

# Analysis of Wildlife Clearances in India, 2019 (January-June)

## KEY FINDINGS

- NBWL considered a total of 70 proposals out of which 30 proposals were for diversion within Protected Areas
- NBWL approved the diversion of 216.18 hectares in Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks; the Rejection Rate is ZERO i.e. no proposal was rejected.
- 89% of diversions is due to Linear Intrusions (Roads, Railways, Transmission Lines, Pipelines).
- 16.77 hectares was approved for diversion within Tiger Habitats for projects such as mining, industry and roads.
- Not even a single proposal approved for diversion within National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries is backed with reasons on how it benefits wildlife, which implies violation of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

# I. INTRODUCTION

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is a statutory body created under India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. It is a 47 member committee headed by the Prime Minister of the country<sup>1</sup> and is tasked with promoting conservation and development of wildlife and forests. In addition to framing policies and advising Central Government on matters related to conservation, it is responsible for regulating activities within India's Protected Areas i.e. National Parks (NPs), Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLSs) and Conservation Reserves (CRs) and Community Reserves (CMRs)<sup>2</sup>. The law mandates the NBWL to constitute a Standing Committee for carrying out its various duties and functions<sup>3</sup>. Having been delegated the powers of the NBWL, the standing committee is required to consider proposals which involve use of land from protected areas (NPs, WLSs and CRs) for activities such as mining, irrigation, roads, highways etc. It is the responsibility of the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife (SC NBWL) to screen these proposals, seek additional information or studies, order for site inspections and subsequently approve or reject the proposal (MOEF Wildlife Division 2012). Prior approval from SC NBWL is also mandatory for proposals involving alteration of boundaries of WLS and NPs<sup>4</sup>.

Further, as per the amendment made to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in 2006, approval from SC NBWL is mandatory for projects which involve diversion of Tiger Reserves and areas which link one Protected Area or Tiger Reserve with another Protected Area or Tiger Reserve<sup>5</sup>.

The purpose of this paper is to review the approvals granted by the Standing Committee of NBWL in the first six months of 2019 (January-June). This paper is based on review and analysis of minutes of the meetings of SC NBWL conducted in the calendar year of 2019. These minutes of the meeting are uploaded on the Wildlife Division of the MOEF&CC website (MOEF&CC Wildlife Division).

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ASIATIC WILD BUFFALO (*Bubalus arnee*) IN KAZIRANGA TIGER RESERVE, ASSAM

1 Section 5A of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

2 Section 5C of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

3 Section 5B of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

4 Sub Section (3) of Section 26 A of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 Sub Section (5) of Section 35 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

5 Section 38 O (g) of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 as amended in 2006

## II. OVERVIEW

The Standing Committee of NBWL conducted two meetings in the first six months of 2019 one in January (10.01.2019) and the other in February (25.02.2019). A total of 70 proposals were considered out of which 63 were approved, one was deferred for later consideration and six were rejected. The proposal deferred was for diversion of 490.55 hectares lying one km from the boundary of Jawahar Sagar WLS, which forms part of Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan. The proposal was deferred for later consideration in view of the fact that Supreme Court order dated 04.08.2006 in the matter of T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad Vs. Union of India & Ors. (Writ Petition (Civil) No 202 of 1995) says mining is not permitted within one km boundary of NPs and WLS. Therefore, the SC NBWL directed the user agency to carry a joint survey (in coordination with the forest department) for delineating the boundary of project area after excluding the area falling within one km of the protected area.

Out of 63 proposals approved, one proposal was for boundary alteration of a protected area, 30 were for diversion within protected areas and rest 32 proposals were for diversion within 10 Km from the boundary of protected areas.

## III. TRENDS IN WILDLIFE CLEARANCES GRANTED BY THE SC NBWL IN 2019 (JANUARY-JUNE)

The trends in wildlife clearance for the year 2019 are analysed on three criteria: de-notification/boundary alteration of protected areas, diversion within protected areas and diversion within tiger habitats.

### i. DE-NOTIFICATION/BOUNDARY ALTERATION OF PROTECTED AREAS

The SC NBWL approved for de-notification of 5,445.6 hectares from Bhitarkanika WLS in Kendrapara district in Odisha. The Bhitarkanika WLS (spread across 67,200 hectares) was declared as WLS in 1975 with the objective to protect the Estuarine or Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) (BirdLife International 2019). The biodiversity value of the sanctuary is unique. Out of 72 mangrove and associated species found world over, Bhitarkanika houses 62 of them. The faunal diversity in Bhitarkanika is represented by 42 species of reptiles, five species of amphibians, 280 species of mammals. The WLS has a coastline of 35 km on its eastern side known as Gahirmatha coast which is known as the largest breeding ground of the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) (Das and Chatterjee 2018). Further, the WLS is rich in avifauna and nearly 220 species of birds have been recorded. It received the tag of 'Ramsar Site' (wetland of international importance) in 2002 and was identified as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International in 2004 (Das and Chatterjee 2018) (BirdLife International 2019).

The 5,445.6 hectares of revenue land proposed for de-notification is covered by 52 villages and consists of developed lands, agriculture, aquaculture and residential areas. The de-notification was proposed in view of difficulties being faced by the forest department in managing the protected area and enforcing restrictions led conflict between the villagers and forest officials (SC NBWL 2019b). While the minutes are silent on the details of the conflict, literature review shows that the conflict between traditional fisher folk and forest department is mainly due to the restrictions imposed by the department in order to protect endangered Olive Ridley Sea Turtles (Banerjee 2017).



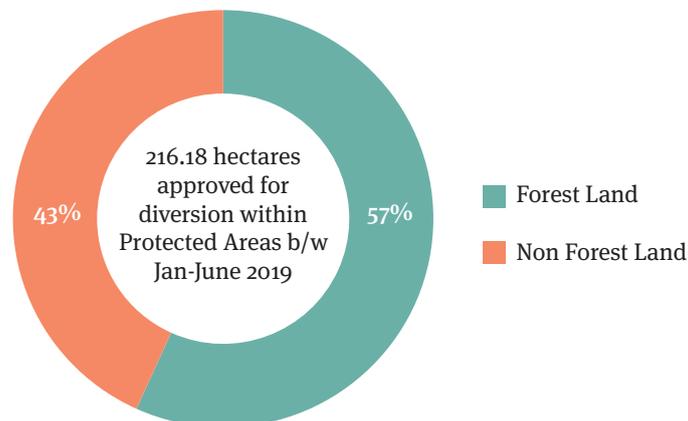
MUGGER CROCODILE (*Crocodylus palustris*), NATIONAL CHAMBAL GHARIYAL SANCTUARY, MADHYA PRADESH

## ii. DIVERSION WITHIN PROTECTED AREAS

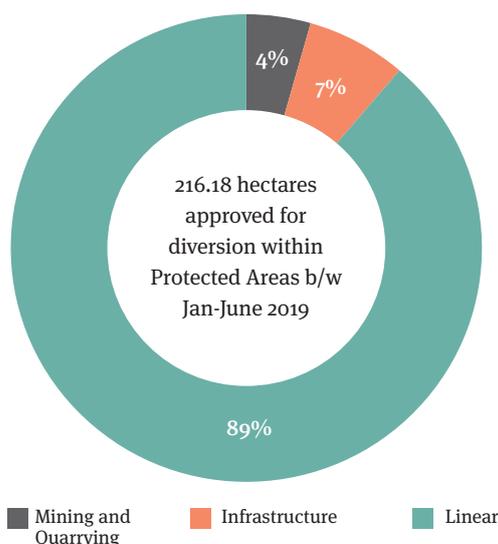
Out of 31 proposals that had sought diversion of land within protected areas, 30 were approved by the SC NBWL. The one that was rejected was for diversion of 160.94 hectares of forestland from Wan WLS (which forms the core of Melghat Tiger reserve, Maharashtra) for Akola - Khandawa (176 km) Gauge conversion works between Railway 645.0 km to 983.0 km between Akot and Amlakhurd Railway Station. It is important to note that this proposal was initially approved by SC NBWL in its meeting dated 03.01.2017 subject to mitigation measures and other conditions as may be suggested by India's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). This wildlife clearance was later challenged in the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee in the following matters Manish Chandwani Jeswani Vs. Union of India (Application No. 1422/2018) and Prasad Khale Vs. Union of India (Application No. 1423/2018). The NTCA in this case had recommended that the only mitigation was the avoidance of the gauge conversion works though the Melghat Tiger reserve Area. The proposed 35 km long railway line falls inside the tiger reserve out of which 18 km falls within its critical tiger habitat. Given NTCA's recommendations, the SC NBWL in February 2019 decided to return the proposal to the State Government (SC NBWL 2019b).

Leaving the Melghat proposal aside, this means that essentially all the fresh 30 proposals (spread across 216.18 hectares) considered by SC NBWL were granted approvals. Analysis suggests that out of 216.18 hectares of land approved for diversion within protected areas, 57% was forest land and rest 43% was non-forest land (see figure 1).

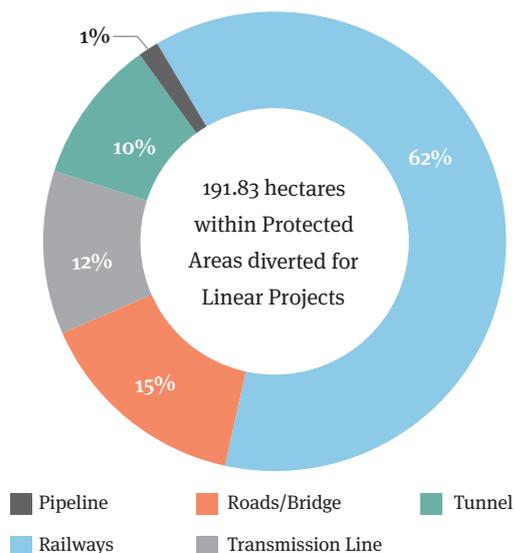
**Figure 1: Diversion (in hectares) within Protected Areas in 2019 (January-June); by Forest and Non Forest Land**



**Figure 2(a):** Diversion (in hectares) within Protected Areas in 2019 (January-June); by Project Category



**Figure 2 (b):** Diversion (in hectares) within Protected Areas for Linear in 2019 (January-June); by Sub Category



In terms of project categories, Linear projects such as roads, railways, transmission lines and pipelines, tunnels had the highest contribution in the overall land approved for diversion within protected areas. Out of 216.18 hectares approved for diversion, 89% (191.83 hectares) was due to linear projects, 7% (14.83 hectares) due to infrastructure projects and rest 4% (9.52 hectares) due to mining and quarrying. The share of different project categories in total diversion within protected areas is shown in figure 2 (a).

From figure 2 (b) it is clear that out of total diversion due to linear projects, the share of railway projects is highest at 62%, involving 118.78 hectares land. This was followed by road/bridges projects which accounted for 15% of total diversion within Protected Areas due to linear projects. Roads/bridges led to 28.81 hectares of diversion within Protected Areas. Transmission Lines accounted for 22.06 hectares of diversion within Protected Areas, followed by tunnels (19.43 hectares) and pipelines (2.75 hectares).

The major linear project cleared was the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project (Bullet Train) which involved diversion of 118.87 hectares within three Protected Areas: Thane Creek Flamingo WLS, Tungreshwar WLS and Sanjay Gandhi NP in Maharashtra. In addition to the land within the protected area, 97.52 hectares within the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of the Thane Creek Flamingo WLS was also approved. The concerns associated with respect to the approval given for Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project are highlighted in Box No.1.

## BOX NO 1: FAULTY APPROVAL GRANTED TO BULLET TRAIN

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**LESSER FLAMINGOS (*Phoenicopterus minor*) AT THANE CREEK FLAMINGO SANCTUARY, MAHARASHTRA**

The proposed Mumbai–Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project (also known as Bullet Train) will divert 3.28 hectares of forest land from Thane Creek Flamingo WLS and 97.52 hectares of non-forest land from its eco-sensitive zone. In addition to Thane Creek Flamingo WLS, the bullet train will require 32.75 hectares of forest land and 77.30 hectare of non-forest land from Sanjay Gandhi NP along with 0.6902 hectares of forest land and 4.75 hectares of non-forest land from Tungareshwar WLS (SC NBWL 2019a).

The proposal was first considered by the Maharashtra State Board for Wildlife (Maharashtra SBWL) in its meeting dated 05.12.2018. The board decided to form a committee under the chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister involving all stakeholders for suggesting mitigation measures for the proposed bullet train. The SBWL decided that mitigation measures shall be binding on the agency and recommended the proposal to SC NBWL. A perusal of the minutes indicate that there was no discussion made on the impact of the bullet train on three protected areas (Maharashtra SBWL 2018). It is important to note that in addition to being a WLS, Thane Creek has been identified as an IBA by BirdLife International. More than 205 species of birds have been reported from the area. The creek with its mixture of mangroves, salt pans and mudflats is a very important wintering ground for water birds. It supports over 1,00,000 birds during winter which include Lesser Flamingo (near threatened), Greater Flamingo, Asian Openbill Stork, White Stork, Pied Avocet, Eastern Golden Plover, Temminck's Stints (BirdLife International 2004). However, the SBWL remained silent on the impact of constructing the underground tunnel below the Thane Creek WLS through which the Bullet Train will pass. The Sanjay Gandhi NP is a unique leopard habitat in Mumbai Suburban and Thane district with a total of 41 leopard individuals photo captured using camera traps in February 2018 (Chatterjee 2018). The Tungareshwar WLS lies adjacent to Sanjay Gandhi NP and its forest hosts more than 600 species of plants, over 250 species of birds and 150 species of butterflies. The leopard is the apex predator and thrives on Spotted Deer, Barking Deer and Sambar (Apte 2003). However, in terms of diversion within Sanjay Gandhi NP and Tungareshwar WLS the SBWL did not consider the impact of bullet train in terms of other projects which have already been cleared (or are proposed for clearance) within Sanjay Gandhi NP and Tungareshwar WLS by SC NBWL. These projects are listed in Table 1. Thus, no cumulative impacts have been considered.

S.No	Project Name	Location vis-à-vis SGNP / Tungareshwar	Area (in hectares)	Status
1.	58.34 km long natural gas pipeline Ambadi Naka area in Virar city,	Within Tungareshwar WLS & its Notional ESZ	4.5718	Ap- proved by SC NBWL
2.	Pipeline for transportation of natural gas from Suraj Water Park, Thane to Fountain Hotel	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP, its ESZ & draft ESZ of Tungareshwar WLS	0.0445	
3.	Underground tunnel from Goregaon to Mulund	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP & its ESZ	19.43	
4.	403 MLD Surya Regional Water Supply Scheme	Within Tungareshwar WLS	15.69	
5.	Laying of 450 mm/300mm diameter water main along existing approach Road to Appapada	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP	0.045	
6.	Dahisar-Surat Section from 4-lane to 6-lane along NH-8 in the State of Maharashtra.	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP and its notified ESZ	Not Specified	
7.	Residential & Commercial project with Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) rental housing project at Balkum, Dhokali, Kolshet Thane, Maharashtra	In the vicinity of Sanjay Gandhi NP	Not Specified	
8.	Bore drilling for survey and investigation at Deokhinpada-Kaman Tah. Wasai, Distt. Thane	Within Tungareshwar WLS	Not Specified	
9.	Construction of double laning of railway line proposed by Dedicated Freight corridor in Sanjay Gandhi NP, Maharashtra	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP & within 10 Km from Tungareshwar WLS	Not Specified	
10.	Renovation of 220 KV old electricity transmission line	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP and Tungareshwar WLS	Not Specified	
11.	Construction of School in Village Magathane, Mumbai.	Adjacent to Sanjay Gandhi NP	1.274	Still under Exami- nation
12.	Tikujiniwadi-Borivali Road Tunnel	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP	45	
13.	Yashwant Smart City Project at Village: Rajawali	Within 1 Km from Tungareshwar WLS	166.4798	
14.	Construction of Elevated Road and Widening of Existing Thane-Ghodbunder Road	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP	13.5671	
15.	402 MLD capacity Surya Regional Water Supply Scheme	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP & Tungareshwar	3.916	
16.	Multi Modal Corridor from Navghar to Chirner by MMRDA	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP	6.44	
17.	Multi Modal Corridor from Navghar (Palghar) to Balavali (Raigad)	Within Tungareshwar WLS; Deemed ESZ of Tungareshwar WLS & ESZ of Sanjay Gandhi NP	256.8	
18.	Gas Distribution Network in Bhiwandi & Vasai Taluka of Thane & Palghar District	Lies 0.025 Km from Tungareshwar WLS	2.7	
19.	Yoor Lake Beautification Activity in Village Yoor, Thane	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP	0.7669	
20.	Eco-Tribal Tourism in Village Yoor, Thane	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP	0.8962	
21.	NOC for conducting soil investigation for Suitable Alignment for Goregaon Mulund Link Road	Within Sanjay Gandhi NP	0.0602	

Source: Minutes of the meeting of SC NBWL, various years

Projects submitted to MOEF&CC for wildlife clearance as listed on PARIVESH (MOEF&CC n.d.)

The Member Secretary, SBWL had raised a concern that the corridor connecting Sanjay Gandhi NP and Tungreshwar WLS already has Kaman-Bhivandi-4 Lane Highway, Dis-Vasai Train Link and two transmission lines passing through it. Given the above scenario, the proposed Bullet Train, Multi Modal Corridor, Dedicated Freight corridor and Virar-Panvel Elevated Railway Line will form a complicated maze in narrow land strip (Maharashtra SBWL 2018). However, these concerns were not addressed in the meeting and the project was recommended anyway.

The proposal for Bullet Train was then considered by the SC NBWL in its meeting dated 10.10.2019. The proposal was not in the agenda and was taken with special permission of the chair. The SC NBWL cleared the proposal on the mitigation measures proposed by the Chief Wildlife Warden and the mitigation measures proposed by the SBWL which consists of construction of a combined Overpass (over exiting Diva-Vasai Railway Line and proposed Dedicated Freight Corridor Line) and Underpass (under Bullet Train, Multi Modal Corridor and elevated PWD road). Further, in addition to widening the existing culvert under Diva-Vasai Rail Line (i.e. Nagale Underpass), the committee recommended building of a similar culvert to enable creation of underpass below its alignment (SC NBWL 2019a). Again there was no discussion on how a linear intrusion as massive as the Bullet Train will impact the three protected areas.

As per the Cabinet Minister of Transport in Maharashtra State Government, the bullet train will entail diversion of 13.36 hectares of mangroves and felling of 54,000 mangrove trees. Mangroves play a significant role in mitigating global climate change as they sequester five times carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than rainforest (WIRE 2019). However, neither the SBWL nor the SC NBWL made any discussion on the impact on mangroves due to the proposed Bullet Train. The SC NBWL while granting the wildlife clearance only concerned itself only with the condition imposed by State CWLW which directs the user agency to plant 5 times the number of mangroves plants anticipated to be lost in this project (SC NBWL 2019a).

### iii. DIVERSION WITHIN TIGER HABITATS

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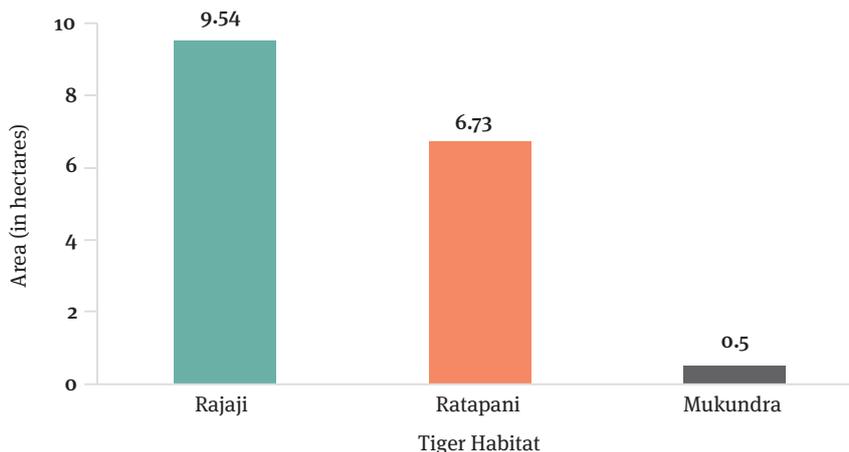
TIGER IN KANHA TIGER RESERVE , MADHYA PRADESH

This section deals with approvals given by SC NBWL to projects proposed within tiger habitats. For the purpose of this analysis, the tiger habitats includes tiger reserves notified under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (as amended in 2006) and forest lands lying contiguous to the notified tiger reserve. These forest areas may serve as important corridors for dispersal of tiger and other wildlife. Given this definition, projects

within tiger habitats therefore include the following (i) projects proposed within notified tiger reserves and (ii) projects proposed over forest lands which lie contiguous to the notified tiger reserve. Further, in this section we have also taken into consideration diversion projects proposed within Ratapani WLS as the NTCA in 2016 had given in-principle approval to declare the sanctuary as a tiger reserve (Ganesan 2016).

Our analysis suggests that the SC NBWL had approved six proposals for diversion within tiger habitats spread over 16.77 hectares. Five proposals were for construction/upgradation of roads and one proposal was for rehabilitation and repair of an existing railway bridge.

**Figure 3: Diversion (in hectares) within Tiger Habitats from January-June 2019**



As clear from figure 3, maximum diversion took place within Rajaji Tiger Reserve (Uttarakhand). This was due to diversion of 9.54 hectares of forest land from Rajaji NP (which falls within Rajaji Tiger Reserve) for construction of motor road from Malakot to Sirasu under Prime Minister Gram Sadak Yojna. The proposed road passes through the core area and default eco-sensitive zone of the tiger reserve and involves felling of 370 trees. The proposal was recommended by NTCA on the condition that animal passages culverts (as recommended by Wildlife India Institute) will be constructed to allow species like tigers to cross the road without hindrance. In order to control animal mortality due to increase in traffic volume after construction of road, the NTCA directed the user agency to put speed breakers and/rumble strips at an interval of every 300-400 m along the entire stretch of the road (SC NBWL 2019a).



UKHRUL DISTRICT , MANIPUR

RITWICK DUTTA

Followed by Rajaji Tiger Reserve, the SC NBWL in its meeting dated 25.02.2019 approved four proposals spread over 6.73 hectares within Ratapani WLS in Madhya Pradesh. These proposals were for upgradation of existing gravel roads to cement roads. These proposals were approved by the SC NBWL on the condition that permission for starting the work shall be given if road design is modified as per an animal passage plan prepared on the basis of Wildlife India Institute Guidelines in “*Eco-friendly Measures to Miti-gate Impacts on Linear Infrastructures on Wildlife*”. The user agency was also directed to prepare a Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Plan providing for regular manual patrolling of the stretch (SC NBWL 2019b).

In the context of road upgradation projects approved within Ratapani WLS, it is important to note that in 2013, the SC NBWL had formed a sub-committee to frame comprehensive guidelines for construction/repair of roads passing through Protected Areas in the country. The Sub-committee had recommended that *status quo* has to be maintained for roads passing through National Parks, Core Critical Tiger Habi-tats (CTH) of Tiger Reserves, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Conservation Reserves. It was clearly specified that width and status of the existing roads shall remain the same and no upgradation will be allowed (Sub-Committee SC NBWL 2013). However, the approval for upgradation of roads within Ratapani WLS by the present SC NBWL shows that there is scant regard for these guidelines.

Lastly, the SC NBWL approved 0.5 hectares of forest land for diversion within Darrah WLS (which falls within Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan) for rehabilitation and repair of existing railway cracked arch bridge No. 150 of Kota-Nagda Section.

It is important to note that while approving proposals for diversion within tiger habitats, SC NBWL made no discussion whatsoever on their potential impact on tigers.

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INDIAN RHINO IN KAZIRANGA TIGER RESERVE, ASSAM

## IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The SC NBWL in the calendar year of 2018 approved a total of 39 projects spread over 409.75 hectares for diversion within NPs and WLSs. Added to this are approvals given to 30 proposals spread over 216.18 hectares in 2019 (January-June). In this context it is significant to note that National Protected Areas such as WLSs and NPs are created for the purpose of creating inviolate areas for the purpose of wildlife conservation. The idea is to keep these areas away (or 'protect' them) from any human activity or human disturbance. This is expressed in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 as well. The statute prohibits damage, destruction or diversion of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks unless it is for the improvement and better management of wildlife. However, the review of minutes of the meeting of SC NBWL shows that not even a single approval is backed with reasons on how it benefits wildlife. Therefore, it is clear that approvals given by the SC NBWL for diversion within protected areas are not in sync with the provisions of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Another disturbing finding was with respect to SC NBWL's approval to previously rejected projects. The SC NBWL in its 53<sup>rd</sup> meeting dated 25.02.2019 gave approval to two projects within Bhimashankar WLS in Maharashtra which were previously rejected in its 18<sup>th</sup> meeting dated 12.04.2011. These proposals were with respect to widening and up-gradation of existing tar road into cement road and construction of community space and toilet blocks. These proposals were initially rejected by then SC NBWL on the grounds that the proposals will lead to felling of a large number of trees and will fragment the habitat of giant squirrel which is a flagship species of the sanctuary. However, these proposals were later approved on the condition that the road design will be modified as per animal passage plan prepared by the project proponent in consultation with State CWLW on the basis of guidelines framed by Wildlife India Institute in "*Eco-friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts on Linear Infrastructures on Wildlife*". Further, with respect to the second proposal, the SC NBWL directed that the user agency will not fell any tree in the area and will shift the toilet block from forest to non-forest area (SC NBWL 2019b).

The SC NBWL in 2018 approved diversion of 2,581.76 hectares in and around tiger reserves for various purposes such as hydel, mining, industry and linear intrusions such as railways, roads etc. This analysis included projects proposed both within notified tiger reserves as well as those proposed within 10 Km from the boundary of the tiger reserve (irrespective of forest land or non-forest land). Given the approval made in 2018, the SC NBWL further approved six projects spread across 16.77 hectares within tiger habitats in 2019. It is important to note that while clearing proposals which entail diversions within tiger habitats, the SC NBWL has made no recorded discussion on how these will impact tigers and their habitat. A review of the minutes of the meeting of SC NBWL suggests that a general proposal for diversion within a tiger habitat begins with a brief description of the project, followed by conditions imposed by chief wildlife warden while approving the project and recommendations made by NTCA. Based on the conditions imposed by CWLW and NTCA, the SC NBWL then gives its approval for diversion.

While this analysis is restricted to meetings held between January-June 2019, a perusal of the agenda notes of SC NBWL meeting dated 18.07.2019 shows that SC NBWL is considering six proposal for diversion within tiger habitats spread across 428.11 hectares. Out of these six proposals, three proposals are for upgradation of roads within core/critical tiger habitat of Melghat Tiger reserve (SC NBWL 2019c). This indicates that projects are not considered together or cumulatively, though their impact is most likely to be cumulative.

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T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpd Vs. Union of India, *Writ Petition (Civil) No 202 of 1995* (Supreme Court of India order dated 04.08.2006)

## END NOTES

- i. As far as diversion proposals within protected areas are concerned, the NBWL (in accordance with Section 5C of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972) has jurisdiction over National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves. However, as per “Guidelines on Taking up Non-Forestry Activities in Wildlife Habitats”, dated December 2012 released by Wildlife Division of MOEF&CC the Standing Committee of NBWL has jurisdiction of National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Conservation Reserves. There is no mention whether diversion proposals within Community Reserves can be considered by the SC NBWL or not.
- ii. Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) has been analysing the wildlife clearances granted by SC NBWL since 2018. As per LIFE’s analysis, the SC NBWL in the calendar year of 2018 approved for diversion of 39 projects spread over 409.75 hectares within protected areas (Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLS) and National Parks (NPs)) for purposes such as construction of railways, roads, mining and infrastructure. It further approved 18 projects spread over 2, 581.76 hectares within tiger habitats. The current paper builds on the analysis carried for the year 2018.
- iii. In order to protect the Olive Ridley Sea Turtles, every year, for a period of seven months (November 1-May 31), the forest department imposes a fishing ban along the 20 km radius from the Gahirmatha coast. This ban is enforced under the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1982 and Orissa Marine Fishing Rules, 1983 (Banerjee 2017).

**Cover:** Kanha Tiger Reserve

**Credit:** Ritwick Dutta



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