

Review Yettinahole project again: Forums

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MANGALORE: More than 14 individuals and organizations, have written to the Union environment minister, secretary and joint secretary, ministry of environment and forest (MoEF) and director, impact assessment, River Valley Projects division, MoEF, to reverse their earlier decision and review the Yettinahole diversion scheme entirely.

The project was planned by the Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Limited (KNNL) purportedly as a drinking water supply scheme to supply 24 tmcft water to Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts. The scheme involves eight dams in Western Ghat forests, 250 km long canals, 80 and 50 km long raising mains and a reservoir that will submerge 1,200 hectares of land and two villages and will require a 370 MW of electricity to pump the water.

Conservationists Niren Jain from Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation, Parineeta Dandekar of South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP) and Himanshu Thakkar, stated that following misleading claims by KNNL, the project has escaped environmental impact assessment (EIA), environmental management plan, public hearing and environment clearance and environmental monitoring.

It had a short appraisal by the expert appraisal committee (EAC) of the MoEF on river valley projects, which wrongly concluded that it is a drinking water scheme.

The EAC had expressed inability of appraising this scheme since as per the current EIA notification of September 2006, drinking water schemes do not require appraisal. The signatories include Ullas Karanth, director, Centre for Wildlife Studies, Praveen Bhargav from Wildlife First, TV Ramchandra from IISc and Vishwanath Srikataiah, rainwater harvesting expert, amongst others. While the signatories supported long term and sustainable solutions to legitimate drinking water demands of drought-affected regions in Karnataka, they said, Yettinahole project does not seem to be an answer for that.

They said that the project will be disastrous for the last remaining biodiversity rich forests of Western Ghats and in any case it is not the most optimum or the least cost solution for the water problem of Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts. The project documents reveal that less than a tenth of the water to be transferred from Nethravathi basin is meant for these drought prone areas even on paper. In reality, it is seriously doubtful if any water will reach these areas, they said.