

Wildlife Conservation Strategy 2002

Wildlife and forests shall be declared priority sector at the national level for which funds should be earmarked.

Law enforcement agencies must ensure that those engaged in poaching illicit trade in wildlife and wildlife products, destruction of their habitat, and such other illegal activities are given quick and deterrent punishment.

We should fully tap the potential in wildlife tourism and at the same time take care that it does not have adverse impact in wildlife and protected areas. The revenue earned from increased tourism should be used entirely to augment available resources for conservation.

Protecting interests of the poor and tribals living around protected areas should be handled with sensitivity and with maximum participation of the affected people. They should have access to the minor forest produce, in the forest outside of national parks and sanctuaries. Employment and means generation for these people is crucial for maintaining symbiosis between the forests, wildlife and the people. People should be encouraged to take up afforestation and conservation in new areas.

While strengthening protective measures against traditional threats to wildlife, we should also respond to newer threats such as toxic chemicals and pesticides.

There should be greater government organizations engaged in wildlife conservation. Mainstream media to better highlight their activities as also successes of governmental initiatives that have worked.

Creatively produced Television Programmes on wildlife and ecology are widely appreciated by young and old as seen from the popularity of dedicated T.V. channels like, Discovery, National Geographic and Animal Planet. It is proposed that Prasar Bharati and our private channels along with agencies like WWF for Nature should collaborate and increase original Indian content in different languages on our television.

No diversion of forestland for non-forest purposes from critical and ecologically fragile habitat shall be allowed.

Lands falling within 10km. Of the boundaries of National parks and Sanctuaries should be notified as eco-fragile zones under section 3(v) of the Environment (protection) Act and Rule 5Sub-rule 5(viii)& (x) of the Environment (Protection) Rules.

Removal of encroachments and illegal activities from within forest lands and protected Areas.

No commercial mono-culture to replace natural forests.

The settlement of rights in national parks and Sanctuaries should not be used to exclude or reduce the areas that are crucial and integral part of the wildlife habitat.

More than 2000 vacant posts in the frontline staff of Protected Areas shall be filled immediately and provided basic infrastructure for efficient discharge of duties. Ban on recruitment of staff against vacant post should be lifted on lines with the Police Department. Innovative initiative such as redeployment of surplus employees in other departments, hiring local people on voluntary or honorarium basis, raising donations from business houses and other members of the public in return for a greater role for them in implementing programmes need to be explored.

Forest officers trained in wildlife management should manage every protected area. Mitigation measures for human-animal conflict and mechanism for crop insurance as also expeditious disbursements of ex-gratia payments, should be instituted by States.

Forest Commission should be set-up to look into restructuring, reform and strengthening the entire forest set up and affiliated institutions in the country.

A working group shall be constituted to monitor implementation of Wildlife action plan.

Most importantly let us resolve that we should end the relative neglect of wildlife conservation in recent years. To begin with Board should meet more often. Wildlife conservation is too important a task to be treated lightly or ritualistically.