

MINUTES OF 38th ESZ EXPERT COMMITTEE MEETING FOR THE DECLARATION OF ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE (ESZ) AROUND PROTECTED AREAS (WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES/NATIONAL PARKS) HELD ON 17th DECEMBER 2019 IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE

The 38th meeting of Expert Committee on Eco-Sensitive Zone was held under the Chairmanship of Shri Ravi Agrawal, Additional Secretary on 17th December, 2019 in the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi. List of participants is annexed as **Annexure A**.

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the members and the participants from the States of Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Meghalaya. Discussions on each of agenda item were taken up subsequently.

3. Following 12 proposals for Eco-Sensitive Zone listed in the agenda were taken for consideration. The representatives of respective State Government presented their proposal for the consideration of the Expert Committee:

S. No.	State/UT	Protected Area	Status
(i)	Maharashtra	Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary	Fresh proposal
(ii)	Odisha	Lakhary Wildlife Sanctuary,	Fresh proposal
(iii)	Odisha	Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary	Fresh proposal
(iv)	Rajasthan	Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary	For pending additional information
(v)	Madhya Pradesh	Kharmor Wildlife (Sardarpur) Sanctuary	Fresh proposal
(vi)	Tamil Nadu	Vellode Bird Sanctuary	Fresh proposal
(vii)	Tamil Nadu	Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary	For pending additional information
(viii)	West Bengal	Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary	Fresh proposal
(ix)	Jharkhand	Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary	For Amendment of the final notification
(x)	Arunachal Pradesh	Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary	Re-notified proposal
(xi)	Jammu & Kashmir	Rajparian Wildlife Sanctuary	Fresh proposal
(xii)	Meghalaya	Nokrek National Park	For pending additional information

4. Discussion on the ESZ Proposals

4.1. *Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary, Maharashtra*

Shri Jayaram Gowda R, DCF Junnar, Forest Department, Government of Maharashtra apprised the Committee about the proposal. It was informed that the draft ESZ Notification of Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary was published on 25.07.2019. The salient features of the draft Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) are as follows:

Area of PA	:	130.78 sq km
Proposed ESZ area	:	80.09 sq km
Proposed Extent	:	0.05 kms to 10 kms

It was mentioned that Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary is located in three districts of Maharashtra viz, Pune, Thane and Raigad at an altitude that ranges from 2132 to 3739 feet above mean sea level. Indian Giant Squirrel is the important fauna available in the protected area.

On enquiring about the reason for minimum extent of 50 metres by the Committee, the representative of the State Government responded that the proposed extent was set following enormous public discussion and approval of the State Government.

The Chairman of the Committee enquired about the mining and human wildlife conflict if any in the area. It was informed that no such issues are reported in the protected area as well as in the proposed Eco-Sensitive Zone.

The feasibility of inclusion of green patch observed in the Northern side of the boundary into ESZ of above WLS was discarded. The representative of the State Government highlighted that people of the adjoining villages had strong objections to the ESZ and urged the State Government to keep zero extent of ESZ, however State Government has reached out to people and decided to keep 50 metres as minimum extent of the ESZ. Further, the State Government justified that 50 metres extent of ESZ is due to presence of land features such as steep slope and cliffs near the boundary which act as natural barrier. Moreover, the main species of the WLS is Giant Squirrel which inhabits the canopy of trees.

Comments/suggestions received from the stakeholders were duly considered.

After detailed discussions, the Committee recommended for finalization of the Draft Notification subject to submission of following by the State Government:

- i. Proper justification of 50 metre ESZ extent and
- ii. Report of public consultation on draft ESZ Notification.

4.2. Lakhary Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha

Shri Vivek Kumar, DFO, Forest & Environment Department, Government of Odisha presented the proposal. It was explained that the ESZ Draft Notification of Lakhary Wildlife Sanctuary was published on 26.07.2019. The salient features of the draft Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) are as follows:

Area of PA	:	185.87 sq km
Proposed ESZ area	:	244.00 sq km
Proposed Extent	:	3.0 kms uniform all around the PA

It was mentioned that Lakhary Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in Gajapati district of Odisha under the administrative jurisdiction of Paralakhemundi. The eastern side of the protected area has Burabandha Dam while southern part of the ESZ is adjoining the proposed Mahendragiri Biosphere Reserve.

The Committee deliberated on feasibility of inclusion of forest patches connected to the Northern and Southern boundary of the Eco-Sensitive Zone so as to create wildlife corridors for better protection. The representative of the State however affirmed that uniform 3.0 kilometres buffer zone that defines the extent of ESZ is good enough for the PA. Moreover, the above suggested forest patches are Reserved Forests and are protected under Forest Act.

It was also informed that no comments/objections were received from the stakeholders/public within 60 days of public consultation. Also, no human - wildlife conflict was observed in the region as informed by the State Government.

After detailed discussions, the Committee recommended for the finalization of the Draft Notification.

4.3. Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha

Shri T. Ashok Kumar, DFO (Kalahandi), Forest & Environment Department, Government of Odisha presented the proposal before the Committee. It was

informed that the draft ESZ Notification of Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary was published on 09.08.2019. The salient features of the draft Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) are as follows:

Area of PA : 147.66 sq km
Proposed ESZ area : 939.58 sq km
Proposed ESZ Extent: zero to 10.0 kms

It was mentioned that Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary is situated about 17 kilometres from District Headquarter Bhawanipatna of Kalahandi District, Odisha.

The representative of the state informed that the State Government is in process of rationalising the area of above protected area. **The revised area of PA will be 175.503 Sq. Km while earlier area of PA was 147.66 Sq. Km.** The State Government is in process of publication of fresh Notification of the Protected Area.

Further, the representative of the state informed that zero extent of ESZ is due to lease out and exploration of Karlapat Bauxite Deposit reserves to OMEC Ltd. (a State owned PSU). The Committee note that as per the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 04th August, 2006 in the matter of T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad Vs. UOI in W.P.(C) No.202 of 1995, the mining activity is prohibited within 1.0 Km from the boundary of the PA even if the area is not falling within ESZ.

Comments/suggestions received from the public and stakeholders were also duly considered.

After detailed discussions, the Committee deferred the consideration of the proposal till the publication of Notification of the protected area by the State Government and also suggested the State Government to submit the revised proposal by extending the area of ESZ towards the southern side of the Sanctuary and justifying zero extent of Eco-Sensitive Zone.

4.4. Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan

The State Government did not attend the meeting. The concerned officers in the MoEFCC described the status of ESZ proposal of Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan to the Committee.

The draft re-notification of the above proposal was published on 9th July, 2018 and the proposal was considered during 33rd ESZ Expert Committee Meeting held on

28th Feb. 2019. During the said meeting, committee deferred the proposal and asked the State Government to arrange public consultation on Draft Notification and come back in the next meeting for further consideration. However, the report of public consultation on above draft was not submitted to the Ministry even after repeated reminders to the State Government. The draft of Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary is expiring on 5th January, 2020.

On telephonic communication with the state during the meeting, the APCCF office of the State Government revealed that the State Government is planning to revise and resubmit the ESZ proposal of above WLS.

Based on the above deliberations, the Committee deferred the proposal.

4.5. Kharmor Wildlife (Sardarpur) Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh

The State Government *vide* letter dated 16th December, 2019 requested for deferment of the proposal. Accordingly, the Committee deferred the proposal.

4.6. Vellode Bird Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu

Shri Sanjay K. Srivastava, PCCF & CWLW Tamil Nadu, Govt. of Tamil Nadu apprised the Committee about the proposal. It was informed that the draft ESZ Notification of Vellode Bird Sanctuary was published on 23.09.2019. The salient features of the draft Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) are as follows:

Area of PA	:	0.77185 sq km
Proposed ESZ area	:	3.40 sq km
Proposed Extent	:	0.50 kms uniform

It was mentioned that Vellode Bird Sanctuary has been categorized as a breeding habitat of birds in the State. Great cormorant, grey heron and the darter are the flagship species in the Vellode Bird Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is basically a seasonal tank and the birds visiting in the water bodies generally provide natural fertilizers to the agricultural fields of local farmers.

While enquiring about the tourism potential of the area, the representative of the State informed that local visitors and bird watchers are usually seen in the area particularly during the migratory period of birds.

It was also informed that no comments/objections were received from the stakeholders/public.

After detailed discussions, the Committee recommended for the finalization of the Draft Notification.

4.7. Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu

ESZ proposal for Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary was considered as additional item in the meeting with the permission of the Chairman. Shri Sanjay K. Srivastava, PCCF & CWLW Tamil Nadu, Govt. of Tamil Nadu apprised the Committee about the proposal. The salient features of the draft Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) are as follows:

Area of PA	:	402.395 sq km
Proposed ESZ area	:	196.05 sq km
Proposed Extent	:	0 (zero) to 3 kms

It was explained that the draft ESZ Notification of Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary was published on 20th July, 2018 and the proposal was considered during the 34th ESZ Expert Committee Meeting held on 06.03.2019. During that meeting, the committee recommended to conduct public hearing in consultation with District Collector. Accordingly, the proposal was deferred in the meeting.

The Ministry reminded that draft notification of the Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary is expiring on 16th January, 2020 and timely submission of public consultation report and prompt communication with the Ministry could help in expediting the process of Final Notification.

The representative of the State informed that public consultation was conducted under the chairmanship of District Collector, Kanniyakumari with wide publicity and also performed after translation of notification in Tamil language. Thus, the representations / petitions received in the public consultation are being analysed. He stated to come up with the proposal by first week of January, 2020 and also assured to accelerate the process of finalization from the State Government side.

The proposal to be considered in the next Expert Committee, after receipt of communication from Tamil Nadu State.

4.8. Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal

The State Government *vide* letter dated 12th December, 2019 has requested for deferment of the proposal. Accordingly, the Committee deferred the proposal.

4.9. Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, Jharkhand (For amendment)

The State Government *vide* letter dated 9th December, 2019 has requested for deferment of the proposal. Accordingly, the Committee deferred the proposal.

4.10. Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary Arunachal Pradesh

Shri Millo Tasser, DFO, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh presented the Power Point presentation of the proposal. It was informed that the draft ESZ Notification of Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary was published on 23.08.2019. The salient features of the draft Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) are as follows:

Area of PA	:	217.00 sq km
Proposed ESZ area	:	55.580 sq km
Proposed Extent	:	0 (zero) to 1 kms

It was mentioned that Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary is located in West Kameng District. The area is one of the most important bird destinations of India. Red panda, clouded leopard, Bhutan glory are the important fauna while *Bugun liocichla* is a critically endangered species available in the Sanctuary.

While enquiring about the zero extent of ESZ, the representative of the State responded that zero extent was proposed toward the northern boundary of the Sanctuary which has border with Sessa Orchid Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh.

No comments/objections were received from the stakeholders/public.

After detailed discussions, the Committee recommended for the finalization of the draft notification.

4.11. Rajparian Wildlife Sanctuary, Jammu & Kashmir

Shri Rashid Nagash, Regional Wildlife Warden Kashmir, Department of Wildlife Protection, Govt. Jammu & Kashmir apprised the Committee about the proposals pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir Union Territories. He illustrated that most proposals for declaring Eco-Sensitive Zone for Jammu and Kashmir have recently been submitted to the Ministry through Wildlife Division. The draft ESZ Notification of Rajparian Wildlife Sanctuary was published on 25.09.2019. The salient features of the draft Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) are as follows:

Area of PA : 48.28 sq km
Proposed ESZ area : 22.60 sq km
Proposed Extent : 0 (zero) to 1 km

It was mentioned that Rajparian Wildlife Sanctuary is located about 90 kilometres away from Srinagar city towards southern side in Anantnag District of the Kashmir Valley. Some important faunal species available in the Sanctuary include musk deer, Himalayan brown bear, Asiatic black bear and common leopard etc.

While enquiring the justification of zero ESZ extent, the representative of the State responded that zero extent was proposed due to separation among watersheds in the landscape of Sanctuary border. Shri. Rashid Nagash explained that boundaries of the protected area are limited by Nullahs at some places and existence of steep slope cliffs having altitude of 4000 metres above sea level. He further submitted that detailed justification is also being submitted to the Ministry.

It was also informed that no comments/objections were received from the stakeholders/public.

After detailed discussions, the Committee recommended for finalization of the Draft Notification.

4.12. Nokrek National Park, Meghalaya

The draft re-notification of the Nokrek National Park was published on 07.05.2018 and considered in 31st Expert Committee Meeting held on 13.09.2018. During meeting, the representative of the State Government sought deferment and informed that there are some anomalies in the proposal and state Govt. is working on it. It was also stated that a fresh proposal would be submitted to this Ministry for re-publication within 6 months. Revised proposal is yet to be submitted by State Government.

Shri. H. C. Chaudhary, Addl. PCCF (CWLW), Meghalaya, Govt. of Meghalaya informed that the proposed area of the ESZ is being surveyed and re-verified. As the area has a very difficult terrain; therefore, State Government require some more time for submission of the proposal.

After detailed deliberation, State Government sought deferment of the proposal and committee agreed on the request.

5. Based on the discussion on the draft, re-draft and final Eco-Sensitive Zone Notification as well as deliberation on the comments/suggestion/objection received from stakeholders/public, the Expert Committee recommended the following:

Sl. No.	Protected Area	State	Recommendation of Expert Committee
(1).	Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary	Maharashtra	Recommended for finalization of draft subject to submission of additional information.
(2).	Lakhary Wildlife Sanctuary,	Odisha	Recommended for finalization of the draft.
(3).	Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary	Odisha	Recommended for submission of revised proposal after rationalisation of Protected Area
(4).	Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary	Rajasthan	Committee deferred the proposal.
(5).	Kharmor Wildlife (Sardarpur) Sanctuary	Madhya Pradesh	State Govt. sought deferment.
(6).	Vellode Bird Sanctuary	Tamil Nadu	Recommended for finalization of the draft.
(7).	Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary	Tamil Nadu	To be considered after receipt of public consultation from Tamil Nadu State.
(8).	Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary	West Bengal	State Govt. sought deferment.
(9).	Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, Final notification	Jharkhand	State Govt. sought deferment.
(10).	Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary	Arunachal Pradesh	Recommended for finalization of the draft.
(11).	Rajparian Wildlife Sanctuary	Jammu & Kashmir	Recommended for finalization of the draft.
(12).	Nokrek National Park	Meghalaya	Deferred the proposal.

6. Meeting ended with vote of thanks to and from the Chair.

Annexure-A**38th Expert Committee Meeting on ESZ held on 17th December, 2019****List of Participants****Members of Expert Committee**

1. Shri. Ravi Agrawal, Additional Secretary, Chairperson.
2. Dr. S. C. Garkoti, Adviser, Scientist 'G' MoEF&CC.
3. Dr. S. A. Hussain, Scientist 'G', Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.
4. DR. C. Raghunathan, Scientist 'E', Z.S.I., Kolkata.
5. Dr. Sandeep Chauhan, Scientist 'E', B.S.I., Kolkata.
6. Dr. K. Chandra Sekar, Scientist 'E', GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment & Development, Almora.
7. Dr. Gopi. G. V., Scientist 'E', Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.
8. Ms. Vishaish Uppal, Director, WWF India.
9. Shri. Surender Mehra, D.I.G., NTCA, MoEF&CC.
10. Dr. Sarita Jain, Research Director, ICFRE, Dehradun.
11. Shri. R K Singh, Director, DoLR, MoRD.
12. Shri. S. K. Singh, Assistant Director (I/C), Forest Survey of India, Dehradun.
13. Shri. P. K. Duria, Town & Country Planner, TCPO, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs.
14. Dr. Mayaunk D. Dwivedi, Project Scientist, BGIR, B.S.I.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GOI

15. Shri Subrata Bose, Director (SC-'F'), MoEF & CC.
16. Dr. Shruti Rai Bhardwaj, Additional Director (SC-'E'), MoEF&CC.
17. Shri. Pankaj Verma, Additional Director (SC-'E'), MoEF & CC.
18. Dr. Veenu Joon, Deputy Director (SC-'C'), MoEF&CC.
19. Dr. Shaikhom Inaotombi Singh (Consultant – ESZ), MoEF&CC.

Officials of Government of Arunachal Pradesh

20. Shri. R. K. Singh, PCCF (A&V), Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh.
21. Shri. Millo Tasser, DFO, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh.

Officials of Government of Maharashtra

22. Shri Jayaramgowda R, DCF Junnar, Forest Department, Government of Maharashtra.

Officials of Government of Jammu & Kashmir

23. Shri. Rashid Nagash, Regional Wildlife Warden Kashmir, Department of Wildlife Protection, Govt. Jammu & Kashmir.

Officials of Government Meghalaya

24. Shri. H. C. Chaudhary, Addl. PCCF (CWLW), Meghalaya, Govt. of Meghalaya.

Officials of Government of Odisha

25. Shri. Abhiram Naik, PCCF Bhawanipatna, Forest & Environment Department, Govt. of Odisha.

26. Shri. Suresh Pant, Addl. PCCF, Forest & Environment Department, Govt. of Odisha.

27. Shri. T. Ashok Kumar, DFO (Kalahandi), Forest & Environment Department, Govt. of Odisha.

28. Shri. Vivek Kumar, DFO (Paralaphemudi), Forest & Environment Department, Govt. of Odisha.

Officials of Government of Tamil Nadu

29. Shri Sanjay K. Srivastava, PCCF&CWLW Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu Forest Department, Govt. of Tamil Nadu.
