



## MoEF asks project proponents to fund conservation near protected areas

Project located near national parks have to set aside 2% of project cost for reducing impact on wildlife

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*Representational image Getty Images*

In the backdrop of the legal tangles and criticisms it has faced for not proposing adequate measures to reduce the impact of projects on wildlife and protected areas, the union environment ministry has come out with fresh guidelines to put in place mitigation measures for wildlife conservation. As per the new guidelines, while setting up new projects, its proponents would have to set aside 2% of their project cost or

the cost of impact mitigation as suggested by the forest department, whichever is more, for wildlife conservation.

The new guidelines have been formulated specifically for projects that fall within 10 km of protected areas such as sanctuaries and national parks. These projects have to obtain a wildlife clearance from the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), as the project activity has the potential to impact flora and fauna of these ecologically fragile areas.

Besides mandating industries to set aside funds for wildlife [conservation](#) and mitigation measures, the recommendations add that the chief wildlife warden, at the state level, will be in charge of drawing up detailed plans. “The Chief Wildlife Warden would propose an impact mitigation and wildlife conservation plan for ten years keeping in view the assessed impact of the proposed project.”

Also, for linear projects or those that fall partially within the zone of regulation, the ministry will calculate the cost to be imposed on project proponents based on the proportion of area affected.

Guidelines for imposing mitigation measures are necessary as projects activities such as mining, industries and infrastructure development have immediate and even long lasting impacts on flora and fauna found near protected areas. Recently, the issue of widening National Highway 7 from four lanes to six lanes between [Maharashtra](#) and [Madhya Pradesh](#) had run into trouble as it cuts through one of the India’s best tiger habitats.

The National Highway Authority of India and environment ministry were initially not keen on implementing mitigation measures suggested by Wildlife Institute of India, that involved building wildlife overpasses and underpasses for tigers. But after they were dragged to National Green Tribunal the NHAI and environment ministry agreed to build eco-ducts or wildlife crossings in both Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh at an estimated cost of Rs 515 crores.

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