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India continues to lose forest land to non-forestry projects

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Central environment ministry reports diversion of 11,467 hectares forest land in 2019 (up to first week of November)



The largest area of forest land was diverted for irrigation and mining projects. Photo: Agnimirh Basu / CSE

The diversion of forest land for other purposes continued throughout India. A total 11,467.83 hectares (114.68 square kilometre) forest lands were diverted in 22 states between January 1 and November 6, 2019, the Union government admitted.

This diversion was for 932 non-forestry projects under the Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA), 1980, according to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change [Annual Report 2019-20](#) (published on the ministry website on June 8, 2020).

More than a third of the diversion (4,514 ha) was for 14 projects was in Odisha, followed by Telangana — 2,055 ha for 11 projects — and Jharkhand (869.99 ha for 11 projects).

The most number of projects — 251 — were in Haryana, which led to the diversion of 519.53 ha. Madhya Pradesh diverted 795.36 ha for 220 projects.

State	Number of Projects	Total Forest Land approved for diversion (in ha)
Andhra Pradesh	3	37.82
Bihar	28	453.43
Chhattisgarh	1	207.99
Goa	1	0.93
Gujarat	99	114.01
Haryana	251	519.53

Himachal Pradesh	52	434.36
Jharkhand	11	869.99
Karnataka	11	162.61
Kerala	2	0.26
Madhya Pradesh	220	795.36
Maharashtra	2	151.81
Mizoram	1	23.69
Odisha	14	4514.00
Punjab	123	411.07
Rajasthan	27	370.34
Tamil Nadu	6	18.45
Telangana	11	2055.05
Tripura	2	1.80
Uttar Pradesh	1	63.27
Uttarakhand	64	159.74
West Bengal	2	102.33
TOTAL	932	11467.83

The annual report also gave the category-wise details of the divisions. The largest area of forest land was diverted for irrigation and mining projects.

Twenty-four irrigation projects led to the diversion of 4,287.50 ha, while 22 mining projects led to the diversion of 3,846.09 ha of forest land. Other than this, 227 road construction projects also led to the diversion of 1,487.82.

Guidelines had been issued for encouraging voluntary relocation of villages from the core areas of national parks / wildlife sanctuaries / tiger reserves to forest fringe areas, the report said.

Wherever this happened, the legal status of the new area could be changed to 'non-forest land' under FCA. However, no rehabilitation project was undertaken in any of the states that would have required diversion of forest land last year.

There was no conversion of forest villages to revenue villages in 2019, as stipulated under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Forest villages were villages set up by the British Indian government to settle workers inside forests and procure resources like timber more efficiently. There are around 2,500 forest villages across the country.

Category	Number of cases	Total Land Diverted (Ha.)
Approach Access	147	5.93
Borehole Prospecting	0	0
Canal	1	0
Defence	0	0
Dispensary/Hospital	1	40.51
Drinking Water	31	158.60
Encroachments	0	0
Forest Village Conversion	0	0
Hydel	9	167.96
Industry	5	29.03
Irrigation	24	4287.50
Mining	22	3846.09
Optical Fibre Cable	126	74.12
Others	244	314.77
Pipeline	19	6.85
Quarrying	1	2.00
Railway	11	386.06
Rehabilitation	0	0
Road	227	1487.82
School	2	4.38
Thermal	3	49.83

Transmission Line	46	578.67
Village Electricity	12	9.72
Wind Power	1	18.00
TOTAL	932	11467.83

Source: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/forests/india-continues-to-lose-forest-land-to-non-forestry-projects-71633>