

Final report to 21st Century Tiger

Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation – Anshi-Dandeli

Project title: Community Leadership Conservation for Tiger Conservation - Anshi-Dandeli.

Project leader: Balachandra Hegde, Sahyadri Wildlife and Forest Conservation Trust

Staff: Permanent: nil, Temporary field staff: 3

Collaborators and Institutional partners

Karnataka State Forest Department
Wildlife Conservation Society, India Program
Center for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore

Project duration: Start date: July 01, 2003 End date: June 30, 2004

Reporting period: 1st July 2003 – 30th June 2004

Acknowledgements:

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Executive summary:

Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation (CLTC) is a continuation of the earlier project supported by 21st Century Tiger in Anshi National Park and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary to support conservation of one of the important tiger habitats in northern part of TCU- 55, level - 1 tiger conservation unit in Western Ghats of Karnataka.

Two protected areas, viz., Anshi National Park (ANP) and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary (DWS), are situated on the northwestern side of the Uttara Kannada district. These forests are linked to six protected areas in the neighboring states of Goa and Maharashtra. Together this region forms a contiguous forest patch of about 2,200 sq. kms with pockets of intact prime habitat for tigers and other habitat specialist wildlife species. This area is a part of the high priority tiger conservation unit and is in the northern part of the Level - 1 Tiger Conservation Unit - 55 (Dinerstein et al. 1997). CLTC aims at continuing conservation education among the locals in and around the reserves to raise conservation awareness and continue conservation monitoring in the area.

During the reporting period over 25 community awareness and school education programs were conducted for locals and students residing around the reserves. The project team followed up with the government to add potential wildlife habitats around the reserve and also on voluntary resettlement of villagers from the reserves. The project leader also provided inputs to the government on various issues.

Description of activities:

Community awareness programs:

Two nature camps for students of local villages, which are located in the interiors of the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, was conducted. Importance of wildlife, forests and other information were discussed with the participants. The participants included both students and other local villagers. Nature walks were conducted for the students to educate them about the hydrological value of forests, importance of wildlife in regeneration of forests and other aspects. 49 students and 35 villagers participated in these educative programs. Faculty from the local Forestry College, forest department officials and journalists delivered lectures on various aspects of conservation.

One nature camp was conducted for teachers from schools in and around Anshi and Dandeli reserves, which was attended by 12 teachers. The camp was conducted to educate the teachers on the importance of tiger and forest conservation.

Seventeen conservation video shows for school children were conducted for Anshi, Gund, Karsingal, Shivapura, Barade, Nujji, Patoli, Kulgi, Phansoli and other villages that are all located inside the wildlife reserve. Films on wildlife conservation were shown to students along with villagers to inculcate interest in wildlife conservation. A field trip was also organized for the students. Over 375 students and 350 villagers belonging to twenty villages actively participated in these educative programs.

During the dry season, awareness programs about forest fires were conducted in the reserves. Volunteers visited villages inside the reserve to educate the villagers about the effects of human induced forest fires on wildlife. Educative pamphlets in local language were distributed to create awareness about forest fires during the awareness campaign.

The reserves are seriously affected during the three major annual religious festivals held at religious sites inside the reserves. Over 100,000 people attend these religious festivals. Visitors collect non-timber forest produce (NTFP), timber, firewood and at times also set fires to forests. An awareness campaign was carried out by distributing educative pamphlets to the visiting pilgrims.

An educative poster campaign was undertaken in and around Anshi National Park and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary. Posters on poaching which was designed by Wildlife Conservation Society with support from 21st Century Tiger has been distributed in villages, forest checkpoints around the reserves to raise public awareness about the problem.

On 13 instances, the project leader assisted villagers inside the reserve who had suffered crop damages from wildlife depredation to apply for compensation from the government. The project leader also supported one family to apply for compensation for death due to elephant. These initiatives will reduce animosity towards wildlife. The project leader also educated local villagers against poisoning of cattle kills by tigers.

Building up a dedicated volunteer group:

Subsequent to the workshop organized for journalists under the project during the previous year, with support from Wildlife Conservation Society, features in state dailies have been published about the problems of the reserve. Journalists who had attended the workshop have published five such features during the reporting period. One journalist who attended the media workshop conducted by Wildlife Conservation Society at Nagarahole is now volunteering to organize education activities under this project.

Local volunteers mobilized under the project collected information on illegal extraction of Cinnamon, a non-timber forest produce which was brought to the notice of the forest department. Based on this information forest department has taken action to control illegal extraction.

Habitat improvement:

Based on the proposal submitted by the project leader and the co-ordinator during the previous year to add potential wildlife areas adjoining the reserves, and after interactions and follow-up, the Chief Wildlife Warden of Karnataka made two field visits to the reserve. Discussions with senior departmental officials, the reserve warden, field staff, the project leader and co-ordinator were held about consolidating additional potential wildlife habitats adjoining Anshi National Park and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary. Based on the proposal submitted by the project leader the reserve warden has now submitted a recommendation to the Government to include about 350 sq kms of prime wildlife habitats to be consolidated into the existing reserves.

A meeting and slide presentation about voluntary resettlement from wildlife reserves was held in the village of Shivapura which is in the interiors of the reserve. Nearly 50 villagers from five villages attended the program. Villagers discussed of possibility of resettlement for their villages. If these villages are resettled outside the reserve nearly 300 sq kms of wildlife habitat will be free of human settlements.

Three formal and several informal meetings were held with Shivapura and other adjoining villagers regarding voluntary resettlement. As a follow up of the earlier meeting held with villagers from Shivapura regarding voluntary resettlement the Chief Wildlife Warden was also convinced to visit these villages for a discussion. A meeting and discussion between villagers of Shivapura and four adjoining villages with the Chief Wildlife Warden, reserve warden and other forest department staff was held at the village. A total of over 100 villagers and eight senior forest department officials attended the meeting. Villagers explicitly expressed their willingness to be resettled outside the reserve if a fair compensation package was provided to them. The Chief Wildlife Warden has agreed to the idea of preparing a formal proposal for the resettlement of villages.

The project leader is following up with the reserve warden to develop a proposal for voluntary resettlement of villagers. Village leaders and the project leader also met senior departmental officials to express their continued support for resettlement.

The project leader made a total of 42 field visits and a total of 68 meetings were held with forest department officials regarding boundary rationalization, voluntary resettlement, management issues, conservation and education activities.

Exploratory activities

On invitation from the International Agriculture Centre, Netherlands, the project leader participated in the International Seminar on Multi-stakeholder Process for Sustainable Natural Resources Management at Khatmandu and Chitwan National Park, Nepal. Natural resource management, conflict handling in natural resource management, tolls for multistake holder process, different techniques used for natural resource management and other issues were discussed at the seminar. The seminar provided better inputs for understanding handling conflict management among different stakeholders.

Based on a request from the forest department the project leader provided inputs for designing eco-tourism plans for the reserves that will be implemented by the forest department.

The project leader also provided inputs to environmental organizations, ministry of environment and forests and the state forest department for developing proposals for declaring the region as Eco-sensitive area and biosphere reserve.

Conservation accomplishments

The final notification of the Anshi National Park (339.866 sq kms) was issued by the state government. Though the first notification of the reserve was for 250 sq kms, after the mapping exercise carried out by the project leader during the previous project year it was found that the actual area of the reserve was 339.866 sq kms. This has been included in the final notification where the reserve has gained an additional area of nearly 90 sq kms due to the exercise undertaken by the project leader.

Proposal submitted under the project is accepted by the forest department to add around 350 sq kms of potential wildlife habitats around the reserves.

Problems and constraints: None

Goals/Activities for the next year:

1. To continue conservation efforts initiated under CLTC during the previous project year.
2. To conduct activities to mobilize public support and build local conservation leadership in the villages to support a long-term conservation activity in the area.
3. To follow up implementation of boundary rationalization proposal already initiated.
4. To continuously liaise with the senior officials and field personnel through formal and informal interaction and providing inputs for conservation of the reserves.

Note: Many of the individuals/organisations/collaborators listed in this project report have offered their time/expertise/ intellectual support to the conservation process carried out under the project on a voluntary basis.