

Minutes / Summary records of the 21st Meeting of National Tiger Conservation Authority

Held on July 29, 2022

Chandrapur Forest Academy of Administration Development and Management, Maharashtra

The 21st Meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was held on 29th July, 2022 under the Chairmanship of Sh. Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Chairman NTCA and in the presence of Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Hon'ble Minister of State, Environment, Forest & Climate Change and Vice Chairman, NTCA at Chandrapur Forest Academy of Administration Development and Management, Chandrapur, Maharashtra.

The list of members/participants is at **Annexure-I**.

The meeting began with a round of introductions of NTCA members. Followed by Agenda wise discussions.

A) Agenda - 1: Updates on activities of NTCA.

The ADG (Project Tiger) & Member Secretary (NTCA) formally welcomed the participants and initiated the proceedings by updating the hon'ble chair with respect to the below-mentioned updates on activities of NTCA.

- The approval for the declaration of the Dibang Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh has been communicated to the State to take necessary action for the notification.
- An eco-tourism workshop was held on 18th July, 2022 at New Delhi wherein Field Director(s) from various Tiger Reserves participated.
- Salient inputs and recommendations of the workshop are detailed below:
 - No new areas to be opened up for tourism in core area and tourism infrastructure from the Core area to be phased out in a time bound manner. The concerned Tiger Reserves would submit a timeline in this regard.
 - Tourism to be restricted as per the carrying capacity given in the Tiger Conservation Plan.
 - Considering the adverse impact of lighting & noise on wild animals during night time, no night safari should be allowed in Tiger Reserves. However, night safari may be allowed in forest areas outside Tiger Reserves as per the extant rules.

- As per the NTCA ecotourism guidelines, it was reiterated that night stay from core area of tiger reserves must be phased out.
- No new permanent tourist facilities in core areas of tiger reserves should be allowed.
- Emphasis to be given on diversification of tourism activities in Tiger Reserves like floral diversity, biodiversity, wetlands, birding, local craft and culture etc.
- No new roads are to be constructed inside Tiger Reserves for the purpose of tourism.
- Owing to a period of rejuvenation for flora & fauna and poor condition of forest roads besides safety of tourists, no tourism is to be undertaken in Tiger Reserves during the monsoon season for a minimum period of three months. This period may be decided by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State in consultation with the Field Director.
- Exploring the use/feasibility of Electric vehicles for tourism purpose in Tiger Reserves having flat land.
- Tiger Reserves should be 100% free of single use plastic. Field Directors should submit a compliance report within 30 days. This would also be evaluated during the independent Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Tiger Reserves.
- To facilitate real time monitoring of the tourist vehicles, tagging by GPS of the vehicles on the lines of 'Baghira' mobile based application being used in Madhya Pradesh.
- Efforts for skill up gradation pertaining to livelihood opportunities through ecotourism initiative in Tiger Reserves need more impetus.
- To generate awareness, every Tiger Reserve should establish an interpretation center of good quality while also showcasing local culture and craft.

B) Agenda – 2: Inputs/updates from NTCA Members

(i) Visit to Tiger Reserves:

(a) Shri P. R. Sinha (Visit to Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar)

The following points were observed:

- Numerous field positions are lying vacant leading to managerial issues.
- Insufficient funds led to a setback in the habitat improvement program.
- Delay in crediting wages to frontline workers is a primary concern.
- No village relocation has been done so far.
- Glitches in the M-STrIPES application are communicated to WII and those need to be sorted out.

- Old vehicles and mobile sets for patrolling need replacement.
- Engaging about 550 local youths in ecotourism through SHGs or as trackers is a commendable initiative in VTR.
- Contribution of local youths in satisfactorily managing ecotourism facilities is appreciable.
- Corridor management plan and funding support is required.

(b) Shri B. K. Patnaik, Member NTCA (Visit to Satkosia Tiger Reserve, Odisha)

The following points were observed:

- The entire area of the Tiger Reserve (core & buffer) lies within the Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Delimitation of the 140 villages inside the tiger reserve has been done successfully however, functionally; they exert the same pressure as before.
- Construction of roads by the PWD department for these villages to commute further adds to the disturbances.
- Voluntary village relocation from core is a priority followed by habitat development and prey recovery measures.
- Generating alternative livelihoods for relocated villages should be emphasized.
- Several reasons led to the failure of reintroduction of tigers in 2017.
- The Field Director is also the Regional CCF, who has multiple territorial charges thus is unable to dedicate exclusive time and concentration to the reserve.
- Approximately 65% of Forest Guards vacancies are lying vacant thereby creating several managerial issues.
- Local Advisory Committee (LAC) needs to be constituted as per guidelines of the NTCA.
- Ecotourism work on the Mahanadi river bank is appreciable however, improved sewage management is required to avoid water contamination.
- Acquaintance of a patrolling team leader with M-STriPES and progress in reporting the intensity of monthly patrolling is creditable.

(c) Shri S.S. Srivastava, Member NTCA (Visit to Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh):

The following points were observed:

- The area is an ideal habitat for Tigers and Elephants. Katarniaghat area is highly disturbed. Relocation of Bharatpur and Chaltua villages needs support and funding from the state and central government.

- Shortage of field staff in the park is observed wherein 48% of the posts are vacant.
- Insufficient funds/and delayed release are causing managerial issues.
- Lack of funds and its delayed release leads to delay in crediting wages.
- Good work has been done related to encroachment eviction.
- Patrolling efforts of the area are commendable which can be seen through MSTRIPES monthly report.
- A directive/policy from the Central Government is required for mandatory support from district administration and police for encroachment and eviction.
- Decommissioning of the Nanpara to Mialani railway line is suggested.
- Activation of EDCs is much needed.
- Man-animal conflict drains out a lot of manpower and resources.

(d) Shri Anish Andheria, Member NTCA (Visit to Sahyadri Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra):

The following points were observed:

- Road network is underdeveloped and huge reservoirs in the center necessitates patrolling via waterways.
- There is a need for rationalization of oversized beats and filling of vacancies.
- Many of the villages have been relocated and only five villages are left to make this a complete inviolate area. Additional funds of about Rs. 10 crore will be required to relocate these remaining villages.
- Profusion of guns in and around villages in tiger reserves is a constant threat.
- To maintain the corridor integrity, Radhanagari, Tillari and other protected areas can be brought into tiger reserve management by extending administrative control or declaring them as new tiger reserves.
- The Park has also undertaken an interim MEE exercise. The report of the same was submitted to the Hon'ble Chair during the meeting.

(e) Shri Sunil Limaye, Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra (Visit to Satpura Tiger reserve, Madhya Pradesh):

The following points were observed:

- Applauded the high foot patrol intensity in Satpura Tiger reserve.
- Relocation of 49 villages from core and buffer areas need major funding support from the government
- Policy and funding support for village relocation in the buffer area by the central government is to be explored.

- It is necessary to treat the proposals of relocation of villages from tiger reserves as a "Strategic Project" and the decision to allow diversion of such lands be delegated to appropriate authorities so as to expedite the entire procedure considering the socio-dynamics.
- The village wise condition of "the extent of land de-reserved/ denotified for resettlement shall not be more than the extent vacated by the settlers in the core area" needs to be reconsidered not only at cumulative area statistics at the state level but considering overall zone of influence of anthropogenic pressure exerted by the village to be relocated.
- Vacancy positions need to be addressed on priority.
- The villages present in the buffer areas are also keen on being relocated outside.

(f) Dr. S. P. Yadav, ADG (PT) & MS (NTCA), (Visit to Rajaji Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand):

The following points were observed:

- Many drainage points from the city of Dehradun open into the reserves which along with waste bring in loads of plastic garbage into the Park.
- The Park is facing an acute shortage of field staff as many of the vacancies are lying vacant.
- The Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) of the Tiger Reserve has not yet been submitted for approval.
- The creation of the Tiger Conservation Fund (TCF) is yet to be done.
- Western zone of the tiger reserve further needs augmentation of tiger population which needs to be followed up.
- The Park may explore funding from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from the industrial estate around the Tiger Reserve.

C) Agenda -4: Proposed by Sh. P.R. Sinha, Member NTCA

(i) Exploring the scope of works for the scientific cell proposed at 20th Meeting of NTCA:

- It was felt that reviewing existing literature is to be done and encouraged which shall give a boost to systemic and scientific ways of working.

(ii) Management Plan for Eco-Sensitive Zone:

- Zonal plans for Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ) are to be prepared on priority with the emphasis of solving the issues of ESZ areas.
- A few Tiger Reserves can take up for formulation of such zonal plans on a pilot basis.

D) Agenda - 5: Proposed by Sh. S.S. Srivastava, Member NTCA

Discussion regarding documentation of research work done in respective Tiger Reserves for each financial year in order to promote systematic management of Tiger Reserves:

- Highlighted the pressure of research work in the Tiger Reserves.
- Need to focus on management input oriented research that is being done in various tiger reserves along with creation of a database which shall comprise all research work done in Tiger Reserves of India.

E) Agenda - 6: Proposed by Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam (Member, NTCA)

Since the Chief Wildlife Warden Assam was not present in the meeting, the discussion on the Agenda was deferred.

F) Additional Agenda:

(i) Compliance of Forest Rights Act, 2006, before declaring new areas under Critical Wildlife Habitat, if any, by the Competent Authority:

The ADG (PT) & MS (NTCA) stated that the compliance of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 shall be ensured.

(ii) Amendment in Agenda Point 7 / Decision of 20th meeting of NTCA (Approval of Annual Report and Budget / Expenditure schedules for 2021-22):

Decision: The amendment was approved by the Authority.

Followed by the discussion, ADG (Project Tiger) & Member Secretary (NTCA) requested for observation and comments from the Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change/Chairman NTCA and Hon'ble Minister of State, Environment, Forest and Climate Change/ Vice Chairman NTCA.

(1) The Hon'ble Minister of State, Environment, Forest and Climate Change/ Vice Chairman NTCA made the following observations and comments:

- (a) The NTCA Members were praised for their visits to various Tiger Reserves.
- (b) The importance of involving local communities into management was highlighted.

- (c) An update on the view of incorporating rivers into the Tiger Reserve was sought.
- (d) Option of affordable ecotourism in tiger reserves for economically backward and adjoining area people and students was asked to be kept open.
- (e) Emphasis was laid on involving students into conservation works bringing them closer to nature and to increase the belongingness of the forest by the communities.
- (f) The importance of digitized communication was highlighted.
- (g) Providing a platform for marketing of bamboo and other crafts by local communities was discussed.
- (h) Single online resource center for all research works and important documents pertaining to tiger reserves was proposed.

(2) The Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change/Chairman NTCA made the following observations and decisions:

- (a) It was informed that the appointment of Hon'ble MPs has been done and the Hon'ble Members shall be present from the next meeting onward.
- (b) With respect to the earlier directions it was reiterated that the information from the 52 Tiger Reserves were to be received in a standard format and should include important aspects such as the year of formation, status of water availability, the area buffer and core, information regarding ESZ, biodiversity, tiger population, village relocation, etc. In this context, one application can be developed (App based).
- (c) As directed in the 20th Meeting of NTCA held at Pakke Tiger on 9th April, 2022, the constitution of a Technical Unit which shall document the research done at various Tiger Reserves and those that are currently ongoing and placed the resource center proposed, should be initiated at the earliest.
- (d) A workshop should be conducted with institutions like Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Indian Council of Forestry Research and

Education (ICFRE), Forest Research Institute (FRI), Forest Survey of India (FSI) that can give support to the NTCA in its work.

- (e) A meeting of the HMEFCC to be convened with Chief Ministers of States having four or more than four Tiger Reserves. The participants of the meeting shall include the Chief Wildlife Warden, NTCA officials and the concerned Hon'ble MP.
- (g) The Hon'ble MoS, MoEF&CC to convene meetings with Chief Ministers of the following States viz:
Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar and Jharkhand pertaining to issues of Tiger Reserves of the aforementioned States.
- (h) Discussion within the Parliamentary Consultative Committee and Expert Members with respect to the issue of Satkosia and Valmiki Tiger Reserve.
- (i) Explore the possibility of procuring Gypsy vehicles exclusively for Tiger reserves.
- (j) Creation of Tiger Reserve specific whatsapp group with the following members for all Tiger reserves: MLAs, MPs, Zila Pramukh, DFOs/FD/DD, SPs & DMs.
- (k) Exploring new ways to connect people to conservation such as
 - Exploring mechanisms to bring villages situated in the ESZ into the purview of the green credit system, ADG Wildlife to prepare and submit a paper on Green credits.
 - Emphasis on agroforestry, natural and organic farming, AYUSH, biodiversity registers, etc.
 - Promoting local traditional knowledge/native wisdom.

Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Chairman NTCA, expressed satisfaction over the efforts of NTCA

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair and participants.

List of Participants in the meeting:

S.No.	Name/Designation and Address
1	The Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
2	The Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change
3	Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (virtual mode)
4	Director General of Forests & Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (virtual mode)
5	Shri B.K. Patnaik, IFS, Retd. PCCF & CWLW, Uttar Pradesh
6	Shri S.S. Srivastava, IFS, Retd. PCCF & HoFF, Odisha
7	Shri P.R. Sinha, Former Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun,
8	Shri Anish Andheria (Ph.D.), Wildlife Conservation Trust
9	Sh. Khageswar Nayak, Retd. Field Director, Kanha Tiger Reserve
10	Sh. Lalit Verma, Chief Conservator of Forest, representing Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttar Pradesh
11	Chief Wildlife Warden, Jharkhand
12	Chief Wildlife Warden, Rajasthan
13	Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra
14	Dr. S.P. Yadav, ADG (Project Tiger) MS (NTCA)
15	Dr. Amit Mallick, IGF (NTCA), New Delhi
16	Sh. W. Longwah, IGF (NTCA), Guwahati
17	Ms Harini V., AIG (NTCA), Regional Office, Bangalore
18	Sh. Md. Sajid Sultan, AIG (NTCA), New Delhi