

Guidelines for Scientific Research in the Wildlife Protected Areas

1. Introduction

Scientific Research in the Wildlife Protected Areas is vital for a better understanding of ecosystems, their functions, ecology and status of various species and their habitats. Information generated by scientific research in Protected Areas would be useful to the managers for taking appropriate conservation and management actions. Since Protected Areas (PA) also serve as 'control sites' for comparing a large number of environmental parameters and ecological processes with those of human influenced ecosystems, organizations and individuals from India as well as abroad would like to undertake basic as well as applied research within Protected Areas.

As per the guidelines of the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016), research projects having the objectives of measuring biological diversity; monitoring the status of indicator / flagship / threatened species of flora and fauna, and their breeding biology, will be given priority in granting permission. In addition, applied research is also needed to help overcome specific management problems in PAs. Multi-disciplinary integrated research encompassing scientific and socio-economic aspects related to PA management also need to be encouraged.

Recognizing the significance of well conceived and problem oriented research in the PAs, adequate provisions for research work have been made in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Section 28 (grant of permit) of the Act gives authority to the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) to grant permission for research.

2. Wildlife Research

Wildlife Research is defined here as research conducted by qualified scientists, including social scientists, or by assistants/ students working under their supervision or Park

Managers. Wildlife research may also be conducted by properly qualified wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists.

3. Duration of research

Based on the anticipated period of study specified in the proposals, wildlife research may be categorized as follows:

- i. Short-term research: Surveys or short studies involving field work up to one year in duration.
- ii. Medium term research: Studies requiring two to four years for completion.
- iii. Longer-term research: Studies exceeding four years for completion.

After taking into consideration the recommendation of the Committee constituted vide Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) notification No. 6-3/2003 WL I dated 24.10.2005 and also the recommendations of the Tiger Task Force, the following guidelines are hereby formulated to facilitate processing and grant of permission for carrying out research in PAs.

4. Processing of research proposals and grant of permission

- 4.1 Under existing laws the Chief Wildlife Wardens are authorized to permit research in Protected Areas. In case of research that involves capture, handling and collection of biological samples from any species listed in Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, the award of permission would lie with the Director (Wildlife Preservation), Government of India (Additional Director General (Wildlife) and Director, Wildlife & Preservation, MoEF). In all cases the proposal should be submitted to the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State with a copy of the same to the Additional Director General (Wildlife), MoEF, Govt. of India. In case of foreign nationals desirous of conducting research in Indian Protected Areas, permission from Ministry of External Affairs / Ministry of Home

Affairs, and National Biodiversity Authority if required in Law should be obtained.

- 4.2 The proposal should contain synopsis, objectives, methodology, literature review, work plan, budget, source of funding, duration, expected outputs and terms of reference. The proposal will be evaluated by a 'Technical Committee' consisting of atleast *three* members constituted under the chairmanship of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State. Other members could be representative of the State Biodiversity Board (if constituted), experts in relevant disciplines of wildlife management, ecology, social science etc. If the state has not constituted the State Biodiversity Board, suitable nomination from university / research institute or any other such organization involved in ecological / wildlife research may be made. The Technical Committee should meet at least once in a quarter on fixed dates and consider proposals received at least 15 days prior to the date of meeting. The committee would also suggest the areas of research relevant to management decisions with respect to Protected Areas of the state. The technical committee may have additional 'Subject Specialists' as a 'Special Invitee'.

However a research project which has been approved by *Deptt. of Science and Technology, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Department of Biotechnology, and other scientific Deptt. of the State/Central Government would not be required to be reviewed by the committee. Chief Wildlife Warden/Director, Wildlife Preservation may pass necessary orders in such cases to grant access.*

- 4.3 The research questions and methodologies used shall be decided by the researchers according to their own priorities/reliable interests, in the case of independently funded wildlife research projects. In case of manipulative or interventional studies, the methods used must be in accordance with standard practice. Research questions in case of Wildlife Research projects sponsored by the State Department of Wildlife shall be arrived at in consultation with the

respective Park Managers. Conclusions and recommendations should be discussed with the Park Managers to ensure the field applicability of the studies.

5. Time Frame for grant of permission

- 5.1 Proposal for short-term research (<6 months) shall be processed and the decision communicated by the Chief Wildlife Warden within a period of two months *if it involves one PA*.
- 5.2 If the short-term research involves several PAs and/or administrative forest divisions, the Chief Wildlife Warden *shall process and communicate decisions* within a period of three months.
- 5.3 Proposals for medium and long-term research (>6 months) shall be *processed and communicated* by the Chief Wildlife Warden within a period of three months. In case of proposals whose coverage is beyond a single Protected Area site, a maximum of four months may be taken to process and communicate the decision.
- 5.4 In case a research proposal is rejected or any modifications suggested, either by the Chief Wildlife Warden or the Director of Wildlife Preservation, Government of India and Additional Director General (WL) and Director, Wildlife Preservation, MoEF, the reasons for such rejection/suggestions must be clearly communicated to the researcher as per (5.1) – (5.3) above from the date of receipt of proposals.

6. General Provisions

- 6.1 It is well recognized that the product of any research in terms of its scientific results and publications must be authorized by the researcher/organization. None other than the individuals responsible for framing research proposals and actually conducting research should have the authorship of scientific papers from the

findings. However, the final report and other scientific publications of the project (hard and soft copy) should be submitted within three months (for short-term research) or six months (for long-term projects) to the concerned Chief Wildlife Warden. For long-term projects, half yearly progress reports should be submitted to the park authorities by the researcher. The Chief Wildlife Warden shall take appropriate action on the researcher/organization for non-submission of final reports on time as per Terms and Conditions stipulated in the letter granting permission for the project.

6.2 Wildlife Institute of India would act as the national nodal agency on wildlife research. It would be obligatory on the part of researcher / research organization to provide a soft and hard copy of his data / report / findings / thesis etc. to Wildlife Institute of India who in turn would make it available on their website for easy access.

6.3 A researcher will not be required to pay entry fee in the park. If researcher needs to use a vehicle for his research activities inside the park no entry fee for the vehicle will be charged. Other facilities when availed will be charged at the rate applicable to Government officials on duty.

6.4 Movements of the researcher and or his assistants in the PA shall be recorded in a log book to be maintained by him which will be submitted to the park management every month.

6.5 Movement at night shall be allowed *only if it is part of the approved research project*. A schedule for such movements shall be developed in consultation with the local authorities and shall be permitted accordingly by park authorities.

In case of any violation of the conditions of permission, Chief Wildlife Warden shall have the authority to revoke the permission.
