

## Forestry and Wildlife Conservation – An Overview

Kamod Kanwar

**Abstract-** Ramsar Convention defines wetlands as areas of marsh or fen, peat-land or water, whether artificial or natural, permanent or temporary, with the water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt including areas of marine water, the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meter. Mangroves, corals, estuaries, bays, creeks, flood plains, sea grasses, lakes etc are covered under this definition.

Taking into consideration deterioration of water bodies, a programme on conservation of wetlands was initiated in 1987 with the basic objective of assessment of wetland resources, identification of wetlands of national importance, promotion of R&D activities and formulation and implementation of management action plans of the identified wetlands, which are at present 27 covering 15 States. Under the management action plans for identified wetlands, activities also include survey and demarcation, catchment area treatment, desiltation, weed control, fisheries development, community participation, water management, public awareness, pollution abatement, etc.

States Steering Committees have been constituted in all the concerned States under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary having members from various subject matter departments relating to wetland conservation in the State.

### Introduction

It may be recalled that some four years back there were only 15 Mangrove areas identified by the Ministry for intensive conservation and management. Recognizing the importance of mangrove ecosystem, the number of

mangrove areas has since grown from 15 to 35 and at present efforts have been on to persuade the State Governments (s) to identify new and additional mangrove conservation areas.

The mangroves in India comprise 69 species under 42 genera and 28 families. India is home to some of the best mangroves in the world. The Ministry has established a National Mangrove Genetic Resources Centre in Orissa. Two mangrove species are endemic to India. (1,2)

One species is *Rhizophora annamalayana*, occurring in Pichavaram, Tamil Nadu. Another species is *Heritiera kanikensis* that exists only in Bhitarkanika of Orissa. Sunderbans (West Bengal) have been included in the World List of Biosphere Reserves by UNESCO. They represent the largest stretch of mangroves in the country.

There were two separate schemes, one each on wetlands and mangroves earlier which have now been merged and permission from the competent authority for its continuation during the 10th Five Year Plan has been taken. All the concerned States / UTs have constituted Steering Committees to monitor implementation of Management Action Plans for mangroves and coral reefs.

### Discussion

The National Committee on Mangroves and Coral Reefs had earlier recommended intensive

conservation and management of corals in four areas, namely, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Islands, Gulf of Kachchh and Gulf of Mannar. The programme is continuing since 1987. Management Action Plans are under implementation in all the four areas through financial

assistance extended by the Ministry to the respective States / UTs. Under Management Action Plan for Conservation and Management of Coral Reefs in Gulf of Mannar, Rs. 30.4 lakhs was released to the State Government in December, 2003 for High Speed Boat (one), Scientific Baseline Data Collection (14 islands). (3,4)

Biodiversity is the variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes of which they are part, including diversity within and between species and ecosystems. Biodiversity has direct consumptive value in

food, agriculture, medicine, and in industry. India is one of the 17 mega diverse countries which together possess 60 to 70% of the world's Biodiversity.

### **National Bio-diversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)**

A comprehensive project with the financial support of UNDP-GEF was launched for producing a series of planning documents relating to ecological security and livelihood of people most dependent on natural resources.

The ultimate aim is to develop a national plan for conservation of biodiversity and its sustainable use. A consultative and participatory approach was adopted by all the executing agencies. A draft National Action Plan

(NAP) has been prepared and circulated to more than 500 experts and organisations for comments. The comments received were suitably incorporated and the report revised. (5,6)

### **Forest Conservation**

Till March 2004, the Ministry received 14,621 proposals from the State/Union Territories for getting approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 for

diversion of forest land for non-forestry purpose. The status of these proposals are as under:-

I. Number of Proposals Received: 14621

(a) Finally Approved 9435

(b) Stage-I Approved 1158

(c) Rejected (on merit) 1414

II. Closed for non furnishing of information by Stages/UT's 1683

III. Returned to State/UT's 191

IV. Withdrawn by State/UT's 100

V. Proposal under process in the Ministry 277

VI. Proposal pending with State Government

### **Forest Policy**

The Forest Policy Division provides policy support in respect of forestry matters, and reviews the forest policy and its relation to policies of other relevant sectors. Various legal issues viz., the State / Central

Bills related with the forestry matters that re required to receive theassent of the President of India are examined by thedivision.(7,8)

#### Integrated Forest Protection Scheme

Integrated Forest Protection Scheme has beenformulated by the merger of the schemes of the 9th FiveYear Plan 'Forest Fire Control and Management' and'Bridging of Infrastructure Gaps in the Forestry Sectorin the North Eastern Region and Sikkim. It is operationalfrom 2002-03. The scheme covers all the States andUTs for the 10th Five Year Plan period.

#### Joint Forest Management

The Joint Forest Management (JFM) Programmewas pursued vigorously with the result that JFM resolutionhas now been adopted in all the 28 States. 84632 JFMCommittees have been formed and 17.33 million ha forest

area have been brought under JFM Programme. About85.28 lakhs families are involved in JFM Programme invarious states all over the country.(9,10)



Panthera tigris (female) - needs protected habitat

#### Conclusion

Animal Welfare fortnight was celebrated from 14th to 31st January, 2004, wherein an exhibition of paintings on wildlife was held. The paintings were

prepared by a pair of brother and sister. In the month of February, six groups from different schools were invited for different theme programme. Ninety

new signages prepared for various enclosures, giving directions and requesting visitors for not teasing and feeding the zoo animals. – Education centre was renovated by providing false ceiling, new fans and Air condition, chairs etc. – A Network of Closed Circuit Tele Vision was established to monitor the visitors to check vandalism and for research and education.

*Research Scholar, Dept. of Environmental Science*

*Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phoolle University, Jaipur*

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