

Draft National Forest Policy 2018

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The Ministry of Environment released the draft National Forest Policy in the year 2018. The basic thrust of the draft Policy is for conservation, protection, and management of forests along with addressing other issues associated with forest and forest management.

Key features of the policy

- The policy proposes to **restrict schemes and projects which interfere with forests that cover steep slopes, catchments of rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, geologically unstable terrain and such other ecologically sensitive areas**
- The draft policy suggests that the ecologically sensitive catchment areas shall be stabilized with suitable soil and water conservation measures, and also by planting suitable trees and grass-like bamboo
- It also suggests setting up of **two national-level bodies—National Community Forest Management Mission(CFM) and National Board of Forestry (NBF)—for better management of the country's forests.**
- The draft mentions that NBF needs to be headed by the central minister in charge of forests.
- The draft policy calls for state boards of forestry headed by state ministers in charge of forests to be established for ensuring inter-sectoral convergence, simplification of procedures, conflict resolution, among other things.
- **Public-Private Participation:** The Draft policy stated that Public-private participation models will be

developed for undertaking afforestation and reforestation activities in degraded forest areas and forest areas available with forest development corporations and outside forests

- **Harmonization of policies and Laws:** The new draft also says efforts will be made to achieve harmonization between policies and laws like the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006
- As far as community forest resources management under Forest Rights Act is concerned, the new policy will address the same under participatory forest management and the same will be addressed through the proposed community forest management mission the draft said
- It also suggested for the **strengthening of the participatory forest management approach for which a National Community Forest Management (CFM) Mission** will be launched.
- On the issue of finances required for management of forests, the draft stated that the compensatory afforestation fund which is being transferred to the states would be a major source of funds for taking up afforestation and rehabilitation works in degraded forest areas as well as for bringing new areas under forest and tree cover.
- **The objective of the proposed policy is to safeguard the ecological and livelihood security of people, of present and future generations, based on sustainable management of the forests for the flow of ecosystem services.**
- The Policy continues with the **target of having 33% of India's geographical area** under forest and tree cover and in the hills and mountainous regions, the aim will be to maintain two-thirds of the area under forest and tree cover.
- The policy also calls for **“promotion of trees outside forests and urban greens”**, while stating that it will be taken up in “mission mode”.
- With respect to forest fires, it states that adequate

measures would be taken to safeguard ecosystems from forest fires, map the vulnerable areas and develop and strengthen early warning systems and methods to control fire, based on remote sensing technology and community participation.

- It emphasized on **integrating climate change concerns into forest management** while noting that forests acts as a natural sink of carbon dioxide thereby assisting in climate change mitigation.
- The policy also stressed that wildlife-rich areas and corridors outside protected areas would be identified and maintained for ensuring ecological and genetic continuity.
- **Human-Wildlife Conflict:** To tackle rising human-wildlife conflict, the draft outlined short-term and long-term actions. It mentions that quick response, dedicated teams of well equipped and trained personnel, mobility, strong interface with health and veterinary services, rescue centres, objective and speedy assessment of damage and quick payment of relief to the victims would be at the core of the short-term action. **Monitoring and management of the population of wildlife would be adopted on a long-term basis within and outside forests for maintaining the balance.**