

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR TIGER CONSERVATION ANSHI- DANDELI

SAHYADRI WILDLIFE AND FOREST
CONSERVATION TRUST (SWIFT)

Nilkund, India



FINAL REPORT

July 2004- June 2005

SUBMITTED TO



21st CENTURY TIGER

giving wild tigers a future

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Final report to 21st Century Tiger

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR TIGER CONSERVATION - ANSHI- DANDELI.

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

Project Leader:

Balachandra Hegde, Sahyadri Wildlife and Forest Conservation Trust (SWIFT)

Staff: Permanent: nil, Temporary field staff: 2

Collaborators and institutional affiliations:

1. Wildlife Conservation Society, India Program
2. Center for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore
3. Wildlife First, Bangalore
4. Joida Taluka Journalists' Association
5. Forestry College, Sirsi

Project duration: July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005

Acknowledgements: Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation was made possible with the funding support from 21st Century tiger. The project team wishes to thank the donors. The project team acknowledges the support and encouragement received from Chief Wildlife Warden, Karnataka Forest Department. The project team also thanks Park warden and entire staff of Anshi National Park and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary for providing active support and help while implementing this project.

Executive Summary:

Community Leadership for Tiger Conservation (CLTC) is a continuation of the ongoing conservation and education project supported by 21st Century Tiger in Anshi National Park and Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary to conserve some of the key tiger habitats in the northern part of the level1 Tiger Conservation Unit-55, (Dinerstein et al. 1997) in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, India.

During the reporting period, 48 community awareness and school education programs were conducted for local communities and students residing in and around the protected areas (PAs). The project team organized activities to educate people about the ill effects of forest fires, extraction of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) and hunting. Initiatives started in the last reporting period to include other potential tiger habitats around the reserve were continued. Activities related to the rationalization of park boundary, voluntary resettlement of villagers from within the PAs, and liaison and follow up with the government agencies were also continued during the project period.

Project Objectives:

The CLTC-Anshi Dandeli project aimed to achieve the following objectives during the period:

- ✍ Continue conservation efforts initiated under CLTC during the previous project year.
- ✍ Mobilize community support and build local conservation leadership in the villages to support a long-term conservation activity in the area.
- ✍ Continuously liaise with the senior forest department officials through formal and informal interaction and provide inputs for improvement of protection mechanism.
- ✍ Continue watchdog activities, to monitor and report activities, which are detrimental to wildlife and their habitat.
- ✍ Provide inputs for consolidation of habitat by the addition of potential wildlife habitats around the reserves, and follow up with the concerned government agencies.

Description of Activities Undertaken:

1. Continue conservation efforts initiated under CLTC during the previous project year.

a) Voluntary resettlement: During the previous reporting period (2003-2004), several meetings were held with local communities, followed by field visits to other PAs where voluntary resettlements processes have already been initiated. Convinced by the success of resettlements in other PAs such as Bhadra Tiger Reserve, Karnataka, some of the villagers inside the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary and Anshi National Park also showed interest in being resettled and submitted a memorandum to the administration demanding resettlement. However, procedures of resettlement (e.g. preparing the draft proposal) had not been initiated then.

The support provided to local communities demanding resettlement during the last reporting period was continued during this reporting period. A committee for drafting the proposal for resettlement was constituted by the Deputy Conservator of Forests, which included villagers, forest officials and the project leader. This committee has drafted the project proposal, which will be sent to the government shortly. The project leader has provided many inputs, including data on the number of families to be resettled, revenue land holdings, and other properties that are liable for compensation, which were collected by him with the help of local youths. The project leader also helped the local people in articulating their demands for resettlement.

2. Mobilizing Community Support for Tiger Conservation

a) Community awareness programs:

Fourteen formal meetings and several informal meetings were conducted with local villagers residing within the enclosures of Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary (DWS) and Anshi National Park (ANP) during the reporting period. During these meetings issues such as voluntary resettlement of villages, crop damage by wildlife and compensation support by the government, local support to the forest department's protection system and minimizing human impacts on forests were discussed.

These educational meetings were meant to create awareness and conceive a strategy for minimum impact harvesting of NTFP. The negative impacts of over-harvesting and destructive harvesting methods were highlighted during these meetings.

The project leader visited all villages which are prone to crop raiding by elephants and other wildlife. The various aspects of the problem were discussed, and the project leader helped mediate between the villagers and the forest department. The project leader ensured that the supply of firecrackers used to drive crop-raiding elephants away was done well before the crop-raiding season.

b) Slide Shows:

Eighteen public awareness campaigns with slide shows were conducted in villages located inside the reserves. All these programs were conducted during local festivals, cultural events and other social meetings. The importance of tiger conservation in the region, and responsibilities of local communities towards conservation were discussed in each of the meetings. Over 600 people from nine villages attended these slide shows.

c) Video shows:

A total of 11 half-day conservation events were organized in villages inside the reserves. Video shows on wildlife conservation were screened and talks accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation on Dandeli and Anshi reserves were conducted. Students and teachers along with local villagers attended these events. A field trip into forests was also organized during each of these events, where the students were introduced to the flora and fauna of the area. Discussions on tiger conservation were initiated in which villagers and students participated actively after the half-day events.

In all about 350 students and teachers from various schools, and about 75 villagers participated actively in these events.

d) Fire protection campaign:

Creating awareness about forest fires was one of the major activities carried out during the reporting period. Posters and pamphlets in the local language about the negative effects of fire on forests and wildlife were distributed to the villagers. Local youth were encouraged to immediately inform the forest department when fires occurred, so that the department staff could take prompt action to extinguish the fires.

e) Religious Festivals: Two religious festivals are conducted annually inside the reserve with around 100,000 people participating in one of them. At this time, people from all over the state visit the temple inside the reserve. Pilgrims, especially from neighboring non-forested areas, use this visit to collect wood, cane and bamboo to make agricultural implements. As part of the project, these occasions were used to spread awareness about

the importance of these reserves, and pamphlets with conservation messages were designed and distributed to the visiting pilgrims.

f) Nature camps:

Five nature camps were conducted for students of primary schools within the PAs and from the surrounding area. Issues pertaining to the wildlife reserves, importance of tiger and forest conservation were introduced to the students and discussion were initiated. A small field trip to the forests, to enable the students to gain exposure to wildlife, and to see first-hand the important role of forests in hydrology and other processes, was also conducted during each camp. The negative impacts to forests and wildlife from NTFP harvesting and local hunting were emphasized. About 121 students and about 25 villagers participated in these nature camps.

g) Support to local communities:

Health camps:

Five health camps were conducted in remote villages situated inside the DWS and ANP in collaboration with the Joida Taluka Journalists' Association. The project mobilized doctors from government hospitals to visit the villages and provided health check-ups. Such camps were conducted in Siddoli (DWS), Kundal (ANP) and Diggi, Terali, Shirolu villages (on the periphery of the reserves). These remote villages gained access to government hospitals for the first time, and about 150 people benefited from these health camps. These camps will help in building goodwill, among these villages inside or on the periphery of the PAs, towards conservation efforts underway inside the reserve.

Interaction with other governmental officials:

Six meetings of local villagers with government officers from other departments were organized by the project leader at villages situated inside the park. The *Tahsildar* (*Tehsil* Revenue Officer) and other officers camped at the villages and provided services such as provision of land records, ration cards and other facilities to the villagers. About 200 people received these services during these camps.

These villages are situated in the interior forests (about 25 - 40 km away from the nearest modern facilities) and have no basic amenities. These programs help instill confidence in the project leader and build a strong rapport, which is likely to help reduce conflicts in the future, and is extremely important if the resettlement project is to be carried out successfully.

Hydroelectric Projects: The government is considering a proposal to construct a series of hydroelectric dams across streams flowing in Uttara Kannada district. A total of 11 dams have been proposed for tributaries of three major east flowing rivers originating in the Western Ghats of the district. Out of these, two of the proposed dams will be inside the Anshi National Park and two inside the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary. The other seven dams will be situated in reserved forest areas, submerging a total of over 6000 ha of pristine evergreen and semi-evergreen forests of the Western Ghats-one of the global biodiversity hot spots. Project leader provided substantial technical inputs and support to local advocacy groups who were campaigning against this ill-conceived developmental project. He also participated in these local campaigns and helped mobilize public support against these projects.

3. Continuously liaise with the senior forest department officials through formal and informal interactions and provide inputs for improvement of protection mechanism.

Interaction with forest department staff:

Regular formal and informal meetings were held with forest officials to discuss conservation issues. During this reporting period, a number of meetings were held with different officials, the details of which are given below:

Forest official	No of meetings held
Range Forest Officer	72 (5 different range officers)
Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF)	21
Conservator of Forests (CF)	12
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Chief Wildlife Warden	4

These meetings were used to communicate conservation problems observed in the field to department officials, and to follow up on the proposals for resettlement and boundary rationalization.

The project leader also provided substantial inputs to forest department officials towards habitat improvement and wildlife management measures. Forest department officials often consulted the project leader on these issues.

4. Continue watchdog activities, to monitor and report activities, which are detrimental to wildlife and their habitat.

Building up of a volunteer group:

Under the guidance of the project leader, nine youths from villages inside the reserves and 15 from other areas have been participating actively in conservation efforts such as conducting nature camps and bicycle rallies. Five of them are regularly involved in various conservation activities. Many of these youths were first introduced to wildlife conservation in the previous reporting years, some of them as long ago as three years, and continue to participate actively. Five journalists, (both freelance and full-time) have voluntarily involved themselves in conservation efforts and write regularly on conservation issues to spread awareness.

Several local youths now provide the project leader with information on illegal activities such as hunting, narcotics cultivation, timber smuggling, dynamiting of streams for fish, poisoning of tiger kills, and encroachments into the reserve, which is then passed on to the forest department. The project leader has maintained a good rapport with these people, and has been able to bring to the department's attention substantial amount of information on these activities.

5. Provide inputs for consolidation of habitat by the addition of potential wildlife habitats around the reserves, and follow up with the concerned government agencies.

Increasing the available tiger habitat:

Around ANP and DWS exist fairly large forested areas with excellent potential to support tiger and prey populations. These areas are currently designated as reserved forests and consequently receive a lower level of protection. Inclusion of these areas to the two PAs will help consolidate the larger landscape and add an additional 300 km² to the existing area. A boundary rationalization proposal towards this end, prepared by the project leader and Mr. Sanjay Gubbi during the previous reporting period, has been accepted by the forest department, and has now been sent to the state government for approval. The project leader is following up with senior forest department officials to implement the proposed boundary rationalization. The project leader has also been providing additional information as and when required by the government.

EXPLORATORY ACTIVITIES:

Project leader participated as an instructor in line transect field surveys conducted by Centre for Wildlife Studies, for large mammals conducted at Nagarahole National Park, Bandipur National Park and Bhadra Tiger reserves. Project leader also participated in the activities carried out by Karnataka Birders Network (NKBN) and Uttara Kannada Jilla Parisara Samrakshanaa Samiti.

PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS:

The project leader met with a vehicle accident and could not actively carry out conservation activities during his recovery period of 45 days. However, conservation field activities were continued by volunteers during this time.

GOALS / ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT YEAR:

1. To conduct education programs on wildlife conservation to mobilize public support and build local conservation leadership in the villages to support Long- term tiger conservation in the area.
2. To educate people about the benefits of relocating to areas outside existing wildlife reserves, motivate them into action, and to support both local people and the forest department in the design and implementation of a fair and just resettlement plan.
3. To interact with the local people and forest officials to improve the on-ground protection for tigers, their prey and their habitat.

CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- A boundary rationalization proposal developed by the project leader to include additional area into the park has been sent by the forest department to the government of Karnataka for final approval.
- A proposal for resettlement has been prepared. The project leader is actively involved with government agencies to obtain approval for the proposal.
- Though difficult to measure, the education activities, as well as the medical camps have significantly increased awareness among local communities, as evident from the information received by the project leader on illegal activities in the PAs from the villagers, the response to the nature camps and a tangible change in attitudes towards conservation.
- A small group of wildlife enthusiasts has been set up, comprising of locals from within the PAs and from the surrounding areas. Under the guidance of the project leader, this group has become increasingly active in conservation efforts.

Appendix I

Photo-images of project activities during July 2004 June 2005



Photo credit: B. Hegde

Densely forested hill ranges in Anshi-Dandeli



Photo credit: B. Hegde

Rugged landscape of the Anshi-Dandeli region.



Photo credit: B. Hegde

Sapindus spp, a non-timber forest product that is subject to heavy collection pressures in Anshi-Dandeli.



Photo credit: B. Hegde

Voluntary resettlement of forest interior villages is a major conservation challenge in Anshi-Dandeli.



Photo credit: B. Hegde

School students learn about local conservation issues during a slide show by Mr. Balachandra Hegde.



Photo credit: B. Hegde

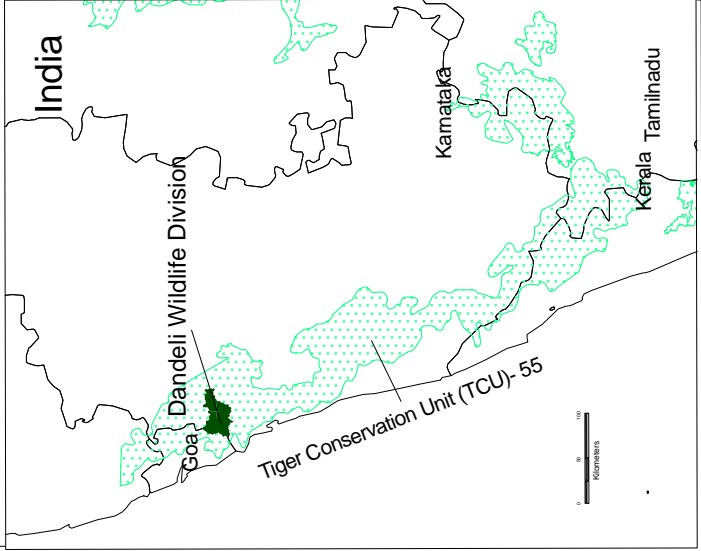
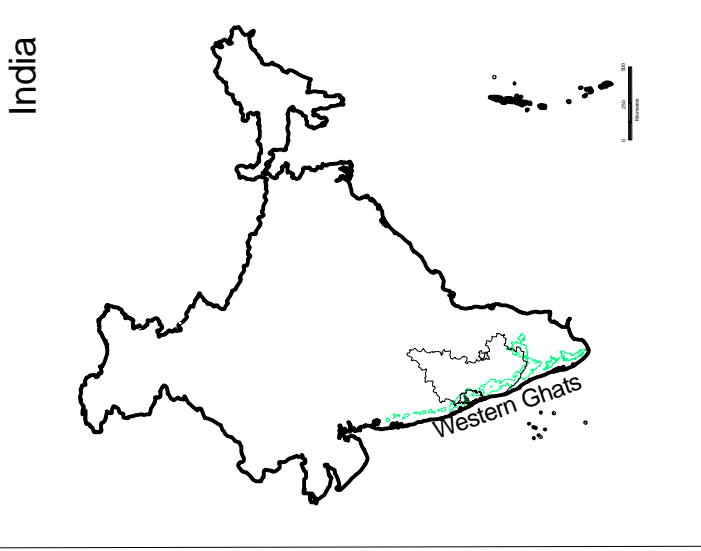
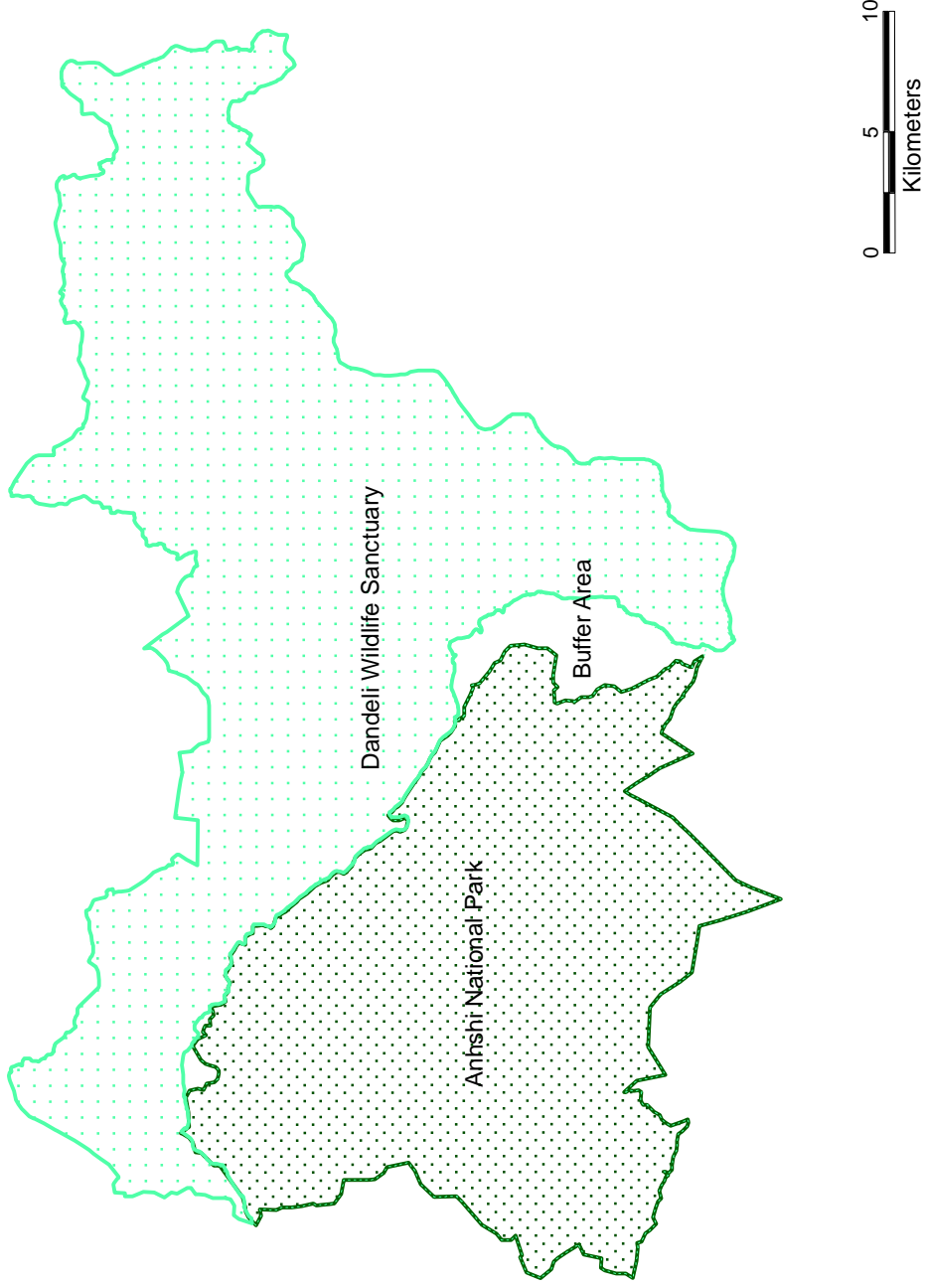
Balachandra Hegde (facing camera, left), talking to students about wildlife conservation during a field trip to Dandeli WLS.

Appendix II

Maps

Location of Dandeli Wildlife Division

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Map 1



Area proposed to be added to Anshi National Park

Phase 1

