



Government of Karnataka
Western Ghats Task Force and Dept. of Forest

Progress Report and Recommendations

Submitted to the Government of Karnataka

by

Western Ghats Task Force



Chairman

Western Ghats Task Force
307/ Vidhanasoudha
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Contents

- 1. Forward**
- 2. The Achievements.**
- 3. List of Major Programmes & Projects**
- 4. The Glossary.**
- 5. The Recommendations**

1. Forward



Western Ghats Task Force was formed by govt. of Karnataka in September 2008 with the mandate of framing & executing innovative policies for ensuring the conservation of *Western Ghats* region in particular & the natural resources of Karnataka in general. It has been since then working according to the original objectives. We have submitted the progress reports in the previous years for 2008-09 and 2009-10. I am now presenting the progress report for 2010-11.

We have tried our best in developing novel schemes & programmes committed for the cause of conservation and sustainable development in *Western Ghats* region. It has also put efforts in ensuring effective implementation of conservation related programmes in the *Western Ghats* region through Dept. Forest & Environment. ***Western Ghats Task Force***, as an advisory body, has also been trying to develop participatory conservation programmes so that all the stakeholders, especially the local villagers take active part in the conservation of forest & environment.

The mode of the functioning of the *Western Ghats* Task Force is of multiple folds. They include:

- Organizing full fledged meetings of the Task Force every month to discuss the various aspects and resolve on the works to be done in the future.
- Organization of consultative meetings with the Govt. and higher officials of Dept. of Forest by the Chairman of Western Ghats to carry forward the resolutions made in the meetings of WGTF.
- Helping the dept. to frame different conservation related programmes.

- Commissioning expert studies, field visits and evaluation of different situations & programmes.
- Organization of workshops & seminars at various level to take the expert opinions of all the stakeholders like scientists, officers, farmers, non-governmental organizations, tribal, rural institutions, women and so on.
- Submission of recommendations of both long term policies & short-term actions periodically.
- Collaborating with the government & non-governmental organizations for implementing the programmes which align with the with Task Force recommendations.

Thus, Western Ghat Task Force has been striving hard to achieve the conservation of the Western Ghats region in Karnataka. The major achievements made during 2010-11 are briefly summarized here in the subsequent pages. A few major recommendations made are also enclosed here. **I appeal the govt. to accept those recommendations and do the needful lo on priority.**

I take this opportunity to thank previous Chief Minister **Sri B. S. Yeddyurappa**, present Chief Minister **Sri D.V. Sadananda Gowda**, former Forest Minister and present Forest Minister **Sri C.P Yogeshwara** for their continuous support and advice for making all these activities possible. I also thank the Principle Secretary of Dept. of Forest & Environment, PCCF, Officers & staff of the Dept. of Forest, Officers & staff of CM office. I also thank the honorable members of the Task Force and my office staff for having extended all their support in realizing all the activities of WGTF.

29 February 2012
Ashisar
Bangalore

Anant Hegde
Chairman
W.G.T.F.

2. The Achievements

The majestic *Sahyadri* range, spread all along the west coast of Karnataka is the part of great *Western Ghats* of India. The forests & mountains here harbor diverse and unique forms of plants, animals & other of living organisms. Many perennial rivers that take birth here have become the lifeline of the entire south India. The people of various cultural background living here represents enormous repository of traditional wisdom, values, knowledge, skills and practices. Therefore *Sahyadri* range has been the epitome of keystone of environment & livelihood security for entire south India.

However, the health of this life-scape is deteriorating rapidly in recent times. The reasons could be many: the increasing population & its demand for natural resources, deforestation & forest fragmentation, unscientific & unsustainable harvest of natural resources, mega developmental projects etc. This has lead to irreversible damage to this fragile ecosystem and thereby endangering very life here. Having recognized the magnitude of this problem, govt. of Karnataka thought to bring in effective policies & programmes for arresting this trend. As the outcome of such effort, it established *Western Ghats Task Force* in 2008, as a high level advisory body. Since then it is engaged such objective driven programmes, based upon scientific principles and participatory approach. The glimpses of those achievements are given here.

1. **Western Ghat's region identification:** The scope of *Western Ghats* in terms of exact geographical area in Karnataka has now been recognized in terms of revenue Hobli-wise maps.
2. **Karavali Hasiru Kavacha:** This is nothing but the Coastal **Green Wall Project**, launched in order to prevent sea erosion and mitigate the coastal ecosystem degradation. This ecosystem restoration based scheme is first of its kind in the country. It is being implemented by the dept of forest in all four coastal forest divisions, namely: Mangalore, Kundapura, Honnavara & Karwar.
3. **Medicinal Plant Conservation:** Ten new Medicinal Plant Conservation Area (MPCAs) are identified and three such area are already launched by the

department. Support is also given to the dept. in taking up the in *-situ & ex-situ* conservation programmes more effectively. Awareness building programs & training workshops for the staff are also organized.

4. **River Valley Protection Program:** Awareness building programme on integrated river valley protection is launched in all the river valley systems of Western Ghats of Karnataka. It basically involves the protection of river basin, stopping the encroachment & erosion, putting a land use policy in place by local administration, formation of Village Forest Committees (VFCs) in all valley regions etc.
5. **Vriksharopana Abhiyana:** Mass planting programmes were organized in June to October period in the public places in association with local educational institutions & non-governmental organizations. More than 50 massive programmes were organized and nearly one crore saplings were planted as part of school garden, temple gardens, Village Forest Committees (VFCs) plantations etc.
6. As per one of the initial recommendations of the *Western Ghats* Task Force, the government has not sanctioned or permitted any new mining project in *Western Ghats* region of Karnataka from June 2008.
7. The process of identifying & declaring the '**Natural Heritage Sites**' is now completed by Karnataka Biodiversity Board (KBB) in **Ambaragudda** (Shimogga Dist.), & **Hogrekanagiri**, (Chikmagalur Dist.) as per the provisions of Biodiversity (conservation) Act, 2002.
8. W.G. T. F .has taken initiative in identifying **Shalmala River** (Uttara Kannda dist.) and **Hireakal Gudda** (Arasikere) as '**Community Reserve**' through Wildlife board of Karnataka and protect them involving people through Village Forest Committees (VFCs).
9. W.G. T. F .has taken initiative in identifying a few more eco-sensitive habitats area of Western Ghats are protected under '**Conservation Reserve**' mode under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, without disturbing the bona-fide rights of local communities. Recently declared **Conservation Reserve** are: **Aghanahshini Valley** (for **Lion Tailed Macaques** in Uttara Kanada), **Bedthl Valley** & **Dandeli forest region** (for **Hornbill** species in Uttara Kannada) and

Basur Amrutha Mahal Kaval (Chikamagalur dist.) for their wide range of wildlife including traditional cattle breeds.

10. Major support is given either to establish the new botanical gardens or rejuvenating the existing ones in ten places. (Dharwad, Sagara, Sakrebail, Sonda, Yellapura etc.).
11. Environment education is being considered as one of the major long term strategy to bring in conservation principles in main stream development debate. In this connection, the Hon. Chairman of Task Force has visited Universities of Mangalore, Dharwad, Kuvempu, Tumakur, Bangalore, Gulbarga universities to have a detailed interaction and apprise them on the need of taking up direct field action.
12. A special follow- up awareness building programme was undertaken to protect the coastal zone with CRZ principles by involving local people & organizations in Udupi, Mangalore, Kundapura, Honnavara , Bhatakai.
13. More than twenty six seminars, workshops and conferences were organized inviting experts and scientists from different fields for suggesting policy inputs in the area like wildlife protection, environment laws, sustainable development strategies, medicinal plant conservation & promotion, eco-tourism, eco-sensitive area, Sacred Grove conservation, coastal zone management, tribal welfare through forest conservation and so on. Recommendations are being made out of such exercise.
14. A major state level conference was organized in Jog Falls on framing the policies of programems for *in-situ* conservation & *ex-situ* conservation of medicinal plants in Karnataka. As the outcome of this, WGTF has made a detailed recommendations to govt. on medicinal plants conservation & development.
15. A state level conference was organized in Sagara on the Sustainable Development of 'Malenadu' region of Karnataka. Based on the deliberations & feedback from the experts of various backgrounds, a detailed memorandum is submitted to the Chief Minister of Karnataka.
16. Efforts are made to promote the use of alternate energy source by organizing workshops in Sirsi, Shimoga & Bangalore. Support has been extended to establish small solar power for tribal villages in Uttara Kannada.

17. Utmost emphasis is being given to form and strengthen the **Village Forest Committees (VFC)** though out the state so that they become the prime vehicles of delivering conservation programs through real participatory approach. Two state level conferences are organized .District level VFC conferences are organized in all the districts of Western Ghats region.
18. *Western Ghats* Task Force has made efforts to reach out to the large communities through organizing interaction workshops in Shimogga, Tumkaur, Thirthalli, Sagara, Hosanagara, Bhadravati, Chikmagalur, Balehonnur, Karwar, Hubli, Yelahanka, Ankola, Bhatkal, Dandei, Yellapura, Sirsi, Gokarna, Halayal, Khanapura, Belgaum, Kundapura, Kollur, Mulki, Mangalore, Puttur, Sullya, Hasana, Madikeri, Mysore, Chamarajnar etc.
19. WGTF tried to galvanize the public and expert opinions on Genetically Modified crops like Bt Brinjal, by consulting farmers & experts and recommended the govt. a detailed report. It has also suggested for taking up further in-depth and wide field studies to asses it's ecological & socio-economic feasibility before giving the final permission for commercialization.
20. The Hon. Chairman of the Task Force has been actively engaged in enhancing the efficiency of govt. conservation programmes with more participation of public. Keeping that objective, Chairman has organized more than 80 consultations and review meetings at district & taluk levels in last year. These meetings and subsequent follow-up actions helped to identity the region specific problems along with policy lacunas for further deliberations.
21. Carrying capacity study of the most forested district of Karnataka – *Uttara Kannada*, has been taken up through Karnataka Biodiversity Board and Centre for Ecological Science (CES), Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.
22. Efforts are initiated to rejuvenate the existing 13 Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas (MPCA) in *Western Ghats* and Plain region though seeking further budgetary support and offering rejuvenation plan. Work is initiated for identifying ten more new Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas (MPCA) and three new MPCAs are already launched in Kanakumbi (Belgaum), Bedasagaum (Mundgod) and Adukatta (Sidapura) .
23. The efforts to develop Gajanoor as a major eco-tourism centre by taking up integrated protection and development works involving dam, backwater,

elephant camp, Ashvinivana botanical garden, Shettihalli sanctuary, the bird sanctuary etc. All infrastructures are being further strengthened this year by allocating special grant and paying attention, with active participation of Dept. of Forest & District Administration.

24. The work on documenting the native paddy varieties in Varada river basin in Uttara Kannada and Shimogga district is going on by involving Biodiversity Board and the Dept of Agriculture.
25. Awareness building programmes are widely taken up on the impact of plastic pollution and reduce the use of polythene bags having color and thickness lesser than 20 microns.
26. Elephant protection and management strategies are being evolved by wide consultation with all stakeholders in order to reduce their conflict with the rural people. Consultation meetings are organized in Yellapura, Halayal, Madikeri & Hasana regarding this.
27. More than twenty individuals and organizations who are actively involved in environment protection are recognized & facilitated by govt. at various occasions like 'World Environment Day', during inauguration of 'Vriksharopana Abhiyana' etc.
28. Policy advisory efforts are done in order to make govt. to take decision on taking more field staff and enhancing the compensation amount meant for the life & crop loss caused by wild animals in rural area.
29. Special consultation meetings cum awareness building were organized on Forest Conservation & Tribal Development in Chipageri, Halyal, Hebri, Agumbe, Neriya etc. Efforts were made to appraise them on different tribal communities on the various supporting schemes available for them and also on the modes of making them part of conservation efforts.
30. 'Jackfruit festivals', 'Pickle Mango Festivals' & 'Horticulture product festivals' were organized in association with dept. of forest and the NGOs in Sirsi, Sagara & Shimogga. Efforts were made here to provide scientific information on the crop identification, documentation, conservation, establishing nursery, agro-forestry, sustainable harvesting, marketing, value addition etc. The exhibitions of the agri-products were also organized as part of this. This has emerged as

very successful effort of promoting conservation of agro-biodiversity & its promotion among the farmers.

- 31.** Many research programmes are launched. Some of the important ones are 'KAAN FORESTS OF SHIMOGA', 'AMRUTH MAHAL KAVALS', 'DEVARA KAADUS', ' MEDICINAL PLANT GARDENS', 'SHALMALA RIPARIAN ZONE' etc. A Jackfruit germplasm conservation area is also launched as the outcome of this effort.
- 32.** Efforts are made to solve by engaging with the various concerned govt. departments on the problems caused by environment degradation like river pollution in Dandeli, Bhadravati, pond embankment breakage in Yellapura, health problems in the fishermen colonies of Bhatkla , sewage problems in Karwar, landslides in Karwar, Honnavara, Belthangady etc.
- 33.** Efforts are made to rejuvenate the govt. schemes on road side plantations, school gardens, social forestry programmes, farm forestry etc.
- 34.** The WGTF has submitted a detailed report to govt. seeking a policy on land use in the state so that all the conservation & development projects are taken up on scientific and sustainable manner.
- 35.** Several awareness building programmes are organized and research reports & books are republished.

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3. List of Major Programmes & Projects

I. Policy Advocacy

1. Addressing & tried to resolve the sustainable harvest of NTFP & their auction guidelines.
2. Addressing & tried to conserve the *Deverakadu* in Uttar Kannada & Kan forest in Shimogga
3. Launch of '*Nadimoola Samrkashana Abhiyana*'
4. Consolidation of '*Karavali Hasiru Kavacha*' programme.
5. Consolidation of '*Vriksharopana Abhiyana*'
6. Efforts to empower the Biodiversity Board, Medicinal Plant Authority & Wildlife Board for effective programme planning, implementation & enforcement .
7. Efforts to develop a policy for sustainable eco-tourism.
8. Programmes for protection of *Mysisitca* swamps I nUttara Kannada district.
9. Efforts to frame & implement programmes for taking up road side plantation in urban areas.
10. Effort to strengthen the Village Forest Committee (VFC) concept and its empowerment.
11. Efforts to develop a policy for sustainable harvest & management of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP)
12. Launched the programme of '*Bayalu Seeme Hasirikarna Yojane*'.
13. Launched the programme of 'Range Level Consultation Meetings' for getting the feedback of all the stakeholders in the field for faming the participatory conservation programmes.
14. Launched the programme for long term conservation of 'Devrakadu' (sacred Groves)

II. Specific Tasks

1. Declaration of new 'Sanctuaries', 'Conservation Reserve' & 'Community Reserve'.
2. Promotion of People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) studies in selected villages of all Forest Divisions of Western Ghats region.

3. Consultation with Dr. *Madhava Gadgil* of WGEP
4. Organization of '**Jackfruit Festival**' & '**Tender Mango Varieties Festival**' in Sirsi & '**Horticulture Festival**' in Sagara.
5. Establishment of new Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas (MPCA) in Bedasagaum (Mundgod- U.K.Dist.), Kanakumbi (Khanapura-Belgaum Dist.) & prevention of illegal transport of medicinal plants.
6. Promotion of medicinal plant cultivation through VFCs & NGOs.
7. Promotion of medicinal plant gardens through VFCs, educational institutions & NGOs.
8. Organization of workshops & trainings on Honey Bee protection in Sirsi, Sagara & Yellpura.
9. Participation in the awareness building campaigns & consultation meetings on conservation of local Brinjal varieties in Dharwad & Bangalore.
10. Studies & survey are initiated to come out with an action plan for protection of INAM land Forest in Dharwad, Haveri & Belgaum districts.
11. A special Jackfruit Germplasm conservation research project is launched through the research wing of Dept. of Forest in Sirsi.
12. Efforts are done to make the thermal power plant campus in Shakti Nagara of Raichur by actively engaging with Karnataka Power Corporation (KPC)
13. Efforts are done to reducing the pollution level in the Kali river in Dandeli due to polluting industries based there by actively engaging with Karnataka State pollution Control Board (KSPCB) and Dept of Environment.
14. Efforts are done to address the pollution caused by prospective Uranium mining in Gogi village of Yadgir district by actively engaging with Karnataka State pollution Control Board (KSPCB), Yadgir District Administration and Dept of Environment.
15. Efforts are done to address the pollution caused by industries related to bone powdering & Sponge Iron in *Londa* by actively engaging with Karnataka State pollution Control Board (KSPCB), Belgaum District Administration and Dept of Environment.
16. Efforts are done to address the land degradation issue in the forest land leased to Mysore Paper Mills (MPM, Bhadravati, by actively engaging with local people, Dept. of Forest, MPM authorities & Shimoga District Administration.

17. Efforts are done to address the large scale land degradation & encroachment of forest issue in and around Ayanoor forest range in Shimoga district through spot visits, consultation & action plans by actively engaging with local people, Dept. of Forest & Shimoga District Administration.
18. Efforts are done to address the problems being faced by Dubare Elephant Camp in Kushalnagar in Kodagu district through spot visits, consultation & action plans by actively engaging with wildlife wing of Dept. of Forest.

III. Botanical Gardens / Vanas

Special programmes are designed with the help of experts to establish the **Botanical Gardens, Medicinal Plant Gardens, School Gardens & 'Pavitra Vana'** in the following locations:

1. Established a Botanical Garden in commemoration of 'Satyagraha Vana' in Mavinagundi, Siddapura, Uttara Kananda .
2. Efforts are done to initiate the establishment of a Botanical Garden *Tumari* , Sagara taluk of Shimoga district.
3. Supported the Botanical Garden in Sakrebail in Shimoga taluk of Shimoga district, for its rejuvenation & expansion.
4. Established a School Botanical Garden in association with Sri Shardamba Education & Rural Development Society in Bhairumbe in Sirsi taluk of Uttara Kananda district.
5. Established a big Botanical Garden called SASYALOKA in association with Sri Svarnavalli Maha Samsthanaum in Sonda in Sirsi taluk of Uttara Kananda district.
6. Supported the Medicinal Plant Botanical Garden in Puttur in Dakshina Kannada district, for its rejuvenation & expansion in collaboration with one Dr. Ravindra Aital, Putur
7. Efforts are done to initiate the establishment of a Botanical Garden *Varadalli*, Sagara taluk of Shimoga district.
8. A School Botanical Garden is being established in association with local educational institution in Heggodu in Sagara taluk of Shimoga district.

9. WGTF has taken active role in implementing a major Medicinal Plant Conservation Project undertaken by Dept. of Forest in Siddharabetta of Tumakur by providing technical support & execution guidance.
10. A Sacred Plat Garden (Pavitara Vana) is established in association with local temple management committee in Heroor in Siddapaura taluk of Uttara Kannada district.
11. A Sacred Plat Garden (Pavitara Vana) is established in association with local temple management committee in Hosagunda in Sagara taluk of Shimoga district.
12. A Sacred Plat Garden (Pavitara Vana) is established in commemoration of Shivapa Nayaka vana in association with local VFC Ikkeri village in Sagara taluk of Shimoga district.
13. A Sacred Plat Garden (Pavitara Vana) is established in association with local temple management committee in Goli village in Sirsi taluk of Uttara Kannada district.
14. A Sacred Plat Garden (Pavitara Vana) is established in association with local temple management committee in Shravanabelagola village in Hasana district.
15. Supported the Medicinal Plant Botanical Garden in the ARBORETUM of SDM College, Ujire, in Belthangdy taluk of Dakshina Kannada district, for its rejuvenation & expansion programme in collaboration with Dept. of Botany & Dept. of Medicinal Plant Biotechnology of SDM College, Ujire.
16. Medicinal & agro-forestry plant species nursery in Bhariumber in association with Hulgol Group Grmagala Co-Operative Society, Bhairumber, Sirsi, Uttara Kananda .

IV. Conferences organized

1. State level conference on the needs & means of medicinal plant conservation in Kargal, Joga.
2. State level Medicinal Plant Conservation Action Plan meeting in Yellapura, Uttara Kannada.

3. District level medicinal plant conservation training & awareness building programmes in Belgaum, Sagara, Chikmagalur, Mysore, Chamrajanagara & Mangalore.
4. State level conference on 'Sustainable Development of Malnad Regions' in Sagara, Shimoga district.
5. State level conference & exhibition on 'Horticulture Fair' (Phala Vriksha Mela) in Sagara, Shimoga district.
6. District level awareness building campaign on '**Conservation & Sustainable Utilization of *Betta* Forest Land**' in Bhairumbe, Nanikatta, Muregar, Vajagadde of Uttara Kananda district.
7. State level '**Village Forest Committees (VFC) Conference**' in Sirsi, Uttara Kannada.
8. State level workshop on '**Grafting Techniques**' in Sirsi in collaboration with Kadamaba Cooperative Society, Sirsi.
9. State level conference cum exhibition on '**Jackfruit germplasm conservation, development & promotion of Jackfruit products**' in Sirsi in collaboration with Kadamba Cooperative Society, Sirsi.
10. State level conference cum exhibition on '**Wild Pickle Mango Germplasm Conservation, Development & Promotion of Wild Mango Products**' in Sirsi in collaboration with Forestry College, Sirsi.
11. State level conference on '**Aranya Saahitya (Literature on Forest)**' in Sirsi in collaboration with Journalists Guild & District Saahitya Parishat.
12. State level '**Media Workshop for Budding Journalists on Conservation Issues**' at Varadamoola, Sagara , in collaboration with Jana Vigyana Parishat, Varadamoola, Sagara, Shimoga. .
13. State level '**Biodiversity Fair**' in Sonda, Sirsi, in collaboration with the 'Sasyaloka' Project of Swranavalli Mahasamsthanum , Sonda, Sirsi, Uttara Kannada .
14. District level consultation meeting on '**The Status of School Gardens in the District and Their Rejuvenation & Expansion**' in Yedalli, Sirsi in association with Sahaydri Parisara Vardhini, Yedalli, Sirsi.
15. Launch of '**Range Level Consultation Meetings on the Forest Conservation & Development**' at Thirthahalli, Shimoga.

16. State level '**Media Symposium on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development for Working Journalists**' at Muttodi, Chikmagalur, in collaboration with *Sahaydri Parisara Samrakshana Pratisthana*, Balehonnur, Chikmagalur.
17. District level consultation workshop on '**Establishing & Nourishing Pavitravana in Uttara Kannada District**' in Kumata, Uttara Kannada.
18. State level conference on '**Conservation of Biodiversity in Western Ghats & its Relevance for the Plain Region**' in Mysore University, Mysore.
19. District level consultation workshop on '**Promoting Eco-Friendly Tobacco Curing Through Fuel Efficient Barn Systems**' in Hunsoor , Chamarajanagara District.
20. State level consultation workshop on '**Conservation, Promotion of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Species in Forest and Their sustainable & Equitable Utilization**' at Aranyabhavana, Bangalore.
21. State level consultation workshop on '**Coastal Green Wall Projects**' and '**Mangrove & Estuary Protection**' in Mangalore, Kundapura, Honnavara & Karwara.
22. State level consultation workshop on '**Devarakaadu (Scared Grove) Conservation**' at Aranyabhavana, Bangalore.
23. State level consultation workshop on '**Rejuvenation of Village Forest Committees (VFCs)**' at Aranyabhavana, Bangalore.
24. A '**Home Remedy Training Camp**' was organized in Ashisar, in Hulekal Range of Sirsi division in association with Agasala-Bomnalli VFC.
25. A public debate & consultation meeting was organized in Dandeli to hear the grievances of the local people arisen out of Kali river pollution caused by Paper industry located there.
26. A high level consultation meeting was organized in Vidhansoudha, Bangalore under the chairmanship of Sri Raju Gowda, District In charge Minister of Yadgir district hear the grievances of the people of Gogi & surrounding villages, arisen out of serious pollution issues caused by prospective mining of Uranium by Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL).
27. A State level public consultation workshop was organized in Vidhanasoudha in collaboration with Dept. of Agriculture on the pros & cons of the proposed

'Biotechnology Industries Regulators Authority (BIRA) Bill, mooted by Union Govt.

V. Conferences / seminars attended by Hon. Chairman as chief guest key resource person:

1. '*Kiburgi Kampu*', state level festival organized in **Gulbarga**.
2. District level Village Forest Committee (VFC) organized in **Belgaum**.
3. International conference of the Ecology & conservation of Wetlands (**LAKE-2010**) organized by Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), Bangalore.
4. The state level programme on de-addiction organized as part of Gandhi Jayanthi celebration at Gandhi Bhavana , Bangalore.
5. State level function organized by Karnataka State Panna-Nirmoolana Mandali in Sirsi to award the Sri D. Veerenadra Heggade, Dharmasthala.
6. International Ayurveda Congress organized by AYUSH, Govt in Bangalore, Bangalore
7. International conference on Medicinal Plants Conservation organized by FRLHT in Bangalore.
8. International conference cum exhibition on 'Alternate Energy' at Palace Ground, Bangalore.
9. National level conference of Plant Taxonomists in Bangalore.
10. National level conference on ecotourism at 'Tourism Development Institute' Mysore.
11. Environment awareness building programme at L.B. College, Sagara.
12. Environment awareness building programme at Govt. First Grade College Sagara.
13. Environment awareness building programme at High School, Heggodu, Sagara.
14. Environment awareness building programme at High School, Hitlalli, Uttara Kannada.
15. State level 'Environment Awareness Building cum Medical Plant Conservation' Programme at Auruveda College, Koppa.
16. State level 'Environment Awareness Building cum Medical Plant Conservation' Programme at JCBM, College, Shringeri.
17. '*Environment Awareness Building Yakshagana*' at Kavalakoppa.

18. *Environment Awareness Building Drama* at Bisalakoppa, Sirsi.
19. Functioned organised at Forestry College, Sirsi to felicitate students those who are qualified IFS.
20. Annual Environment Award awarding function organized by Dept of Environment on the day of World Environment Day (June 5).
21. National level Western Ghats Conference organized by Save Wrester Ghats Movement at Moodbidri.
22. District level Science Mode Exhibition cum Debate Competition organised by Dept. of Public Education in Siddapura.
23. 'Environment Awareness Building programme and inauguration of Pavitra Vaana' at Goli Village, Sirsi.
24. State level conference on education & youth organized by ABVP in Shimogga.
25. State level conference cum exhibition on Bamboos called 'Bamboo Sammlena' organized by Dept. of Forest in Shimogga.
26. Awareness building programmes on 'Bio-fuel Development'.
27. Programme organized as part of visit of International Permannent Peopole's Court on Public Issues' organized by Sahaja Samruddha Organization in Bangalore.

VI. New *Devradkaadu* Conservation Projects.

***Dervrakaadu (Sacred Grove)* conservation & development programme is undertaken in the following villages:**

1. **Tavananndi:** Soraba.
2. **Banavasi:** Sirsi.
3. **Hulekal :** Sirsi.
4. **Bedsagaum:** Mundgod.
5. **Bisalkoppa:** Sirsi
6. **Bicchugatti:** Tyagarti, Sagra.
7. **Hosagunda:** Sagara.

VII. '*Nadimoola Ulisi Abhiayana*' Programme

A major awreness building programmes were organized in all the districts of *Western Ghats* region in order to asses the status of the major rivers & streams and their origin

and spread awareness among the public. Some the places we here the major programmes organized are:

1. **Kollegal: Kaveri river**, Chamarajanagar District.
2. **Kollur : Souparnika river**, Udupi District
3. **Sullua: Payaswini river**, Dakshina Kannada.
4. **Chipageri: Bedthi river**, Uttara Kannada.
5. **Magod : Bedthi river**, Uttara Kannada.
6. **Harsikatta: Aghanshini river**, Uttara Kannada.
7. **Balehole : Bhadra river**, Chikmagalur district.
8. **Joida- Kai river**, Uttara Kannda district.
9. **Talakaveri: Kaveri river**, Kodagu district.
10. **Thrthahalli: Sharavati river**, Shimoga district.
11. **Muregar: Pattanada Hole, Sirsi.**

VIII. Issues addressed by the Hon. Chairman of WGTF

17. Bhatkal 100 Paralysis patients.
18. Addressing the case of Kiaga, Vajralli & Bare cancer cases
19. Addressing & resolved the case of Dandeli Factory ash spillage.
20. Addressing & resolved the case of Londa iron ore sponge e factory pollution
21. Addressing & resolved the case of bone factory at londa.
22. Addressing the case of Pradahana Mantri Grameena Sadhak Yojana guidelines in order to avoid unnecessary widening of roads.
23. Addressing & resolved the case of *Sullya* fish killing case
24. Addressing & tried to resolve the case of Pollution in Kollur & Shivanasamudra, Talakadu, Holebagilu
25. Addressed the case of Vanalli Honeebie tree loss
26. Addressed the case of Sonda bulldozer case
27. Addressed case of 'Halmaddi' tree cutting cases in Uttara Kannada & Shimoga district. .
28. Addressed and tired to resolve the case of illegal mining in Joida, Ammanagahatta, Amabaagudda, Kadthoka, Tygarthi

29. Addressed and tired to resolve the case Mavinagundi & Vazralli river dam projects.
30. Addressed and tired to resolve the case Sagara Social forestry nursery.
31. Addressed and tired to resolve the case Tumari Climate change station
32. Illegal cutting of Kan forest in Thirthalli.
33. Tackling of landslide in Charmady, (D.K.), Honnavara & Karawaraa (U.K.)

IX. Tribal Welfare Programmes:

The major consultation meetings and awareness building programmes organized by WGTF on Tribal Welfare & ensuring the participation of tribal in forest conservation:

1. Marathikeri, Bannavasi Range, Sirsi.
2. Chipgeri, Yellapaura Range, Yellapaura
3. Halayal, Halyal Range, Halyal.
4. Udupi District

X. Eco-sensitive Areas:

The major eco-sensitive areas being protected under the initiatives of WGTF.

1. Hogrekanugiri: Chikmagalur District.
2. Ambaragudda: Shimoga District.
3. Amrutmahal Kaval, BAsur: Chikmagalur District.
4. Bedthi River Valley: Uttara Kannada district.
5. Agahanashini River Valley: Uttara Kannada district.
6. Shalamala River Valley: Uttara Kannada district
7. Dandeli Hornbill Area: Uttara Kannada district.
8. Shalmali River valley: Uttara Kannada district.
9. Kappatagudda Hills: Gadag Distrcit.
10. Chincholi: Gulburga District.

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Activity at Glance

No	Programmes	Number
1	Public Advocacy Initiatives	14
2	Specific Tasks Tackled	18
3	Botanical Gardens / <i>Pavitravana</i> project	16
4	Workshops/ Conferences organized	27
5	Conferences/ Seminars attended by hon. Chairman as Chief Guest Key Resource Person	27
6	<i>Devradkaadu</i> Conservation Projects.	07
7	<i>'Nadimoola Ulisi Abhiyana'</i> Programme	11
8	Issues Addressed by the Hon. Chairman of WGTF	33
9	Tribal Welfare Programmes:	04
10	Eco-sensitive Areas	10

4. Glossary

- ◆ **Karavali Hasiru Kavacha:** An innovative project is launched in all coastal districts to protect the coastal ecology and prevent beach erosion. It involves the programmes like mangrove restoration, raising *Green Wall*, participatory afforestation etc.
- ◆ **Nadi Samraksahna Abhiyana:** It is a public awareness & action campaign, launched in order to restore the river valley environment. The local people's representatives, *Panchyat Raj* Institutions, farmers, forest dwellers, students and others were involved in assessing ecological status of river valley regions in their area and developing participatory conservation action plan.
- ◆ **Vriksharopana Abhiyana:** A massive planting programme is being organized with active participation of public - the farmers, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. More than crore saplings are raised in public land every year from 2008. It has become successful afforestation programme since the local people are involved from the planning stage itself.
- ◆ **Hasiru Samruddhi Gramma:** This programme was launched by the Forest Dept. in 2008. It involved adopting natural resource management based sustainable development strategies in selected villages in every Forest division as model. It comprises fuel efficient *Chullas*, biogas systems, bio-fertilizer & vermin-compost units, raising fodder & agro-forestry species etc.
- ◆ **Recognizing Western Ghats Region:** Efforts of recognizing the exact area of *Western Ghats* region in terms of revenue jurisdiction is initiated through research institutions.
- ◆ **Participatory Forest Conservation :** Emphasis is given to strengthen & extend Village Forest Committees (*VFCs*) through out Karnataka to make the all the forest conservation programmes more people participatory & transparent. VFC conferences were organized at state as well as district

levels to get the feedback from grass root level. Specific recommendations are submitted to govt. on this after wide consultation & filed study.

- ◆ **Medicinal Plant Conservation:** Medicinal Plant conservation is promoted by desiring & implementing new strategies. While the conservation efforts in 13 existing Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas (MPCA) are strengthened, 10 more new MPCA are being identified & protected. Training programs for department staff are organized on aspects like medicinal plants inventory, prevention of smuggling and enforcement of provision of Biodiversity (Conservation) Act, 2002, etc. Nurseries are promoted to raise & distribute herbs. Medicinal plant gardens are established in more than ten locations.
- ◆ **In-situ Conservation:** Ecologically sensitive areas like 'Primary Forest Pockets', 'Sacred Groves', and 'River Valley Regions' etc. are being conserved with active participation of local people. Certain region of high conservation value are declared as 'Biodiversity Heritage Sites' ('Ambaragudda' in Shimogga, 'Hogarekanugiri' in Chikmagalur dists.) and 'Community Conservation Reserve' ('Shalmala River Zone', 'Bedthi River Valle'y, 'Agansahini River Valley' in U.K. District & 'Amruthmahal Kaval' of Basur in Chikmagalur dist.)
- ◆ **Ex-Situ Conservation:** Nurseries of medicinal & RET species are promoted in all forest divisions. *Botanical Gardens* are established and rejuvenated 20 locations with active cooperation of educational institutions, non-governmental organizations & VFCs. The concept of sacred plant gardens called '*Pavitra Vanas*' and '*School Gardens*' are further popularized & strengthened. Massive afforestation scheme with indigenous plant species is launched in *Betta* land with participation of farmers & co-operative societies.
- ◆ **Carrying Capacity Study:** Integrated ecological carrying capacity study is launched in *Uttara Kannada* under Biodiversity Board through experts of Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. It would become model for developing sustainable developmental regime for other regions of *Western Ghats* as well

- ◆ **No Mining:** Karnataka Govt. has not allowed any mining projects in *Western Ghats* region as per the recommendations of the WGTF,
- ◆ **Biodiversity Conservation & Education:** Recommendations are made to bring in very scientific, transparent & socially justifiable Non-timber Forest Produce (NTFP) species conservation & sustainable harvest after wide consultation with all stakeholders. Efforts are done to establish & empowering Biodiversity management Committees (BMC) at *Grama Panchayats* and to take up the biodiversity inventory studies called 'People Biodiversity Register (PBR)' throughout the states. The 'Eco-clubs' in the schools and 'Eco-development Committees (EDC)' in Protected Areas are strengthened to get involved in awareness building efforts in the field.
- ◆ **Tribal Development:** Special consultation meetings and awareness building programmes are being organized to appraise tribal communities about the schemes available for their welfare. Filed level conservation action plans planned & implemented by ensuring their active involvement. The efforts are done to ensure speedy & adequate compensations to forest dwellers at the instances of crop & life loss due to wildlife attack. Efforts are made to give priority to tribal while recruiting filed staff in all circles.
- ◆ **Alternate Energy Sources:** Programmes are taken up to promote the alternate energy models like solar energy lighting, biogas & firewood efficient *Chullas* for cooking, bio-fuel plant species plantation etc. in selected villages through VFC as model projects. Recommendations are submitted on incorporating those components in different departmental schemes in wide scale.

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5. Recommendations on Conservation and Sustainable Development of *Western Ghats* regions of Karnataka.

(Submitted to Govt. of Karnataka on 29 February 2012)

Western Ghats Task Force (WGTF) is a special initiative of Government of Karnataka. It has been working since 2008 with the mandate of developing effective policies and programs related to the conservation and sustainable development of Western Ghats region of Karnataka. WGTF is putting efforts to design such programs in association with all the stakeholders and even trying to incorporate them into many programs of Department of Forest. '*Karavali Hasiru Kavacha*' scheme, '*Hasiru Samruddhi Grama*' scheme, increase in compensations to be given for victims in the cases of life and crop losses in the villages due to wildlife attack, declaration of new 'Medicinal Plant Conservation Area-MPCA', recognizing new 'Biodiversity Heritage Sites' & 'Community Reserves' in the ecologically sensitive valley regions, conservation of 'Sacred Groves' etc. are the result of such successful collaborative functions of WGTF with the government. And now we are submitting new recommendations, arrived after having wide consultations with all stakeholders and necessary research.

1. Expansion and strengthening of Village Forest Committees (VFC): Village Forest Committees (VFC) are the grass root level people's organizations, promoted by Dept. of Karnataka in order to achieve the objectives of participatory forest conservation. More than 5000 such VFCs are working now across the state. There is a need of extending this Joint Forest Management concept to the entire state and further strengthening these grass-root level institutions. Keeping this objectives in mind, WGTF had organized several rounds of consultation workshops and conferences both at the state . and district levels. After such wide consultation with all stakeholders, the following recommendations are being made.

- Steps should be taken to establish VFCs in every Forest Division across the state by establishing a minimum number of them every year in incremental manner.
- Fixed amount seed money should be given to each VFC every year, in order to sustain the activities of VFCs. The minimum amount needed for such seed money should be fixed after wide consultations with all stakeholders.
- The VFC members need to be given regular training and exposure in order to make them self reliant on framing polices and programs for the conservation of natural resources in their proximity.
- VFCs need to be empowered and involved in taking up specific activities related to the regular programs of the Dept. of Forest like forest protection, sustainable management, nurseries, plantations, alternate energy sources, fodder and firewood species development, common land protection, agro-forestry programs etc.

2. Western Ghats Conservation Fund (*Sahyadri Samrakshana Nidhi*): The significance of Western Ghats is being realized all over now. The rich diversity of plants and animal species found here has made this region as one of the mega biodiversity regions of global scale. The rivers that originate here feed the entire peninsula. The wild varieties that found here that of many commercially important plant species like cereals, spices, medicinal plants etc. has made this as 'Natural Gene Bank'. Therefore, the conservation of this ecologically sensitive region is considered as important task today. In order to augment financial resources that needed for such conservation works, it has been recommended to establish a Western Ghats Conservation Fund. The details could be worked out by having further consultations with all stakeholders, by involving the following vital aspects:

- **Proposed name:** Western Ghats Conservation Fund.
- **The proposed legal frame work:** This fund could be established on the lines of Chief Minister Relief fund, which would be directly administrated by Chief Minister.
- **The objectives of the proposed fund:** This fund can be utilized for the special & unique expenses related to the conservation and sustainable development of the Western Ghats region. For example; the plant protection works, plantations, afforestation, fire prevention, tackling smuggling & poaching, managing man-animal conflicts, works that are aimed at conservation of soil fertility & water resources, watershed works, wildlife protection, livelihood related works in order to support the forest dwellers and tribal , tackling natural disasters like fire or land slide etc.
- **The need of such fund:** The conservation and sustainable development works that need to be taken up in upland and coastal region of Karnataka may require huge financial support. It may go well beyond the regular budgetary support given by the govt. to the concerned departments. In such occasions, the public donations and external funding would be the natural options available. But, there is no specific mechanism at the govt. level today to receive such public donations and to utilize it for same purpose. This proposed fund would create such a viable mechanism to augment the resources for the conservation cause.
- **The possible sources for proposed fund:** There are many individuals, organizations and companies which are very much willing to give the financial support to the govt. for conservation related works. This fund will help to tap such sources. For example; the individual philanthropists who are willing to donate their earnings for the cause of natural resources, the government and non-government organizations who are working for the

similar cause, the companies who are willing to donate as per their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles etc.

3. River Valley Protection Program. The rivers and the streams that originate in the Western Ghats region are the she source of all perennial rivers in the peninsula. Therefore, the water security of the region very much depends upon the protection of these watersheds in the Western Ghats region. However, they are being increasingly polluted and degraded in recent years in alarming rate. The reasons could be many; like the forest encroachment, river bank degradation, river valley development projects, dumping of solid waste and sewage and so on. Therefore, there is urgent need of recognizing this pressing problem. Having recognized the magnitude of this situation, a River Valley Protection Awareness campaign was organized by WGTF last year across the Western Ghats districts. Based on the inputs provided by all the stakeholders, WGTF is making the following recommendations.

- The government should come out with long term river protection policy with rational and scientific guidelines for land use in all major river systems.
- Minimum 15% of the financial outlay set aside for the major irrigation projects should e spent on the protection and rejuvenation of the catchment area of those river systems.
- The pollution in the rivers and streams across the sate need to be controlled by adopting stringent pollution control principles and effective waste water recycling methods.
- The watershed development projects should be taken up on priority in the catchments of all major river systems.

4. Policy for sustainable development of Western Ghats region: The conservation strategies of Western Ghats must also address the needs of local people by reaching out to the people. Therefore, there is a need of framing a policy for designing ecologically feasible development programs in the region. Such a policy should involve certain impotent principles mentioned below:

- As per the objectives of national forest policy, there is need of developing minimum 33% forest cover in the state. That could be achieved by adopting a proper afforestation program by involving all local communities and forest dwellers.
- The ecologically sensitive areas like river valley or wildlife corridors in forest pockets need to be protected while executing major developmental projects.
- While deciding budgetary support to the development programs in the hilly area of Western Ghats region, criteria like providing basic facilities, solving problems of remote hamlets etc., need to be taken into consideration apart from population parameter.

- The development programs in *Western Ghats* region should give more emphasis on the ecologically feasible and locally employment generating activities like development of nurseries, sustainable harvest of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), value addition for forestry and agro forestry produces, fresh water fisheries, promotion of fodder, firewood, agro-forestry crops, medicinal plants etc.
- The tribal and forest dwellers need to be supported and empowered to take up income generating activities by making sustainable utilization of natural resources like wood craft, pottery, basket weaving, mat making etc.
- The alternate energy sources like solar lights, bio-gas & firewood efficient chulla etc. need to be given priority while providing the energy facility to the local communities.

5. Forest Status Report: The department of Environment of Govt. is publishing the Environment Status Report in the state periodically. That would help in understanding the status of the quality of the environment in all the regions also serves as the reference material while taking up further programs by the govt. for improving environment quality. Such a scientific assessment need to be done in the forestry sector too. Therefore, the govt. should come out with a detailed **Forest Status Report** periodically by taking inputs from all possible sources, with the support of different experts and research institutions.

6. Rejuvenation of district level committees of forest & environment issues: There are many district level committees are working under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioners with the mandate of ensuring conservation and sustainable utilization of natural landscapes and resources. However, in most of the cases those committees on forest, environment, minerals, coastal environment etc. are not functioning effectively due to many reasons. And those issues are not getting enough priority in the regular governance also. Therefore, there is need of rejuvenating these district committees with proper reorganization and empowerment strategies, so that they play effective and positive play in ensuring the objectives of their mandate.

7. Rejuvenation of Research Wing of forest department: There is a separate research wing in the dept. of forest. It has its headquarters in Bangalore with four regional offices across the state. They are supposed to provide all necessary research inputs to the conservation related programs of the department. However, there is a need of upgrading and rejuvenating this section for ensuring further efficiency. Therefore, the following steps may be taken up in order to achieve this.

- A qualified scientist should be made the in-charge this research wing on permanent tenure basis, so that all the research activities get regular monitoring and guidance.

- Adequate human resources and infrastructure should be provided to research wing, both at head quarters and the regional offices.
- In order to identify the right research problems and their perusal, there is need of establishing a Research Advisory Committee, so that they get regular guidance, support and monitoring.
- The department should constantly take the support of research wing while designing effective conservation programs of both long term and short term nature.

8. Government order on banning of mining in Western Ghats Region: The govt. of Karnataka has taken a major policy decision of not allowing the mining activities in the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats region of Karnataka. This major decision which is very much important in view of livelihood and ecological security of the entire state is appreciated by all corners of the society. WGTF appeals the govt. that this significant policy decision needs to be translated into proper government order too.

9. KAA Forest Conservation in Shimoga district: There is a special type of traditional forest management practice in Shimoga district, with land titles called 'KAAN FOREST'. They are the vast evergreen or semi evergreen forest pockets which are being protected by local communities for several hundreds of years, since they worship them as 'Sacred Groves'. There are found in nearly 12,000 hectares of land in the district, both in the reserve forest areas and r govt. revenue lands. They are getting degraded in recent time because of many reasons, like increasing human population, higher consumption of natural resources, encroachment and so on. Therefore, the govt. needs to come out with a clear program for their conservation. The following aspects need to be incorporated in such action program.

- The survey must be taken up in *Soraba, Shikaripura, Sagara, Hosanagara* taluks in order to come out with status report on of KAA FOREST.
- The vulnerable KAA forests and already degraded KAA forest need to be assessed to come out with an action plan for their protection with hobli wise mapping.
- The different financial resources like CAMPA, 13th Finance Commission, Forest Development Fund etc. need to be utilized for the same.

10. Promotion of alternate energy modes for sustainable post harvest processing practices for tobacco in Hunsur region: Karnataka state has been one of the major Tobacco growing states of the nations. Most of these Tobacco cultivation is being made in Mysore district. More than 42,000 farmers are involved in this farming. Tobacco leaves are processed after harvesting, which need large volume of firewood to run those processing units. More than 5 lakh tones of firewood is being used for this

purpose every year .This is leading to loss of more than two and half lakh trees. Therefore, this is responsible for huge forest loss in *Mysore* and nearby *Kodagu* and *Chamarajanagar* districts. There is an urgent need of addressing this issue by adopting certain quick interventions mentioned below:

- The firewood efficient tobacco processing units need to be designed and promoted. The research wing of Dept. of Forest need to take up this issue on priority with the association of expertise available in the research institutes like Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.
- Village Forest Committees (VFC) need to be promoted in this region for establishing and maintaining those processing units.
- Alternate energy sources like agri-residue, coconut shells, Tobacco plant residues etc. need to be used as sources in these processing units. The Tobacco Board of Govt. of India need to be involved in promoting such options.
- Farmers need to be educated, supported and empowered to grow firewood species in marginal or waste lands in agro-forestry principle.
- Dept. of Forest should take necessary steps in order to provide at least twenty five lakh sapling for planting purpose in association with farmers in *the Mysore* and *Chamarajanagar* district.

Western Ghats Task Force (WGTF) hereby appeals the Chief Minister of Karnataka, Hon. Forest Minister of Karnataka and Chief Secretary of Karnataka for accepting these recommendations and do the needful on priority.

29 February 2012
Bangalore

Chairman
And all members
Western Ghats Task Force (WGTF)
307/ Vidhanasoudha, Bangalore-01