee also referred to the Hon'ble Supreme Court's order dated 21.03.2024 in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 838 of 2019 regarding Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary wherein a seven member committee has been

formed to find a balance between GIB conservation and renewable energy efforts. The ESZ Expert Committee asked the State Govt to provide a reasonable justification for rationalization of area of GIB Sanctuary keeping in view the above order of Hon'ble Supreme Court for conservation of GIB.

*Based on the deliberations held the Committee decided to defer the proposal and asked the State Govt. to provide detailed map and shape file of the ESZ area to the Committee members . Also, the Committee directed the Govt of Maharashtra to provide justification for rationalization of ESZ area keeping in view the above mentioned Hon'ble Supreme Court order dated 21.03.2024.*

## **LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

### **Members of Expert Committee**

1. Shri Tanmay Kumar, Additional Secretary, Chairperson, MoEF&CC.
2. Dr. S. Kerketta, Scientist 'G', MoEF&CC.
3. Dr. S.C Garkoti, Former Advisor MoEF&CC, Non-Official Member of Expert Committee.
4. Shri R. Raghu Prasad , IGF, MoEF&CC
5. Shri P.K. Gupta, Director, CPCB
6. Shri Amit Thakkar, Additional Director, CPCB
7. Dr. C.R Raghunathan ,Zoological Survey of India
8. Dr. K.S Kanwal, Scientist, GBPNHE, Almora.
9. Dr. Hitendra Padalia, Head FED, IIRS, Dehradun.
10. Dr. Gautam Talukdar, Scientist F, Wildlife Institute of India.
11. Dr. Sanjay Singh, Scientist E, ICFRE, Dehradun.
12. Ms. Abha Agarwal, Member, Town and Country Planning Organisation
13. Shri Rekhraj Meena , Deputy Director, Central Water Commission
14. Ms. Neha Sinha, Head Policy, WWF
15. Forest Survey of India.
16. National Tiger Conservation Authority

### **Officials of MoEF&CC**

17. W. Bharat Singh, Scientist 'F' MoEF&CC
18. Dr. Ritesh Joshi, Scientist 'E' MoEF&CC
19. Dr. Veenu Joon, Scientist 'E', MoEF&CC.
20. Shri Anil Thakar, Consultant, MoEF&CC
21. Ms. Ritu Narwaria, Consultant, MoEF&CC
22. Shri Manish Chaturvedi, Legal Associate, MoEF&CC

### **Official of Government of Chattisgarh**

23. Shri Prem Kumar, APCCF(Wildlife) , Chhattisgarh

### **Officials of Government of Maharashtra**

24. Shri Maheep Gupta, PCCF and CWLW Maharashtra
25. The Additional PCCF, Wildlife, Mumbai
26. Shri Shrinivas K. Pachgane, DFO, DCF (Wildlife), Maharashtra.

### **Officials of Government of Uttarakhand**

27. Dr. Parag Dhakete, Member Secretary, Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board, Uttarakhand
28. Dr. Ankur Kansal, Environment Engineer, Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board

**Officials of Government of Rajasthan**

29. ACS, Rajasthan

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