



Govt. of Karnataka

Major Interim Recommendations of Western GHats Task Force

(Report Submitted as part of Second Annual progress report)



Submitted to:

Sri B. S. Yeddyurappa
Hon. Chief Minister of Karnataka

Govt. of Karnataka
Vidhanasoudha
Bangalore

Submitted by:

Sri Anant Hegde Ashisar
Chairman

Western Ghats Task Force
Dept. of Forest & Environment
307 / Vidhansoudha, Bangalore-01

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Western Ghats Task Force, Dept. of Forest & Environment, Govt. of Karnataka
Major Interim Recommendations

1. Karnataka has now left with hardly 20% forest cover in its total geographic area of 1,92,000 sq.km. Its protection should be done on priority. As envisaged by the National Forest Policy, efforts should be made to increase the present forest cover up to 33% in order to achieve ecological security and the livelihood security of the people of Karnataka. The financial resources available in the schemes like NAREGAs, CAMPA fund & 13th Finance Commission should be utilized for such **protection & afforestation programmes** which ensure the effective participation of local communities through institutional modes like Grama Panchayata, Biodiversity Management Committees like modes like Village Forest Committees (VFC) on Joint Forest Management (JFM) principle.
2. A **special fund needs to be created** in the name of Chief Minister of Karnataka to build a big corpus which can be utilized by the govt. to address the emergency requirements which is important for ensuring the conservation & sustainable development of *Western Ghats* region. While the fund can be created by initial contribution of govt., efforts can be made to mobilize funding from private & corporate philanthropy.
3. An independent **national level research institution** should be promoted by the govt. for taking up quality research on forest, environment and policy issues with specific reference to *Western Ghats*. Such multidisciplinary research of high order would contribute to the cause of conservation & sustainable development of *Western Ghats*. It should be established on priority.
4. A special programme should be initiated for conservation of the **origins of the perennial streams & major rivers** in Western Ghats.
5. A high level **Legal cell & Technical support Cell** should be created and strengthened at the head office of the Dept. of Forest at Bangalore which can support all the sections and field offices & staff on legal and technical aspects related to conservation & development of forest in the *Western Ghats* region in particular and the entire state in general.
6. The programmes like establishment of **Elephant Park, consolidation of elephant corridors** etc. need to be done on priority in order to address to tackle the increasing elephant-man conflict and conserve the elephants for the future.
7. Programmes should be taken up for promoting alternative energy sources with proper awareness building exercise and financial support in all taluks. The farmers and landless laborers in rural area, especially in *Western Ghats* and Coastal area should be empowered and supported for establishing **biogas by Gobar Gas systems, ASTRA stoves, solar lighting system & water heating systems etc.** It would reduce the pressure on the forest ecosystems and thereby contribute to the natural resource augmentation.
8. **The monsoon banning of fishing** in coastal area should be implemented effectively so that fish regeneration does not get disturbed. The sustainable fishers techniques like adopting **Turtle Excluding Device (TED)** in the fishing boats, **ban on fishing RET species** like Dolphins etc. need to be enforced effectively.
9. The dept. of forest need to be involved in effective tackling of naxalite issue in *Western Ghats* region and the funds available under NAXAL Package can also be utilized for strengthening Eco-development Committee & Village Forest Committee, involving local people in raising nurseries & protecting forest, NTF collection etc. It would help in

generating sustainable rural employment for a lot of local communities and, in turn, they would support the cause of peace & harmony in the region.

10. Govt. should take up a special greening & biodiversity development programmes in plain region of Karnataka through participatory approach. The avenue trees, agro-forestry, raising fodder trees green fencing etc., can be taken up under such schemes with direct involvement of farmers & Village Forest Committees (VFCs).
11. Participatory afforestation programmes like '**Vriksharopana Abhiyana**' need to be further extended & strengthened by providing budgetary & administrative support.
12. The ecologically sensitive areas of the Sahydri regions of Karnataka like Bedthi valley, Aghanashini valley & Dandeli forest regions have now been protected by declaring them as '**Conservation Reserve**' by Wildlife Board. WGTF congratulates the govt. for this significant step. Similar steps should be taken up in **Sharavati valley, Agumbe, Kodachadri, Charmadi, Gundya** River valley, **Subramanya** state forest, **Kumarapurvata** hill range etc. in *Western Ghats* range through '**Conservation Reserve**' or '**Community Reserve**' modes.
13. **Kappatgudda** hill range in Gadag dist., **Chincholi** forest in Gulbarga district should be protected by declaring them as '**Wildlife Sanctuary** or '**Conservation Reserve**' under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
14. A comprehensive protection & development plan should be framed & implemented for all the 13 existing **Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas** (MPCA) involving both eco-restoration and people's participation components. Besides, many more such potential areas need to be identified and brought into conservation jacket. Some of the suggested area are:

N	Dist.	Place
1	Khanapura tq. In Belgaum dist.	Chigvallai
2	„	Chaploi
3	„	Vandurga
4	„	Chinagad
5	„	Talewadi
6	„	Gavali
7	„	Himmadka
8	„	Kanakambi
9	„	Shiroor
10	Mundgod (Uttara Kannada)	Bedsagum
11	Sirsi (Uttara Kannada)	Konkikote
12	Kumata (Uttara Kannada)	Yana
13	Karwar (Uttara Kannada)	Karawar
14	Mavinagundi (U. K. Dist.)	Jog
15	Shimoga	Hosagunda
16	Dakshina Kannada	Shishila
16	„	Gundya
18	Kodagu	Scared Groves
19	Hasana	Hirekal Gudda
20	Chikkamagalur	Inam Dattapeetha & Kavals
21	Chamaraja Nagara	Malai Mahdeshwara
22	„	Pachaamlaia
23	„	Ponnache Boli
24	„	Samabrani gudda

25	„	Kotigudda
26	„	Votakal Gudda
27	„	Deshipura
28	„	Somanathpura
29	„	Heggawadi

15. The Karnataka Biodiversity Board has proposed to take up special conservation efforts in 13 forest patches in plain region of Karnataka by declaring as '**Plain Region Biodiversity Conservation Area**'. It should be done at the earliest. They are:

N	District	Place
1	Bidar	Karpkapalli
2	Raichur	Guntgola
3	Ballari	Donimali
4	Koppala	Indargi
5	Tumakaur	Siddharabetta
6	Bangalore Rural	Makali Durga
7	Kolar	Sunnakal
8	Klolar	Chikkamakli
9	Chitradurga	Jogimatti
10	Davanagere	Male Bennur
11	Bijapura	Mamadapura
12	Badami	Makuta
13	Gulbaurga	Sheribikanahalli

16. Any mega and unsustainable development projects like proposed Gundya river valley hydro-electricity project should not be taken up in the Western Ghats region.
17. Action should be taken to identify and document different kinds of Deemed Forest found in the revenue land and revenue enclosures amidst reserve forest across the Western *Ghats* region through joint survey. These **deemed forest area should be transferred** to dept. of forest for ensuring their long term protection. The fund available in the CAMPA or 13th Finance Commission could be utilized for this purpose.
18. The efforts can be done to design the schemes to promote the sustainable collection & value addition of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) & medicinal plants, through participatory approach by involving VFC, LAMP societies etc. Inland fisheries, value addition to farm products etc. can also be taken up further in this model in order to enhance natural resource based sustainable rural employment generation. The divisions of the Forest Department like Karnataka Forest Development Corporation (KFDC) & Cashew Development Boards can play effective role in such programmes.
19. Govt. should come out with a policy to conserve & promote the agro-biodiversity in the state. The pogrammes should be taken up like that of providing incentives to farmers, who are engaged in conserving traditional food crops and identifying agro-biodiversity rich

areas. 9For example, paddy varieties in Varada River basin and *Gulla* Brinjal varieties in Udupi).

20. The Genetically Modified crops in the food sector, like Bt. Brinjal, should not be given permission for commercial release. Union govt. should be urged to take up long term research on health & environment safety issues related to Generally Modified food crops before considering them for commercial release.
21. The Village Forest Committees (VFC) based on the Joint Forest Management (JFM) principle should be strengthened in all the *taluks* in *Western Ghats* region and empowered with further training and financial incentives.
22. Policy should be framed to give back at least 25% revenue generated from the dept, of Forest in the *Western Ghats* districts for the purpose of forest protection and restoration works.
23. Further recruitments should be done to fulfill the vacancies of field staff, namely: foresters, guards & watchmen. Policy should be evolved to give priority for the local people and forest dwellers like tribal in the *Western Ghats* and coastal region by creating 50% reservation.
24. A Technical Resource Centre (TRC) need to be established within the dept. of Forest at each district in order to assist the forest protection works like combating encroachment, smuggling of timber & medicinal plants, forest fire, etc. The Forest Squad units should be strengthened with further support like training, latest arms & ammunition and communication tools at every forest division in the *Western Ghats* region for ensuring effective forest protection.
25. The district level task force under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner meant for regulating the mining of minor minerals, sand, quarrying etc. needed to be rejuvenated and strengthened with more administrative power.
26. Watershed development programmes should be implemented by involving departments of Forest, Watershed, Agriculture and local people for the rejuvenation of village wells, ponds, lakes and rivers in Sahydri region.
27. The voluntary '**Green Action movement**' could be promoted for spreading the ethos of environment protection across the state by involving schools-colleges, SHGs, VFCs, Eco-development committees, Eco-clubs, NSS & NCC, other interested organizations and general public.
28. A well thought comprehensive land use policy should be developed for the entire *Western Ghats* and coastal region. The opinion of the Task Force need to be considered while deciding on proposed mega development projects. Any sort of major mining should not be allowed in the *Western Ghats* region.
29. The newly launched "**Coastal Green Wall Project**" should be extended to all Hoblis in the entire 300 kms coastal line of the state for its eco-restoration.
30. Efforts should be made by the govt. to get back the entire township and other establishments from KIOCL since no more mining is permitted and land lease period is expired. It would ensure the complete protection for Kuduremukh National Park.
31. A comprehensive policy should be framed, which achieves the objectives of conservation, promotion, cultivation & sustainable utilization of medicinal plant resources by making **Karnataka Medicinal Plant Authority** as the nodal agency.

32. A new integrated eco-tourism policy should be framed keeping the principles of protection of forest & wild life, constant monitoring and regulation, local people's participation and benefit sharing mechanism with local people in the ecologically pristine tourism potential area.
33. The **Biodiversity Management Committees** (BMC) should be formed in all *Grama Panchayats* as per the provisions of Biodiversity Conservation Act (2002) and they should be empowered to take up the biodiversity conservation, enhancement and sustainable utilization tasks.
34. A novel participatory natural resource augmentation programme need to be designed in *Betta* land in Sahydri region. Necessary modifications in Acts and rules could be brought in to ensure effective participation of farmers in such agro-forestry programmes.
35. The roadside plantation should be taken up in all the newly laid, improved & expanded road systems in the state. The revenue generated by each Forest Circle through fine & royalty over tree cuttings by road projects, should be spent for the purpose of tree planting only. A specific cell has to be created at the Dept. of Forest to administer this entire programme.
36. The ban on use polythene bags (that are colored & lesser than 20 microns in thickness) should be enforced effectively across the state.
37. Protected Area (PA) conservation efforts should be enhanced by strengthening the field staff, veterinary care facility, awareness building programmes among the local people etc. The Eco-Development Committees (EDC) should be extended to all PAs extensively and they should be given more incentives and motivation to take part in the conservation process.
38. The field staff of the Protected Area (PA) should be given special support in terms of special allowance for staying in remote area, health insurance, support for children education etc.
39. All the nurseries maintained by the research wing of dept. of forest should have clonal orchard for ecologically & commercially important woody species of the region. All the districts of coastal and *Sahydri* region should have such exclusive nurseries dealings with the conservation of RET, Endemic and medicinal plants.
40. All the '**Kavals**' forests and grasslands in the Chikkamagalur, Tumakur & Hasana districts should be protected with effective people participation methods.
41. The process of compensation meant for the people suffered due to wild animal attack, should be rationalized, so that the benefits reach the needy people and the entire delivery process needs to be strengthened so that it reaches the needy people at the earliest.
42. The '**District Environment Committees**' under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioners should be made functional with more administrative support.
43. Strict actions should be taken to control the depletion & pollution of ground water in the state.
44. Consultation cum awareness building workshops should be organized to the Assembly and Parliament members over the issues pertaining to conservation & sustainable development of *Western Ghats* region.
45. A comprehensive pollution mitigation action plan should be drawn up by involving all the stake holders like industries, dept. of Urban Development, Pollution Control Board,

Panchayat Raj institutions and Dept. of Environment in most polluted places like Bhadravati, Dandeli, Gokarna, Londa etc. The pollution by Sponge Iron factory near Londa in Khanapur taluk of Belgaum is causing severe problems to both local community & the environment. The district administration has taken the initial measures. The govt. should take remedial actions to mitigate these pollution problems.

46. The maintenance and improvements works of all established Botanical Garden in the state by the department should be incorporated in annual working plan so that they receive regular maintenance grant.
47. The biodiversity conservation issues including that of medicinal plant component should be included in the syllabus of training being given to the newly recruited Foresters & Gaurds.
48. There is tremendous pressure in the reserve forest tract in the eastern side of Soraba & Sagara taluks. There is a need of giving protection through digging Cattle Prevent Trench (CPT) nearly about 30 km. It should be taken up on priority.
49. A '*Shaydri Summit*' should be organized in Bangalore to bring together all the stakeholders like Policy makers, top govt. officials, scientists, research institutes, conservation agencies, corporate bodies intended to invest in natural resource management, farmers, NGOS and all those who are concerned, so that message of conservation & sustainable development of *Western Ghats* reaches to wider sections of the society. This would help to bring in more investment for all these conservation projects too apart from ensuring the participation of all sections of the society in the conservation process.
50. Forest department should come with proper scheme and mechanism to protect and develop the plantations of the department which are developed over the years under different afforestation schemes.
51. Government should come out with a package of green industries which are ecologically very friendly and provide mass employment in rural area. Such sustainable development programmes, then, can be taken up in *Western Ghats* & coastal region.
52. The Govt. of Karnataka should convene a high level intergovernmental meeting of the *Tamil Nadu, Keala, Goa, Maharastra & Gujarat* states involving senior officers, scientists and the civil society organization those who are working for the cause of conservation & sustainable development of *Western Ghats*. Such an initiative would help in framing the long-term conservation porgramme for the entire *Western Ghats* range and also to sort out many administrative issues like interstate resource sharing, smuggling of forest produce & wildlife products at border region etc.

Submitted by:

Sri Anant Hegde Ashisar
Chairman
Western Ghats Task Force
Dept. of Forest & Environment
307 / Vidhansoudha, Bangalore-01