

**CS directs prioritization of forest conservation**

09 February 2022

SRINAGAR, Feb 8: The Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta today chaired the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) to review achievements registered under the Annual Plan of Operations (APOs). At the outset, Dr. Mohit Gera, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests gave an overview of the major initiatives of the Government including Green J&K Drive, Har Gaon Haryali, creation of livelihoods from forests, eco-tourism and major achievements of department during the current year.

It was informed that during the last two years, CAMPA has increased its activities by almost three-fold. Against an average annual coverage of 5000 ha till 2019-20, the Department will be covering rehabilitation of about 14000 ha area in the current financial year and about 18000 ha in the next financial year. Besides, each work under CAMPA has been given unique ID to ensure its execution, monitoring and maintenance for effective outcome.

It was further informed that detailed site-specific plans along with their location maps for rehabilitation of degraded forests have been prepared for the next financial year using CAMPA portal. The rehabilitation plan includes protective fencing and planting of about 1.70 crore plants, highest ever in history of J&K. The plan also includes broadcast of 25.18 lakh seed balls and sowing in 40.59 lakh patches and 10.21 lakh dibbles as low cost afforestation measures. Furthermore, various soil conservation measures like dry rubble stone masonry, crates and water harvesting structures/ponds have been proposed to give a fillip to eco-restoration efforts. For protection of forest lands from encroachment, 23,500 new boundary pillars are proposed to be erected during 2022-23.

The proposed plan lays special emphasis on eco-restoration of Kandi areas in Jammu as well as Kashmir region and augmentation of grass and fodder production. The Wildlife Protection Department will be working towards improvement of wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation works, maintenance of animal rescue centres, eco-development activities and development of wildlife related infrastructure.

During the meeting PCCF informed that 100 biggest encroachments on forest land have been removed and more than 23000 kanals of land have been recovered from the encroachers. The Chief Secretary asked the Department to prioritize modernization through remote sensing and GIS tools for preparation of digital maps, equipment like, CCTV, Drones, Camera traps, GPS for more efficient functioning.

Dr. Mehta directed the Forest Department to take action for enhancing livelihood from forests, establish deeper connect with Panchayats, and rehabilitate degraded forests in a time bound manner, besides laying special focus on forest conservation, forest fire mitigation and plantation of 1.7 crore trees. He also emphasized on fodder production and water conservation. On the occasion, publications on 'Wetlands in Forest Areas of J&K', 'Forest Trek Routes', 'Calendar highlighting Forest Recreation and Other Interventions', 'Asian Waterbird Census in Jammu &

Kashmir', pamphlet on 'Pine Needles to Handicraft', and documentary on 'Van Se Jal: Jal Se Jeevan' were also released.

Source: <https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/cs-directs-prioritization-of-forest-conservation/>