

Government of India plans for 60 more Eco-sensitive Zones (ESZ) this year

In order to provide a better sanctity to the protected areas, the government aims to notify over 60 sanctuaries and national parks as 'eco-sensitive zones' this year. The move will not only serve as a powerful tool to strengthen the buffers and corridors around the Protected Area network, but also will check the negative impact of industrialization and unplanned development in and around Protected Areas (PAs).

"We are trying to do as much as possible provided we get clear proposals from the states. We will notify more than 60 eco-sensitive zones this year," a senior official from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) told PTI. In the previous year, around 40 sanctuaries and national parks were declared as 'eco-sensitive zones'. At present there are over 600 sanctuaries and national parks in the country, the official added.



Trees uprooted for resort activities near protected areas

Earlier, new guidelines for the Eco-sensitive Zones (ESZ) were formulated by the ministry to ensure that these areas act as "shock absorbers" for the protected areas against any non-forest activity by way of regulating, managing and prohibiting such activities around ecologically fragile areas. This was a part of the action plan envisaged in the 'Wildlife Conservation Strategy', adopted in 2002. The basic aim of these guidelines was to regulate certain activities around protected areas so as to minimise the negative impacts of activities such as mining, power projects, etc. in the fragile ecosystem encompassing the PAs.



Mining activities are strictly prohibited in ESZ

According to the guidelines, activities including commercial mining, setting of saw mills and industries causing pollution, commercial use of firewood and major hydro-power projects, are prohibited in such areas. It also prohibits tourism activities like flying over protected areas in an aircraft or hot air balloon, and discharge of effluents and solid waste in natural water bodies or terrestrial areas. Felling of trees, drastic change in agriculture systems and commercial use of natural water resources, including groundwater harvesting and setting up of hotels and resorts, are the activities regulated in the areas.



An Eco-sensitive Warning Board

On the other hand, activities permitted in the areas include ongoing agriculture and horticulture practices by local communities, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, adoption of green technology and use of renewable energy sources. The width of the ESZ and type of regulation differs from one protected area to the other. However, as a general principle, the width of the ESZ is 10 km around the protected area.

Recently, the Environment Ministry had sought views and suggestions from the public on the draft notification for declaring areas around two wildlife sanctuaries, one in Dadra & Nagar Haveli and the other 'Pranahita' in Telangana - as 'eco-sensitive zones'.

Source:

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/government-to-notify-more-than-60-eco-sensitive-zones-this-year/articleshow/45928040.cms>