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GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Abstract

Forest & Wildlife Department- Implementation of Biodiversity Programme- Guidelines - Revised- Orders Issued.

FOREST & WILDLIFE (E) DEPARTMENT

G.O.(Rt) No.485/2016/F&WLD

Dated ,Thiruvananthapuram ,24.12.2016

- Read:-
1. G.O(Rt.) No: 402/2010/F&WLD dated 14.09.2010
  - 2.G.O.(Rt.) 354/2013/F&WLD dated 12.09.2013
  - 3.Minutes of the Chief Conservator of Forests Council Meeting held on 29.06.2016
  4. Letter No: BDC1-17000/2015 dated 29.07.2016 from the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife ) & Chief Wildlife Warden.

ORDER

As per the Government order read as 1<sup>st</sup> above, Government have issued administrative sanction and Guidelines for implementation of the following schemes under "Biodiversity Conservation Programme" `

1. protection of sacred groves.
2. Conservation of mangroves.
3. Identification of oldest tree, raising platform and displaying information board.

These guidelines were later revised vide Government Order read as 2<sup>nd</sup> above for the implementation of the scheme "Protection and conservation of sacred groves" for extending financial support to the owners of sacred groves, with a view to preserve the Kavus, the rich repository of biological resources.

Now vide paper read as 4<sup>th</sup> above, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife )& Chief Wildlife Warden has requested Government to reconstitute the State Level Expert Committees, with Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) as the Chairman, for selection of sacred groves for financial assistance and Vanamitra award, in place of Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Biodiversity Cell), and to issue modified guidelines accordingly.

Government have examined the matter in detail and are pleased to reconstitute the above committee with Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) as the Chairman in place of Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Biodiversity Cell) and the guidelines are modified accordingly. The revised guidelines are appended herewith.

(By Order of the Governor)

P.MARA PANDIYAN

Additional Chief Secretary to Government

To

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force, Thiruvananthapuram.



## INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY CAMPEIGN GUIDELINES FOR IDENTIFYING SCHEMES UNDER BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

### 1. GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING AND DECLARING OLDEST TREE (MARAMUTHASSY)

The intent of this scheme is to attract public attention and appreciation to old trees of the locality. In many locations across the state , especially in urban areas , very old trees are surviving amidst growing pressure. These trees have been providing ecological services over the years to society. An opportunity is provided to society to appreciate and express gratitude for the tree for the ecosystem services and produce given to society over these years . This will help build a bond between man and trees over the long term. This will result in improved protection of trees by society.

In short , programme will provide an opportunity for community , especially the children , to honour ,m revere and appreciate these trees for the selfless service provided to society over the years.

The following guidelines are issued for selection and declaration of Maramuthassy in each District.

- The Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) in the respective District shall be the Authorized officer for inviting nominations , processing the same for finally declaring the Maramuthassy of the district.
- Assistant conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) will address all the Grama Panchayats in the District concerned to recommend oldest tree with respect to each local body.
- Any NGO/individual/institution can submit nomination for selecting a particular tree in their locality to declare as maramuthassy to the respective Grama Panchayath.
- Nominations for Maramuthassy shall be selected from amongst those trees located in public land, premises of schools , offices/public / government institutions etc. Selection shall be based on age followed by ratify and uniqueness.
- Only one tree will be selected and declared as Maramuthassy in each District
- Wide publicity shall be given by the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) in inviting nominations for trees to be identified as Maramuthassy.
- The nominations shall be screened by a District Level Committee comprising of Assistant

- Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) or Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) (1) An elderly cultural leader of the community (2) An elderly person of the community (3) An elderly person of the community (4) An environmental NGO or an NCD of the District (5) etc.
- The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) ) having jurisdiction of the area shall constitute the District level committee for screening the nominations.
- The selected tree along with a proposal covering various aspects viz: vernacular name, scientific name, cultural / biological significance, age, height, girth and other features, criteria for selecting the tree etc. shall be submitted to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) , who will submit proposal for all the districts to the Government for approval and notification.
- An information board covering its name, age, taxonomy, distribution, ecological culture and economic significance etc. may be displayed in front of the Matamuthassy notified groves to provide basic information for the benefit of the public.
- Suitable platform around the tree may be provided for protection and aesthetic appearance. The platform shall be made of Laterite stone and plastering shall be avoided.
- The platform shall be made with adequate precaution against tampering with or damaging the roots of the tree.
- A public programme for honouring and appreciating the the services provided by the tree over the years with the full participation of local school children and community shall be organized for declaring the Maramuthassy. This can be developed as an annual event.

## 2 . REVISED GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME FOR PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SACRED GROVES.

Sacred groves are rich repositories of biological resources that have been preserved in their pristine conditions by religious belief of the community . These sacred groves are under severe pressure and require support for their conservation. Most of these groves are preserved despite many pressures and the owners need to be appreciated and recognized by society for their conservation efforts. It is proposed to provide financial support to owners of sacred groves and initiate Awards for the best managed groves by inviting applications /nominations after wide publicity where necessary support for activities such as for documentation of flora and fauna, awareness creation, protection activities, rebuilding lost / degraded sacred groves, giving incentives and awards etc.

1. The Scheme will be taken up in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Government for implementation of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the "Intensification of Forest Management Scheme" for protection and conservation of Sacred Groves as and when the funds

are received from the Government of India , as well as for implementing the scheme under conservation of Biodiversity funds by State Government.

2. The Scheme will be co-ordinated and monitored by the Social Forestry Wing of the Kerala Forest Department.
3. The Scheme will be implemented through the respective Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) of each district.
4. The Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) of each District will give wide publicity about the scheme so as to invite maximum applications.
5. The interested Devaswam /Owners/temple trusts shall apply to the Assistant Conservator of Forests(Social Forestry) of the concerned District in prescribed format. Those who were selected for financial support during the previous years will not be considered under this scheme.
6. The Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) will shortlist 5 applicants in each District based on extent in area and biodiversity value for long term conservation.
7. The owners/trusts of 5 short listed sacred groves will prepare a proposal/Micro plan for protection and conservation of the concerned sacred grove in consultation with the Assistant Conservator of Forests.
8. In the case when any District failed in submitting 5 proposals before the expert committee , the sacred groves having maximum extent among the applications received in other Districts will be considered for financial support.
9. A State Level Expert Committee will be set up comprising the following :
  - i. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) – Chair Person.
  - ii. Director, Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi or his nominee.
  - iii. Director, JNTBGRI, Palode or his nominee.
  - iv. Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wild Life)
  - v. Prof. Sobheendran , Environmentalist.
  - vi. Prof. E. Kunhikrishnan , Subject Expert.
  - vii. The President, Travencore Devaswam Board or his nominee.
  - Viii. The President, Malabar Devaswam Board or his nominee.
  - ix. The President , Ayyappaseva Sanghom or his nominee.

The State Level Committee Shall:

- i. *Scrutinize , evaluate and recommend in order of priority , sacred groves in each District for long term and one time support under the Scheme.*
- ii. *Approve the proposal/Micro Plan/Management Plan for each sacred grove.*
- iii. *Render any other advise sought for by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry).*

10. Proposal along with detailed estimate (Sanctioned by competent authority of the Social Forestry Wing) will be prepared with technical support of the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry).
11. The owners / Trusts of the Sacred Groves selected for support under the Scheme will enter into an Agreement with the First Party (Copy of the Agreement enclosed) prior to the commencement of the programme.
12. Prior to signing of agreement the owner /trust /Devaswams shall produce relevant documents to prove ownership of the sacred groves.
13. The fund requirement will be made available through the respective Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry).
14. On signing the Agreement , 10% of the total project cost subject to a maximum of Rs. 25,000/- will be released as 1<sup>st</sup> installment for arranging the works. Subsequent installment shall be made as when required by the beneficiary on production of vouchers and records for the completed works subject to a minimum of 25% of the total project cost. First installment shall be adjusted in the final claim. In case of proposals requiring Rs.25000/- or below , the entire amount shall be released on production of proper vouchers.
15. The Devaswam /trusts/owner managing the sacred groves shall maintain proper accounts and vouchers with respect to the expenditure incurred under the scheme and shall produce the same for inspection , as and when required by the First Party , the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) . The Owner /Trustee/ Devaswam signing the Agreement shall be liable for this.
16. In case of breach of conditions of Agreement , the agreement shall be terminated after giving an opportunity to be heard and the amount released to the owner /Trustee/Devaswam in so far has not been utilized as per approved proposal shall be refunded to the Government forthwith as determined by the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry).
17. The Scheme will be monitored by the **Social Forestry Wing** and evaluated by the Vigilance wing of the Kerala Forest Department.

**3. GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME FOR PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SACRED GROVES.**

A scheme has been prepared for conservation of mangroves with the following components:

1. *Providing incentives to the owners for maintaining mangroves.*
2. *Financial Support for regeneration activities.*
3. *Entry point activities.*

4. *Extension and awareness.*

Mangroves are rich repositories of biological resources having structural adaptations and physiological characteristics, enabling them to thrive in the estuarine habitats. Kerala coast once supported a large tract of mangrove vegetation. Kerala once had 700 sq.km of mangrove forests, which now has dwindled, to a great extent.

It is proposed to support the owners of mangrove areas by awarding monetary incentives at the rate of Rs.4000 per acre for their noble gesture of maintaining the existing mangroves and protecting them from destruction and making available the ecosystem services from these mangroves to society.

1. The scheme will be co-ordinated and monitored by Social Forestry wing of the Kerala Forest Department.
2. The Scheme will be implemented through the respective Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) of each District.
3. The Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) of each District will invite application by giving wide publicity about the scheme through the media.
4. The interested owners shall apply to the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) of the concerned District in the prescribed format along with the proof of original ownership ( title deed, tax receipt and a certificate from the village officer stating ownership of land) and a sketch of the area.
5. The owners of selected mangroves with the assistance of the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) will prepare a detailed sketch of the area indicating the details of the mangroves present and activities proposed to ensure their conservation.
6. A District Committee will be set up comprising the following :
  - i. *Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry)* - *Chairman*
  - ii. *Representative of District Panchayath* - *Member*
  - iii. *Representative of Research Institution* - *Member*
  - iv. *Representative of Reputed NGO* - *Member*
7. The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) / Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) having jurisdiction over the area will approve the composition of the District Committee.
8. The District Committee shall scrutinize , evaluate and select the mangroves to be supported in each District under the scheme. The District Committee will decide on the extent of the

- mangroves and the amount of incentive to be payed to the owner of the mangrove
- The owners of mangroves selected for support under the scheme will enter into an MoU with the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) prior to the commencement of the programme.
10. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forests) will make available necessary fund to owners through the respective Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry)
11. The owners shall sign an MoU with the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) at the time of giving the seedlings for planting in their land to the effect that the seedlings planted will be protected for one year before the incentive for surviving seedlings can be given.

4. **GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION OF VANAMITHRA AWARD FOR BEST PRACTICES IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION.**

- a. The Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) shall give wide publicity in this regard.
- b. Application for consideration shall be submitted to the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) of the concerned District.
- c. Individuals , Educational Institutions , NGOs , farmers etc. will be considered for the award . They are required to furnish a note justifying the claim for the award including photographs.
- d. The Assistant Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) shall scrutinize the applications received and recommend two nominations after field verification before the state level committee along with his recommendations.
- e. There will be only one award in each district.
- f. Selection will be done by a State Level Expert Committee comprising the following members viz., Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry) (Chairman).one representative each from Kerala Forest Research institute (KFRI), Kerala Agricultural university and Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden(JNTBGRI), Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and an environmentalist as members. The decision of the Expert Committee will be final.
- g. Activities which contributed to the conservation of the biodiversity values of the locality viz., conservation of sacred groves , mangroves , medicinal plants, agro-biodiversity etc. will be considered for awards.