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GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Abstract

Forest & Wildlife Department- Renaming River Forest Protection Fund (RFPF) as Eco system Management Fund (EMF) and Revised Guidelines for collection , accounting and utilization of the Eco system Management Fund- Orders Issued.

FOREST & WILDLIFE (E) DEPARTMENT

G.O.(Ms) No.40/2017 F&WLD

Dated,Thiruvananthapuram 23/08/2017

Read:- 1. G.O(Ms.) No: 18/2002/F&WLD dated 02.04.2002

2. Lr. No: E&TW1-14355/2017 dated 23.06.2017 from the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW)

ORDER

As per the Government order read as 1st paper above, Government have issued guidelines for collection , accounting and utilization of River Forest Protection Fund (RFPF) , for the proper maintenance and protection of forest areas.

Now, the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW) as per letter read as 2nd paper above has informed Government that , the Executive Committee Meeting of State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) held on 29.01.2016 deliberated on the issue of utilization of River Forest Protection Fund (RFPF) and proposed to revise the existing RFPF guidelines to cater more to the protection and overall improvement of forest and forest dependent community and to rename the River Forest Protection Fund (RFPF) as Eco system Management Fund (EMF).

Government have examined the matter in detail and are pleased to rename the River Forest Protection Fund (RFPF) as Eco system Management Fund (EMF) and to issue revised guidelines for the collection , accounting and utilization of Eco system Management Fund as follows,

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FUND (EMF)

The Ecosystem Management Fund is generated from the service charges collected from visitors in the Ecotourism centers carried out by VSS/EDCs in the forest areas. Ecotourism is defined as 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of the local people'. Such tourism is low impact, educational, and conserves the environment while directly benefitting the economic development of local communities. The following guidelines are issued for better management of EMF.

GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTION, ACCOUNTING AND UTILIZATION OF ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT FUND (EMF)**1. MODE OF FUNCTIONING AT VSS LEVEL****1.1. EMF Collection**

- a) The Secretaries of the concerned VSS /EDCs are authorized for the collection of EMF.
- b) The Concerned Range Forest Officers will supervise the collection of EFM.

1.2. Mode of collection and deposit

- a) Collection of EMF will be made through printed tickets in same format all over kerala in prescribed format approved by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW)
- b) E-tickets will be introduced in all ecotourism sites at the earliest. Printed ticket sale will be discontinued when the e-ticketing facility for all ecotourism sites come into existence.
- c) The rates of tickets will be exhibited near the ticket counter and in the website of the Forest Department.
- d) Cash collected to be verified at the end of the day and deposited in the next day morning to the bank where the accounts are kept.

- e) Remittance should be made in separate EMF account of the CEO..
- f) In any areas this is not possible , remittance shall be made in the SB Account jointly operated by President and Secretary of VSS/EDC and transfer the amount remitted to the account helds by the CEO in this regard, every week.

1.3. Accounting

- a) Tickets printed in the prescribed format shall be used in all ecotourism sites.
- b) CEOs have to make arrangements for the printing and distribution of ticket books to the destinations.
- c) One qualified person should be engaged in the cash counter for collection of EMF. The qualification will be prescribed by the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW)
- d) Daily report in Form-2 (in duplicate) shall be prepared by the Secretary of VSS and sent to Range Forest Officer.
- e) Daily report should be consolidated at Range Office in Register- 3.
- f) The accounts of each eco-tourism point shall be kept by the concerned secretary, VSS/EDC along with the daily collection/visitor details and the abstract of weekly collection deposited to FDA next Monday. The copy of the register has to be sent to the concerned Range Forest Officer before 5th of next month.
- g) Prescribed registers should be used for accounting. Consolidated Ledger in Form 4 prepared by VSS Secretary will be copied to Range Forest Officer. Cash book in Register-4 in duplicate prepared in VSS with a copy to be submitted monthly to CEO every month. FDA level Ledger in Register 5-shall be prepared by Secretary VSS. Monthly report of remittance to FDA Account prepared by Secretary VSS in triplicate shall be submitted to FDA and to the Range Forest Officer. The uniform format for the registers and forms shall be prepared by the

Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW).

h) The compiled report of all the ecotourism sites in a Range has to be submitted to the Divisional Forest Officer before 10th of every month.

1.4. Utilization of funds

a) VSS will prepare annual Action Plan and anticipated income and expenditure (Budget) for each Eco- tourism spots prepared in form no: 8 and presented before the General Body and get it approved and submitted to FDA before 31st December .

b) Based on the request for advance fund through proper intent as per approved action plan, the fund will be transferred to the Operational Fund account of the VSS.

c) The VSS will get approval from FDA, the list of persons for different jobs. They will maintain a register in Form no: 10 showing the name and address of the persons engaged, and will also maintain a monthly statement of man days generated using EMF in Form no: 7 and submit to CEO with a copy to Range Forest Officer.

d) A statement of accidents in Register shall be maintained in each VSS/Range.

e) The VSS will present the vouchers for payments to the CEO and based on the proceedings order obtained after passing the bills, the amounts for payment will be transferred from the operational account to the Core fund Account of the VSS.

f) Payments will be effected to the accounts of the persons engaged for different jobs.

2.MODE OF FUNCTIONING AT FDA LEVEL

2.1 Accounting

a) Cash book at FDA level shall be maintained in Register – 6.

2.2 Utilization

- a) FDA Level Annual Plan of Operation and Budget will be prepared based on VSS action plans and shall be presented before Executive Committee of FDA and approved.
- b) Approved Action Plan and Budget shall be sent to Member Secretary, SFDA in the 1st week of April every Year.
- c) CEO, FDA will prepare quarterly requirement of fund which shall be submitted along with annual budget for fund allotment for 1st quarter.
- d) SFDA will examine the APO and allot funds for utilization in the month of April. SFDA can sanction loans from one FDA to another FDA.
- e) FDA will maintain day to day accounts in Register – 7. A Ledger in Register – 8 and register 12 will also be maintained.
- f) The compiled report of all ecotourism sites in a Division has to reach the APCCF (E&TW) on a quarterly basis.

3. MODE OF FUNCTIONING AT SFDA LEVEL

- 3.1. The fund allotment application of VSS/EDC to FDA and that of FDA to SFDA will be in the prescribed forms.
- 3.2. The Member Secretary, SFDA with the approval of PCCF (FM) and Chairman of SFDA will allot EMF to each FDA on quarterly basis based on approved budget of FDA.
- 3.3. Inter-FDA transfer of EMF or the fund transfer to other divisions will be made by Member Secretary, SFDA with the approval of Chairman, SFDA
- 3.4. In deserving cases loan from EMF will be sanctioned to the same FDA or different FDA for activities connected with or ancillary to EMF activities by the Member Secretary, SFDA with the approval of Chairman, SFDA.

3.5. The audited account of the EMF of the FDA for the previous year also should be sent to the office of the APCCF (E&TW) and Member Secretary, SFDA in the first week of June.

4. GENERAL DIRECTIONS

4.1 The EMF should be utilized in the following priority

SL NO	ITEM	ALLOCATION (AS% OF COLLECTION)
1	BENEFIT TO LOCAL COMMUNITY	40
2	FOREST PROTECTION	10
3	MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF ECOTOURISM LOCATION/FACILITIES	15
4	ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS PROMOTION	4
5	FLEXI FUND WITH CEO.	1
6	PFM CENTRALIZED FUND**	30

4.1.1 Benefit to local community

The major benefit from ecotourism should go to the local people by providing employment, Soft loans, Special Trust funds, development schemes for livelihood of tribal and fringe area communities, etc.

4.1.2 Forest Protection

Money for Forest Protection from EMF will only be used for

- Providing Rations for interior camps.
- Providing Camping Gear like Umbrellas, Sleeping bags, Shoes, Tents for staff for interior camps. The details of purchase and distribution of these items shall be entered in a separate stock register maintained for purchase from the EMF fund.
- Providing legal support including advocate fee to staff when they are faced with private

complaints for action taken in good faith on duty.

- An arrangement to provide the compensation to wildlife victims on the date of proceedings by the DFO. This will be adjusted immediately on receipt of allotment in concerned head.

4.1.3 Management and maintenance of Ecotourism Facilities.

This fund can be utilized for the management of ecotourism location including arrangement of security to visitors and Environment impact assessment studies of community based ecotourism centers. Guided tourism can be promoted. Local inhabitants having a fairly sound knowledge of the history of the area, flora and fauna in the whole locality and with flair to interact with the people shall be selected, trained and deployed as guides. Any visitor to the eco-tourism destination shall be ensured with a detailing as to what is ecotourism, the importance of nature conservation, about the local flora and fauna, the history of the place, etc. The visitors in groups of around 10 can be managed by a guide.

4.1.4 Environmental awareness promotion

Environment awareness/education to Local-self Government institutions, schools, colleges and nature clubs can be taken up.

4.1.5 Flexi Fund with CEO

A fund for addressing localized issues need urgent intervention and for meeting the minimum essential expenditure for running the office of the Chief Executive Officer will be maintained by the Chief Executive Officer, FDA. One percent of the EMF collection shall be credited to this account. The fund shall be utilized to meet contingencies like

- Arranging vehicles and man power for fire fighting, Man-animal conflict mitigation etc
- Providing urgent medical care for tribal's, arranging transport facilities to tribals in unavoidable circumstances.
- Urgent data collection and compilation for issues like relocation, notification etc.

The expenditure should be accounted and registers and vouchers maintained, which shall be presented in the FDA general body for approval.

4.1.6 Centralized Fund

A corpus fund at SFDA level will be formed by pooling thirty percent of all collections under EMF of each FDA. This would not be required in case EMF collection from all ecotourism destinations in a FDA is less than ten lakhs. The corpus fund will be maintained and will be at the disposal of SFDA. The General Body of SFDA will approve a budget for corpus fund for a particular year before 31st March of the previous financial year. In addition to funding the activities of PFM cell at Head Quarters, the corpus fund will be utilized for the following activities in general.

1. Livelihood development projects for tribals and other forest dependent communities with special emphasis on particularly vulnerable tribal groups.
2. Activities aimed at welfare of staff in general and those working in remote forest camps in particular.
3. Developing website for dissemination of information, preparing and distributing study materials with required and updated contents to schools and colleges. The distribution of study materials shall be monitored by the Forest Officials. The feedback from students and teachers shall be collected and necessary changes shall be made in contents if necessary.
4. Funding Environment Impact Assessment studies of community based ecotourism centers.
5. Forest protection activities with emphasis on relocation of hamlets, facilitating corridors for animal movement, etc.
6. Any other activity ancillary or incidental to the above activities.
7. Payment of salaries of PFM Managers and Asst. Managers (Ecologist & Sociologist)
8. Establishment of medical emergency centers at all ecotourism sites.

4.1.7 The Executive Committee of SFDA will sanction specific projects approved in the budget depending on the availability of Corpus fund.

5. Guidelines for Loan Disbursement

- (a) Loan to meet contingencies up to Rs.5, 000(Rupees Five Thousand Only) will be sanctioned and disbursed by CEO subject to ratification in the next FDA meeting.
- (b) All VSS members are eligible for loans provided. They shall provide guarantee/security of at least two daily waged forest employees from the same FDA. Defaulters will lose VSS membership as decided by FDA.
- (c) The loans except for contingencies shall be disbursed to the most eligible applicants. The selection has to be made at the FDA meeting. If no consensus is reached at FDA meeting the FDA can nominate a committee which will scrutinize the applications and enlist the applicants on the basis of eligibility.
- (d) The loan amount that can be disbursed is limited to Rs.50, 000 (Rupees Fifty Thousand Only).
- (e) Loans shall be repaid in equal installments within a period of 36 months.
- (f) One family can avail only one loan at a time other than the contingency loan.
- (g) Once the entire loan is repaid, further loans can be availed by the family members.
- (h) Allocation for loan shall be limited to 20% of the sl. no 1 of table in para 4.1 (BENEFIT TO LOCAL COMMUNITY.)
- (i) Loans can be sanctioned for educational purpose, medical care, and self-employment.
- (j) A separate register shall be maintained for entering the loan disbursement details. The details of all loans provided, the details of beneficiaries, the loan amount, the repayment details of defaulters etc. for the preceding five years shall be maintained in the register. The register has to be audited every year by an approved Chartered Accountant. The copy of the audit report approved by the General Body/ Executive Committee of the FDA shall reach the Member Secretary, SFDA by May of the next financial year.

6. Engaging Guides and workforce

- a) The Ecotourism programmes are conceived and is run for the upliftment of the forest dependent community by providing alternative livelihood options thus reducing their dependence on the forests.
- b) The Livelihood programmes can be initiated with the surplus fund in EMF.
- c) The management of the Ecotourism programmes initially requires manpower including guides, sweepers, cleaners, boat drivers, lascars, etc.
- d) The manpower requirement has to be approved by the executive committee of the FDA and it is the executive committee which will be responsible for selection from among the eligible applicants.
- e) For unskilled jobs only members of VSS/EDC constituting the FDA are normally eligible. But victims of man-animal conflict even though not a member of VSS/EDC can be provided with jobs.
- f) Skilled and Semi-skilled workers can be employed from outside only if there is dearth of such skilled persons within in the VSS/EDCs.
- g) The payment to the guides/cleaners and technical workers shall be revised by the FDA general body. Considering the very high demand for jobs, maximum number of persons has to be accommodated. This calls for the restriction in the number of days of employment provided to each. The wages received by a worker associated for longer periods with the department should be correspondingly higher as has been mentioned below.

YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT	<u>0-2</u>	<u>2-5</u>	<u>5-10</u>	<u>10-15</u>	<u>15</u>
NO OF DAYS WORK PROVIDED	<u>10</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>26</u>

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- a) The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW) shall formulate an effective machinery for inspection , analysing and reporting the entire activities in the project and correcting the defects if any noticed.
- b) The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW) shall evaluate the

functioning of the entire scheme regularly and submit reports to Government through Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF) with their remarks, suggestions and alterations if any required.

(By Order of the Governor)

JAMES VARGHESE

Additional Chief Secretary to Government

To

- The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force,
Thiruvananthapuram.
- The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (FM), Thiruvananthapuram.
- The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW),
Thiruvananthapuram.
- The Director, Tribal Welfare Department, Thiruvananthapuram.
- The Principal Accountant General (Audit), Thiruvananthapuram.
- The Principal Accountant General (A&E/Audit), Thiruvananthapuram.
- ✓ The Web & New Media Division , I&PRD/ Press Release
- Forest & Wildlife (F) Department.
- Stock file / Office Copy.

Forwarded/By Order,



Section Officer.