

RECOMMENDATIONS BY 'WILD ORISSA' BEFORE THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS & MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS GOVERNMENT OF INDIA COMMITTEE ON FOREST RIGHTS ACT

'Wild Orissa', an organization for conservation of nature and wildlife, places the following recommendations before the Ministry of Environment and Forests & Ministry of Tribal Affairs Committee on the Forest Rights Act. The recommendations are based on deliberations during a Workshop held on the 28th December 2008 at Bhubaneswar, Orissa, on the issue of 'Critical Wildlife Habitat', apart from the relevant provisions of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 or STOTFDRFRA, Wildlife Protection Act 1972, Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, etc.

1. The Government of Orissa is urged to take expeditious steps for finalizing proposals on Critical Wildlife Habitats which are to include among others, 'Corridors of Significant Wildlife Values' for recommending them to the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, on a case by case basis
2. The information according to the stipulated Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment & Forests may include the following in proposals on Critical Wildlife Habitats being forwarded by the Government of Orissa to the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.
 - a. Scientific studies evidencing documentation of biodiversity for ecological data on the habitat and status of the significant plant and animal species.
 - b. Data on human animal conflict and assessment of impact of human presence on animal numbers and animal habitat.
 - c. Studies on the extent of dependence and interaction of the affected communities with the forest resources within the proposed critical wildlife habitats
3. It was recognized that there are many areas in the state of Orissa, falling outside the purview of National Parks and Sanctuaries, which have
 - a. Viable populations of tiger and other rich faunal and floral species, rich biodiversity and life supporting ecological systems in natural wilderness areas.

- b. The potential to harbor viable populations of umbrella species (endemic species, top carnivores, mega-herbivores, indicator, wild relatives of species of economic value, endangered and threatened and migratory species the conservation of which is to benefit the human race, and which are urgently required to be recognized as 'inviolable areas'.

Accordingly the Government of Orissa is requested to take priority steps in listing out the same and recommend the same for being notified as Critical Wildlife Habitats. Wild Orissa has resolved to provide necessary assistance in this regard.

4. Wherever the proposals contain suggestions for relocations and resettlements, it needs to be duly accompanied by a report about the anticipated adverse impact due to activities of habitations/settlements upon wild animals causing irreversible damage and threat to the existence of a species and its habitat.
5. The Government of Orissa is requested to take steps for inviting proposals and eliciting opinion from wildlife conservation organizations, including Wild Orissa, functioning outside the state forest department, experienced in the field of wildlife and nature conservation, at the time of consideration of proposals for 'Critical Wildlife Habitat'.
6. The Government of Orissa is requested to take up demarcation of protected areas and Reserved Forests and notify the pending proposals for Reserved Forests and protected areas in the state of Orissa on a priority basis. Further patches of revenue forests in small pockets are distributed all over the state. They should all be demarcated, mapped and notified as Reserved/Protected/Village Forests and brought under control of forest department for improving its vegetation and providing suitable habitats for appropriate wildlife. Funding should be made available for the purpose expeditiously. They should not be allowed to be quarried or used otherwise
7. It is requested that the Government should access and document the traditional knowledge of biodiversity and fauna and flora in possession of tribes and traditional forest dwellers residing in and around an area being considered as a critical wildlife habitat.

8. The Government of Orissa may be requested to take necessary steps for recommending to the concerned authorities for suitably amending the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 as:- Section 2(b) - The phrase "areas of National Parks and Sanctuaries" may be substituted by "Protected Areas as defined under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 including Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves and Reserved Forests under the Indian Forest Act 1927/Orissa Forest Act 1972 and 'Ecologically Sensitive Areas' under the Bio-diversity Act, 'Sensitive Areas' under provisions of the Coastal Regulation Zone Act and other categories of Forests falling under the purview of the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980".
9. Presently parts of the Similipal Tiger Reserve and the Satkosia Tiger Reserve have been notified as Critical Wildlife Habitats in the state of Orissa. Further the following areas may be expeditiously notified as Critical Wildlife Habitats in the state of Orissa:-
 - i. Whole of proposed Core area of the Sunabeda Tiger Reserve
 - ii. Whole of Berbera and Dhuanali Reserved Forests in Khurda/Nayagarh districts
 - iii. The total Core area/proposed Core areas of the following protected areas:
 - a. Ushakothi Wildlife Sanctuary
 - b. Khalasuni Wildlife Sanctuary
 - c. Hadagarh Wildlife Sanctuary
 - d. Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary
 - e. Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary
 - f. Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary
 - g. Bhittarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary
 - h. Chandaka Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary
 - i. Lakhari Valley Wildlife Sanctuary
 - j. Kotgarh Wildlife Sanctuary
 - iv. The following areas need to be notified in view of their criticality from the wildlife perspective
 - a. Approx 200 sq kms in Ghumusar North and South divisions
 - b. Approx 250 sq kms in Athmalik division
 - c. Approx 200 sq kms in Boudh division
 - d. Approx 150 sq kms in Kapilas and nearby RFs

- e. Approx 200 sq kms in Gupteswar, Boipariguda
 - f. Approx 250 sq kms in Narayanpatna
 - g. Approx 200 sq kms in Chandrapur
 - h. Niyamgiri Reserved Forest
 - i. Approx 200 sq kms in Malkangiri
10. Orissa has about 57% of the elephant habitat in Central India with 1800-2000 elephants spread over an area that forms about 24% of the forest cover of the state. Nearly 44% of the elephant habitat falls within eleven Protected Areas of Orissa. Karo-Karmpada corridor connects Karo and Sidhamata Reserve forest of Keonjhar Division (Orissa) and Karampada Reserve Forest of Sarada Division (Jharkhand). This corridor is important for continuing between the elephant populations of Jharkhand and North Keonjhar and further onwards to the Bonai Forests of Orissa. The corridor is being mostly used by loners and small herds of elephants generally during October-February. Badampahar-Dhobadhobin corridor connects Badampahar Reserve Forest with Dhobadhobin Reserve Forest and Undula Protected Forest leading to Haldipokhari Reserve Forest of South Chaibasa. This corridor is mostly being used by bulls and small herds corridor leads to the main elephant habitat of south Chaibasa and Kolhan. Badampahar-Karida east corridor connects Badampahar Reserve Forest of Orissa with Karida Reserve Forest of Jharkhand maintaining the contiguity between Simlipal National Park and Mosabani Range of Dhalbhun Forest Division, Jharkhand with a length of 28-30 Km. Elephants from Simlipal pass through Badampahar Reserve Forest, Dhasra Reserve Forest, Teltangia Village Forest, Teltangia village Forest, Dhenkla National Park, Tungru Reserve Forest and Sarali Reserve Forest (Orissa) to enter Karida East Reserve Forest near Satbakra (Jharkhand). Simlipal-Satkosia or Simlipal- Hadagarh Corridor connects Simlipal National Park with Hadagarh Wildlife Sanctuary through Nato and Satkosia Reserve Forest. This corridor is being regularly used by herds of 20- 25 elephants and bulls. It is about 15-16 Km long. Baula-Kuldiha or Hadagarh-Kuldiha corridor is being used by small herds of 10-15 elephants. This corridor connects Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary with Hadagarh Wildlife Sanctuary. Kahnejena-Anantapur corridor is being used by small herds of 3-5 elephants during October-February. Elephants move from Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary to Anantapur Reserve Forest crossing through number of reserve forests

and Forest Divisions. Tal- Kholgarh corridor connects Tal Reserve Forest with Kholgarh RF and Landakot RF connecting the elephant population of Satkosia Wildlife sanctuary with Khalasuni Wildlife sanctuary through Baruni RF and Raun RF. This corridor is being used by herds of 15-20 elephants. Nuagaon-Baruni corridor connects Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary, Talaipathar and Nuagaon RF with East and West Baruni RF. Similarly, Kotgarh-Chandrapur corridor is being used mostly by bulls and small herds of elephants. This corridor connects Kotgarh Wildlife sanctuary with Chandrapur RF of Rayagada Forest division. It is important that no land rights are issued on such migratory corridors as it will lead to severe human-elephant conflicts entailing serious damage to lives of humans and elephants.

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