

Forest Department

2.2 Protection of Forest and Wildlife in Rajasthan

Executive Summary

Rajasthan has recorded forest area of 32,828.37 sq. km (9.59 per cent of the geographical area) which is significantly below the national average of 23.34 per cent and the target of 33 per cent as envisaged in National Forest Policy (NFP) 1988. A performance audit on “Protection of Forest and Wildlife in Rajasthan” for the period from 2013-14 to 2017-18 was carried out to analyse the department's efforts in achieving this goal. The significant audit observations are as follows:

The 10-years working plans (WPs) for the forest divisions were approved by Government of India, but the WPs were not being implemented in letter and spirit due to non-provisioning of adequate budget.

(Paragraph 2.2.11.1)

Eco Sensitive Zones (ESZs) could not be notified due to incomplete proposals being sent by the Department; resultantly, the activities in ESZs could not be regulated.

(Paragraph 2.2.11.2)

State Level Inter-Agency Coordination Committee and Wildlife Crime Control Units to combat wildlife crime were not established in the state despite the fact that maximum crimes related to environment in the country were committed in Rajasthan.

(Paragraph 2.2.11.3)

Though State Government issued (November 2011) Gazette Notification under section 35 of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, declaring government's intention of establishing the Kumbhalgarh National Park for protection of leopard and other species but the final notification for the said Park was not issued (March 2018).

(Paragraph 2.2.11.4)

Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) for the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve (RTR) submitted in 2013 was still to be approved by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the corridor between RTR-I and RTR-II was not yet completed. Local Advisory Committee (LAC) was not formed in RTR and Sariska Tiger Reserve (STR). In the absence of LAC, the tourist activities in the parks could not be regulated which caused disturbance to wild animals. Contrary to the directions of NTCA, zone number six to ten of the RTR, core areas of the park were not closed in monsoon season.

(Paragraph 2.2.12 to 2.2.12.6)

The site selected for construction of Abhera Biological Park at Kota was not conducive due to adjoining garbage dumping yard, industrial areas, firing range of Indian Army, existence of unauthorized kachchi basti, etc. in nearby area.

(Paragraph 2.2.14)

The Department received 28.17 sq. km of non-forest land in lieu of forest land diverted for non-forest activity during 2013-18, however notification for the same is still to be completed. Further out of 5974.54 sq. km of forest land pending for mutation as of April 1999, only 1218.71 sq. km (20.40 per cent) forest land was mutated in 19 years. 7145.43 sq. km of mutated land was still pending to be demarcated on revenue maps as of March 2018. 1,72,701 pillars for demarcation of forest land are yet to be erected.

(Paragraph 2.2.15.3 and 2.2.15.4)

As of March 2018, 6,369 cases involving encroachment on 81.91 sq. km of land, 7,879 cases relating to illegal mining and 4,446 cases of illegal grazing were pending for disposal.

(Paragraph 2.2.16.1 to 2.2.16.3)

The Department did not recover Additional Compensatory Afforestation (ACA) amount of ₹ 26.52 crore in lieu of diversion of forest land for non-forest purpose.

(Paragraph 2.2.16.6)

Good Practice:

There has been a steady increase in the number of Great Indian Bustard (GIB) from 103 in 2013-14 to 166 in 2016-17 which is one of the most endangered birds in the world after the State Government had launched a scheme in the year 2013-14 for the protection of GIB in Rajasthan.

2.2.1 Forest cover at a glance

The responsibility to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife in the state lies with the Forest Department (Department). Despite being the largest state of the country with an area of 3,42,239 sq. km, Rajasthan has recorded forest area⁴⁸ of 32,828.37 sq. km *i.e.* (9.59 per cent of the geographical area) which is significantly below the national average of 23.34 per cent and the target of 33 per cent as envisaged in National Forest Policy (NFP) 1988. However, as per the Forest Survey of India (FSI) Report 2017, the digitized boundary of recorded forest area in the state covers an area of 23,105 sq. km only (*i.e.* 6.75 per cent of total area). Besides, the forest cover⁴⁹ in Rajasthan is 16,572 sq. km *i.e.* 4.84 per cent, whereas the country's forest cover is 21.54 per cent.

⁴⁸ Area recorded as a 'Forest' in the government records.

⁴⁹ All land more than one hectare in area with a tree canopy of more than 10 per cent irrespective of land use, ownership and legal status.