

**REPORT FILED BY THE PRINCIPAL CHIEF CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS
AND HEAD OF FOREST FORCE, ANDHRA PRADESH BEFORE THE
NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL, SOUTHERN ZONE, CHENNAI IN
O.A. NO.259(SZ) OF 2020& 02/2021 (SZ)**

1. SUO MOTO cases were registered by the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (Southern Zone), Chennai, based on the Newspaper reports published in the Times of India, dated.08.12.2020; Indian Express, dated.09.12.2020 and in the Hindu, dt. 15.12.2020, under the captions "**heavy metal content in water caused mysterious disease in Andhra Pradesh**", "**Andhra town Eluru hit by 'mystery' illness, traces of Lead, Nickel in blood samples**", and "**mystery illness raises concerns over Kolleru pollution**" respectively and a news item telecasted in NDTV, dated.09.12.2020 under the caption "**Lead, Nickel found in Blood of people with a mystery illness in Andhra Pradesh**".

2. It is respectfully submitted that the Hon'ble NGT (SZ), Chennai in their order dt.26.10.2021, directed to implead the Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force, Andhra Pradesh and also the District Forest Officer, West Godavari District as additional respondents 9 and 10 in O.A. No. 2 of 2021. Consequent to the notification of a part of Kolleru Lake as a Wildlife Sanctuary by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary has been under the administrative control of the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department. Hence, the Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force, Andhra Pradesh is impleaded as 9th respondent.

3. It is respectfully submitted that, Kolleru Lake is one of the largest freshwater ecosystems (Wetland) in India of International importance recognized under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971) in the year 2002. Out of the total area of the lake which is up to +10 feet MSL contour (Ac. 2,25,250), only up to +5 feet MSL contour (Ac.77,138) has been declared as Wildlife Sanctuary in the year 1999. Further, as per the direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in I.A. no. WP(C) no.202 of 1995, a total of 1776 no. of tanks (1140 in West Godavari district + 636 in Krishna district) covering an area of about 43,724 acres (28,949 acres in West Godavari + 15,775 acres in Krishna) have been demolished under "Operation Kolleru" within the notified area of Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary, up to +5' contour. After operation Kolleru, the sanctuary lands were consolidated by the Revenue Department of West Godavari and Krishna Districts and handed over to the Forest Department.

4. There are mainly three categories of lands that exist inside the Sanctuary area viz., Government, D-Patta, and Ziroyati lands. The area of the Ziroyati land i.e., Ac.14,861.33 is with individual farmers. The D-Pattas granted inside the Sanctuary area were cancelled at the time of notification. Traditionally, the villagers were practicing either agriculture or aquaculture activities in the area. After the "Operation Kolleru 2006", the Revenue Department from both the Districts i.e. West Godavari and Krishna has consolidated the area, village-wise and handed it over to

the Forest Department. But, the survey did not take place to demarcate the physical boundary of the Sanctuary, which runs along the +5 feet MSL contour as per the notification. During "Operation Kolleru-2006", the aquaculture tank bunds inside the Wildlife Sanctuary were partially demolished and the villagers again resorted to aquaculture activities by strengthening the partially demolished bunds. The encroachments are seasonal in nature. During monsoon season, the area within the +5 feet contour of MSL is generally flooded and once the water level recedes post-monsoon, the villagers try to repair the bunds of old tanks and start aquaculture activities. The Ziroyati lands are yet to be acquired by the Government from the farmers by paying suitable compensation. Though the D-Patta lands were cancelled at the time of notification, the farmers claim that they still have rights over those lands.

5. There is a lot of pressure from local villagers to carry out aquaculture activities and several complex issues involved from paying compensation to downsizing the Sanctuary boundary. Forest Department is making concerted efforts in protecting the sanctuary area despite all hurdles. So far, 544 cases have been registered related to encroachment, mainly for aquaculture in all the categories of the lands since 2006-07 and the cases are under trial in various courts. The details of cases registered from 2006-07 to 2021-22 (up to 31-10-2021) are given below;

ABSTRACT OF ENCROACHMENT CASES REGISTERED FROM 2006-07 TO 2021-22 (up to 31-10-2021) IN KOLLERU WLS

Year of Encroachment Case booked	No. of cases booked	The extent of Encroachment (Acres)		
		Govt.	Ziroyati	Total
2006-07	3	0	3.03	3.03
2007-08	1	0	0	0
2008-09	11	170.00	258.71	428.71
2009-10	23	307.95	471.31	779.26
2010-11	36	321.61	355.24	676.85
2011-12	11	182.21	40.88	223.09
2012-13	18	237.83	122.45	360.28
2013-14	5	28.62	22.53	51.15
2014-15	19	586.80	193.88	780.68
2015-16	33	361.37	33.48	394.85
2016-17	74	737.83	172.51	910.34
2017-18	95	2329.59	244.69	2574.28
2018-19	55	2428.97	25.71	2454.68
2019-20	46	1665.47	95.27	1760.74
2020-21	65	1305.45	1009.33	2314.78
2021-22	59	1204.12	825.24	2029.36
TOTAL::	554	11867.82	3874.26	15742.08

6. However, in some areas cases were registered multiple times since aquaculture activities were attempted in the same location every year. Accordingly, the area has been reconciled and arrived to an extent of 9522.10 Acres. (Govt. land: 6680.73 Acres. Zeroyati land: 2841.37 Acres.). District -wise particulars are given below and a map is enclosed depicting the encroachments based on the cases registered so far.

ABSTRACT OF AREA UNDER ENCROACHMENT BASED ON CASES REGISTERED FROM 2006-07 TO 2020-21 IN KOLLERU WLS

Sl. no.	District	Mandal	Area of the Mandal (Acres)	Extent of Encroachment (Acres)		
				Govt. Land	Zeroyati Land	Total
1	West Godavari	Eluru	23900	2052.24	303.51	2355.75
2		Denduluru	586	0	158.54	158.54
3		Pedapadu	789	0	179.20	179.20
4		Nidamarru	6838	0	495.08	495.08
5		Unguturu	134	0	30.81	30.81
6		Bhimadole	20323	1617.69	834.28	2451.97
7		Akiveedu	6914	580.150	517.37	1097.520
		Total	59484	4250.08	2518.79	6768.87
1	Krishna	Kaikaluru	10295	2539.63	308.66	2848.29
2		Mandavalli	7359	71.02	13.92	84.94
		Total	17654	2430.65	322.58	2753.23
	WLS TOTAL		77138	6680.73	2841.37	9522.10

Activities taken up by the Forest Department in the Sanctuary area:

7. The Sanctuary area is generally managed based on the prescriptions provided in the approved Management Plan. The previous Integrated Management Plan for Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary was prepared by WISA (Wetlands International-South Asia):2008 for a period of 5 years under an assignment from the Forest Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh. The present Management Plan for Kolleru WLS is being prepared by involving Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai and it is under progress.

8. Forest Department is implementing various activities through State and Central schemes. The main activities implemented broadly in the Sanctuary area are Protection, Wildlife Habitat Improvement, Ecotourism, Development of bird congregation sites and infrastructure development etc., Overall, an amount of Rs.30 crore(approx.) has been spent in the sanctuary area from 2006-07 to 2020-21. Some of the important State and Central schemes being implemented currently in the sanctuary are CAMPA, BIOSAP, 04-Sanctuaries, 06-Development of National Parks & Sanctuaries, Centrally Sponsored Schemes - Conservation of Natural Resources & Aquatic Ecosystems etc., A brief note in this regard is annexed hereto.

9. The important activities being taken by Forest Department in the Sanctuary area are;

1. Protection: Establishment of base camps, strike force, check posts for regular patrolling, collecting intelligence, preventing encroachment activities, checking vehicle movement that carries fertilizers, chemicals, and fish feed into Sanctuary area etc. Presently 5 base camps, 1 strike force and 6 check posts are functioning from various locations in the Sanctuary area.

2. Habitat improvement: The activities like desilting of drains, demolition of old bunds, removal of water hyacinth and other weeds, formation of mounds, planting trees for bird nesting, installation of artificial perching stands, releasing fish fingerlings (food for aquatic birds) etc., are being taken up to create a favourable environment for the wildlife to survive.

3. Research & Monitoring: Regular censuses are being conducted to enumerate different bird species and their population. Research related to tagging of birds was conducted earlier by BNHS. Presently through M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), a study is being conducted on Socio-economic and livelihood assessment of communities living in and around Kolleru WLS.

4. Ecotourism: The ecotourism facility at Aatapaka and Madhavapuram in the sanctuary caters to visitors and acts as a Conservation Education Centre. Presently facilities like Environmental Education Centre, watchtower, boating are being maintained by the department. These facilities are being managed by local communities under the supervision of the Forest Department.

5. Awareness creation: Regular village level awareness programmes are being taken up and competitions for school and college students are being conducted during World Wetland Day, World Environment Day and Wildlife Week etc., mainly for gaining their support in the protection and conservation of this wetland.

10. Further, Forest Department is not only implementing various developmental activities but also constantly monitoring the sanctuary area and taking strict actions against the illegal activities despite all hurdles. The seasonal encroachments in the Sanctuary area mostly for aquaculture have been tackled by registering offence cases, demolishing the bunds, conducting village level programmes. The department is taking the best possible efforts to prevent and remove all kinds of encroachments in the sanctuary area.

11. It is respectfully submitted that, the Map of Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary depicting encroachments along with a report in the form of Searchable PDF/OCR supportable PDF is enclosed herewith. Necessary hard copies are also enclosed herewith which are as follows;

- Note on schemes under implementation (ANNEXURE - I).
- A detailed note on Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary is also enclosed herewith for kind perusal (ANNEXURE - II).
- Map of Kolleru Wild Life Sanctuary (ANNEXURE - III).

This is submitted for kind information.


 Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests &
 Head of Forest Force
 Andhra Pradesh

14.12.21

ANNEXURE - I**Brief Note on schemes being implemented in Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary**

Andhra Pradesh Forest department is implementing various activities through State and Central schemes. The main activities implemented broadly in the sanctuary area are Protection, Wildlife Habitat Improvement, Ecotourism, Development of bird congregation sites and infrastructure development etc. Overall, an amount of Rs.30 crore (approx.) has been spent in the sanctuary area from 2006-07 to 2020-21.

The Scheme-wise activities being taken up by the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department in the sanctuary area are broadly as follows;

1. CAMPA:**a. Wildlife Habitat Improvement in protected areas**

- i. Boundary Demarcation by the erection of stone monoliths/cairns

b. Water Resource Management in Protected Areas

- ii. Construction of water conservation structures
- iii. Development and maintenance of Check dams

c. Forest & Wildlife Protection

- iv. Construction of boundary pillars

2. BIOSAP

- v. Habitat Improvement

3. 04-Sanctuaries:**d. Habitat Improvement and Protection**

- vi. Maintenance of existing bird roosting stands

4. Vanavihari (Eco-tourism):

- vii. Maintenance of EECs

Centrally Sponsored Schemes**5. Conservation of Natural Resources & Aquatic Ecosystems****e. Sustainable resource development and livelihood improvement**

- viii. Release of fish seed (fingerlings) into Kolleru WLS at strategic points


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ANNEXURE -II**NOTE ON KOLLERU LAKE & KOLLERU WILDLIFE SANCTUARY****BACKGROUND:**

1. Kolleru Lake is one of the largest freshwater ecosystems (Wetland) in India of international importance recognized under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971) in the year 2002. It is a naturally formed lake between the alluvial plains of river Godavari and Krishna deltas and acts as a natural flood balancing reservoir. The lake with its variety of habitats supports rich biodiversity including some endangered species and supports the livelihoods of a large population living in and around the wetland system.

History:

2. The lake has been under tremendous pressure due to unsustainable developmental activities, particularly agriculture and aquaculture, which have led to the construction of hydraulic structures, roads, bunds and other infrastructure within its basin. The area under cultivation within the lake increased since 1940 when the British government granted *pattas* (title deeds) on payment of market value for the land. In 1954, the government initiated cooperative farming in the region inducing the formation of 93 farming societies on 850 sq. km. of the lake bed. The native paddy varieties were gradually replaced with shorter, high-yielding varieties that required the application of high dosages of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. By 1969, almost the entire lake was brought under cultivation and huge bunds were constructed to keep water out to protect the crops. As floods threatened cultivated areas almost every year, several control measures were also initiated during this period. However, the entire area was ravaged by a cyclone in 1969 which led to the near-complete destruction of agriculture. By the time flood control measures were completed, most of the people had become disillusioned with agriculture and had abandoned it. The roads and bridges that came up with agricultural development coupled with the increased demand for fish created a new livelihood opportunity and vast market for fish by 1978. Land use shifted to pisciculture which suddenly became profitable and by 1984, 5000 acres of government land within the lake bed was converted to fish tanks under the management of cooperative societies. The land was arbitrarily and haphazardly notified for pisciculture in total disregard to natural drainage patterns. High-profit margins subsequently induced contractors and private entrepreneurs into the Kolleru Lake area, who intensified aquaculture without adopting any environmental safeguards.

3. Realizing the rapid degradation of Kolleru Lake, the Government of Andhra Pradesh constituted several committees to propose measures for its restoration. Most of these committees, however, suggested engineering solutions aimed at agriculture and fisheries development and flood control. The measures proposed were aimed at the diversion of water to the upstream reaches reducing flows to the lake. The report of the expert committee on floods of deltaic areas on Krishna, Godavari and Guntur Districts by the Mitra Committee in 1966 suggested the construction of reservoirs at Budameru and Tammileru for storage of floodwaters (Mitra, 1966). Widening of Upputeru was proposed to drain the floodwaters with the lake levels controlled through the construction of a regulator (Mitra, 1966; Sreeramakrishnaiah, 1987; Ramakrishnan, 1980). Pandurangam (1976) recommended the construction of 71 tanks and necessary development to promote fisheries. Construction of roads, school buildings, hospitals, electrification and development of piggery, duckery, and dairy farms for socio-economic benefit were also recommended.

Area:

4. The Kolleru lake spreads over an area of 2,25,250 acres up to +10 feet contour MSL with rich biodiversity. The water spread area of Kolleru lake is as follows:

Up to +10 feet contour MSL	2,25,250 acres
Up to +7 feet Contour MSL	1,68,750 acres
Up to +5 feet contour MSL	77,138 acres
Up to +3 feet contour MSL	33,750 acres

Declaration of Kolleru wildlife sanctuary:

5. Govt. have issued a draft preliminary notification declaring Kolleru lake as a Wildlife Sanctuary vide G.O.Ms.No.76, EFS&T (For.III) Dept, dated. 25-9-1995. Later, the Govt. have issued a final notification of the sanctuary vide G.O.Ms.No. 120, EFS&T (For.III) Dept., dated.4-10-1999. The Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary spreads over 9 Mandals, i.e., 7 Mandals in West Godavari and 2 Mandals in Krishna District with an extent of 30,855.20 ha or 77,138 acres up to +5 feet contour MSL. Out of this, 14861.33 Acres are privately owned Patta lands.

The sanctuary area details are as follows:

Sl. no.	District	Name of the Mandal	Area in Acres
1	West Godavari	Eluru	23900
2		Unguturu	134
3		Pedapadu	789
4		Denduluru	586
5		Akiveedu	6914
6		Nidamarra	6838
7		Bhimadolu	20323
West Godavari district total			59484
8	Krishna	Kaikaluru	10295
9		Mandavalli	7359
Krishna District Total			17654
Total			77138

Status of WPs filed in the Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh:

6. Aggrieved by the notification orders issued by Government, several hundreds of illegal fish tank owners and other groups have filed several writ-petitions in Hon'ble High Court challenging the notification issued in 1999. After hearing all the writ-petitions, the Hon'ble High Court has bunched all the writ-petitions and treated them as a single case proclaimed the judgment on 30-7-2001, declaring the final notification issued by the State Govt. vide G.O.Ms.No.120 as valid and issued the following directions to the Government of A.P.;

- o The final notification issued is valid.
- o The Govt. should take all the steps to bring back Kolleru to its pristine glory.
- o No pisciculture/aqua-culture/shrimp culture should be permitted inside the sanctuary except traditional methods of fishing and traditional agriculture in their Patta lands, till such time their agriculture lands are acquired by Government.
- o All encroachments within Kolleru sanctuary up to +5' contour should be removed.

- o Government should take adequate steps in stoppage of effluents into Kolleru lake.

Steps taken by Govt. of A.P after the Hon'ble High Court orders, dt.30.7.2001:

7. In order to implement the Hon'ble High Court orders, the Government have taken several steps. Taskforce teams were formed to prevent illegal encroachments. The Forest Department has removed 54 illegal fish tanks and faced threats and very difficult situations. Motivation camps were conducted to educate the local people on the adverse effects of floods like crop damages, deterioration of water quality, dangerous effects of pollution due to excessive usage of chemical fertilizers, feed, and pesticides by the illegal fish tank owners, etc. A total of 731 cases were booked for habitat destruction etc., from 30-7-2001 to 17.11.2005. Pollution control measures were taken by monitoring the water quality in 19 stations.

PIL filed by NGO (Nallamalai Foundation) before the CEC:

8. As the matter stands at this stage, the Executive Director, Nallamalai Foundation (NGO) filed an IA No.381/2005 before the Central Empowered Committee (CEC), constituted by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (C) No.202/95 and 171/96 praying for the direction to the State Govt. on;

1. Immediate eviction of all encroachments in the sanctuary.
2. To expedite the acquisition of private Patta lands.
3. Cancellation of D-Form pattas (2,882 acres). (These D-Form pattas were cancelled by the Collector, West Godavari District on 11.8.2005 and 20.10.2005, and by the District Collector, Krishna on 10.1.2002 and 21.2.2002).
4. To bring back the Kolleru Lake to its pristine glory.

9. Hon'ble CEC has called for objections and conducted several hearings at New Delhi and also in Hyderabad wherein all the people representatives, several illegal fish tank owners, a large number of advocates have presented their cases before the committee and filed their affidavits during January-March, 2006. After the final hearing, the CEC has submitted its report to the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India during the month of March 2006.

Directions of the CEC of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India:

10. While dealing with a petition in IA No.1486-1487, Dt.20.3.2006, the Central Empowered Committee appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, vide Para No.54 of their report; issued the following directions;

- a. Use or transportation of inputs for pisciculture such as chemical fertilizer, farmyard manure, poultry manure, DOB, oil cakes etc., shall not be allowed in Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary.
- b. All fish tanks constructed inside the sanctuary shall be demolished in a time-bound manner starting from the big to the smaller ones. The tanks of an area of more than 100 acres (cumulative) shall be demolished within a period of 15 days and the remaining tanks shall be demolished by 31st May 2006.

Judgment of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and action taken by the Govt. of A.P:

11. Aggrieved by the order of the CEC, the Kolleru Food Industries have filed a Writ Petition No.1486-1487 before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and the Supreme Court in their judgment Dt:10.04.2006 have upheld the directions issued by the CEC. As per the direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, under "Operation Kolleru" totally, 1776 tanks (1140 in West Godavari + 636 in Krishna district) covering an area of about 43,724 acres (28,949 acres in West Godavari + 15,775 acres in Krishna) have been demolished in Kolleru wildlife sanctuary up to +5' contour. The demolition work has been taken up and completed by 15.6.2006 as per the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and CEC. The demolition was carried out by the revenue department under the supervision of District Collectors.

Post "Operation Kolleru-2006"

12. After the completion of "Operation Kolleru" in 2006, the revenue department from both the districts consolidated the lands falling up to +5 feet contour MSL and handed them over to the forest department for management. The Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary is under the administrative control of the Wildlife Management Division, Eluru. Unlike the regular reserve forest blocks, the boundary of the sanctuary is described in terms of +5 feet MSL contour line in the notification. Through G.O no.144, EFS&T (For.II) dept., dt.15.11.2006 staff were recruited on a contract basis under various categories to effectively manage the sanctuary area.

Details of private Patta lands owned by farmers:

13. Traditional agriculture in privately owned lands is permitted as per G.O. Ms.No.120, EFS & T (For.III) Dept., dt.4.10.1999. The Patta lands owned by private owners having legal rights to practice traditional agriculture within the sanctuary area up to +5' contour is 14,861.33 acres out of the total sanctuary area of 77,138 acres. The details are given below:

Sl. no.	Name of the Mandal	No. of villages	No. of Ryots	The Extent of area (Acres)
West Godavari Dist.				
1.	Eluru	7	399	823.61
2.	Pedapadu	3	199	496.52
3.	Denduluru	2	111	380.28
4.	Bhimadolu	5	1167	2426.87
5.	Nidamaruru	11	4126	6150.63
6.	Unguturu	1	30	146.46
7.	Akiveedu	10	1981	3475.1
	Total	39	8013	13899.47
Krishna District				
1.	Kaikaluru	10	125	571.45
2.	Mandavalli	5	71	390.41
	Total	15	196	961.86
	Grand total	54	8209	14861.33

14. As per G.O.Ms.No.120, dated.4.10.1999 and the judgment of the Hon'ble High Court, dated.30.7.2001 and also as per the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India's orders in April 2006, the owners of the agriculture lands can practice traditional agriculture without using pesticides and chemicals. But the farmers are agitating to permit them to use chemical fertilizers to get more yields, which is illegal. Otherwise, they are requesting to pay adequate compensation to their lands.

15. The Dist. Collector, West Godavari indicated Rupees Six Hundred Twenty-Five Crore Forty-Eight lakh (Rs.625.48 crore) and the Dist. Collector, Krishna has indicated Rupees Thirty crore (Rs.30.00 crore) to acquire an extent of 13,899.47 acres and 961.86 acres respectively. Accordingly, the Govt. have proposed to pay the total compensation of rupees Six hundred fifty five crore and forty eight lakh (Rs.655.48 crore) for paying compensation to the agriculture landowners to an extent of 14,861.33 acres from accumulated Compensatory Afforestation Management & Planning Agency (CAMPA) and requested Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forests & Climate Change to consider this proposal. But the Union Minister, MoEF & CC, GoI in National Board for Wildlife Meeting held by him on 22-12-2009 has decided and informed that CAMPA funds cannot be used for acquisition of private lands and the question of payment of compensation to the farmers from CAMPA funds cannot be considered.

A.P. State Legislative Assembly resolution on 04.09.2008:

16. The A.P Legislative Assembly on 4-9-2008 had adopted a resolution to request the National Board of Wildlife, GoI and the Central Empowered Committee for reduction of the boundary of Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary from +5 feet contour to +3 feet contour to mitigate the problems of the farmers.

17. The Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, GoI has been addressed accordingly vide EFS&T Lr.No.5876/For.II (2) 2006, dated. 17.10.2008 to place the matter before the National Board for Wildlife. The issue was discussed in the 17th meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife on 22.12.2009 and the Chairman decided to visit the site. Hon'ble Union Minister for Environment, Forests & CC visited the Kolleru WLS along with the public representatives on 27.2.2010 and announced that a committee will be formed to look into the problems of the people and environmental issues. The Government of India have constituted a 7-member committee vide GoI F.No.6-118/2008/WL-1, Dt: 29.4.2010 headed by Dr. P. A. Azeez, SACON. The Committee has visited the Kolleru lake from 20th to 25th September 2010 and the report was submitted to the Government of India in April 2011.

18. The committee was not in agreement with the proposed reduction of the area from +5 feet contour to +3 feet contour as this would seriously affect the conservation of wildlife especially the migratory birds. The committee felt that it is not advisable to reduce the sanctuary area as it would not be a viable solution for socio-economic and ecological issues confronting the stakeholders and local communities dependent on the lake. The committee has stressed the need for appropriate relocation and rehabilitation policy to be adopted in acquiring the private lands below the +5 feet MSL contour level. The GoI has accepted the committee report and directed the State Government to implement the recommendations of the Committee vide F.No.6-118/2008/WL-I, Dt: 6.6.2012.

19. While is so, the Government of India have formulated the Wetlands (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2010 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (the same are amended subsequently in 2017). According to these rules, the entire Kolleru Lake up to +10 feet contour MSL (901 sq.km) will be under the purview of the Wetlands (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2010. Consequent to this and because of severe public opposition, the Government of Andhra Pradesh in letter No.10295/For-II (2)/2010-2, dt: 29.01.2011, has requested the Government of India to drop the proposals of bringing the entire lake under the purview of Wetlands (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2010 and also requested that these rules may be applied to the areas in Kolleru lake which remain underwater for most of the period of the year (up to +3 contour level).

A.P State Legislative Assembly Resolution on 23.12.2014:

20. The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly have adopted the following resolution on 23.12.2014. "Kolleru Lake has been declared as Wildlife Sanctuary up to +5 feet Contour vide G.O. Ms.No.120, EFST&T (For.III) Dept., dated 04.10.1999 over an area of 30,855.20 Hectares, which includes 14,861.33 acres of Ziroyathi lands of which 13,899.47 acres is in West Godavari District 961.86 acres in Krishna District.

21. That these farmers are not getting adequate income from traditional agriculture without utilizing chemical fertilizers as per GO.Ms.No.120 EFS&T (For-III) Dept., dt.04.10.1999. The compensation proposed to be paid for acquiring these lands will cause a heavy financial burden on the state exchequer.

22. This House resolved to request the National Board for Wildlife, Government of India and the "Central Empowered Committee" to recommend for reduction of the boundary of Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary from +5 feet Contour to +3 feet Contour to mitigate the problems of the farmers.

23. The above-said resolution was placed before State Board for Wildlife Andhra Pradesh. The State Board for Wildlife in its meeting held on 13.08.2015 recommended the reduction of the boundary of Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary from +5 feet Contour to +3 feet Contour to the National Board for Wildlife.

24. The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife in its 35th meeting held on 18th Aug 2015 discussed the proposal for boundary alteration of Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary. The Standing Committee decided to constitute a Working Group to study all aspects of the matter. The Working Group will include member Prof R.Sukumar, representative of Wildlife Institute of India, a nominee of Wildlife Division of the Ministry and a representative of the State Forest Department of Andhra Pradesh. The Group visited the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary area during the second week of December 2015 and brainstormed on all aspects of the proposal and to suggest viable options, including rationalization of boundaries of the Sanctuary, for conservation of the wetland and the Sanctuary while ensuring that no hardships are caused to the bonafide owners of the lands in the area.

25. Further, in the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife in its 37th Meeting held on 26-02-2016, Chairman requested Dr. Sukumar and the site inspection team to interact with the state Government of Andhra Pradesh and finalize the report with the recommendations for the part of the Sanctuary area, which is suitable for de-notification, which would cater to the needs of the local and owners while preserving the Kolleru Bird Sanctuary.

26. Further, in the 40th Meeting of Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife held on 3rd January 2017, member Dr.Sukumar, described the recommendations made in the report,

- No compromise with the ecological balance by a drastic reduction in sanctuary area as per Andhra Pradesh State Assembly Resolution.
- Deletion of private Ziroyati lands from the sanctuary, i.e., approx. 5533.3 ha located inside the north-eastern boundary of Kolleru WLS except major rivers/streams flowing within this area retaining 10 m on either side of the stream/river by the government to ensure the environmental water flow into sanctuary.
- Based on the authentic information on the extent of lands assigned to Scheduled Castes and Backward Class communities, the genuine D-Patta

cooperative societies be accommodated adjoining the Ziroyati lands to be deleted. Their process of rehabilitation should be ensured that these lands do not fall into the hands of 'Benami' owners.

- The government should be prepared to invest resources in R&R to resolve the rehabilitation cost of remaining Ziroyati landowners.
- The above actions may be started after the compilation of reliable data on the actual boundary of Kolleru WLS and the preparation of an integrated management plan.
- Within the rationalized boundaries of sanctuary, the important areas of bird congregation should be declared as core zones free of human disturbances and the rest buffer areas can be used for traditional fishing without the construction of bunds.
- Ecologically Sensitive Zone (ESZ) should be declared up to the present boundary or may be extended to a distance recommended by experts on wetland ecology.

27. Further, the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife in its 48th meeting held on 27.03.2018 recommended for deletion of Ac.19797.69 cents (Approx. Ac.20000 cents) of private Ziroyati lands and D-Patta lands as per the resolution passed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. Hon'ble CEC addressed the Chief Secretary, A.P vide letter dated 25.07.2018 (F.No.2-77/CEC/SC/2018-Pt.VI) advised no further action may be taken to implement the decision of the Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife taken at its meeting held on 27.03.2018.

Encroachment status within Kolleru WL Sanctuary (up to +5 feet contour):

28. There are mainly three categories of the lands that exist inside the sanctuary area (Government, D-Patta & Ziroyati). Traditionally the villagers are practicing either agriculture or aquaculture activities in the area. The D-Patta lands were cancelled at the time of notification. After the "Operation Kolleru-2006", the revenue department from both the districts consolidated the area village-wise and handed it over to the forest department. The survey did not take place to demarcate the sanctuary boundary and as per the notification, the boundary of the sanctuary runs along the +5 feet of contour MSL. During "Operation Kolleru-2006" the aquaculture tank bunds inside the Wildlife Sanctuary were only partially demolished and the villagers again resorted to aquaculture activities by strengthening the partially demolished bunds. The encroachments are seasonal in nature, during monsoon season the area within +5 feet of contour MSL generally flooded and once the water level recedes post-monsoon, the villagers will try to repair the bunds of old tanks and start aquaculture activities. The Ziroyati lands are yet to be acquired by Government from the farmers by paying compensation. Though the D-Patta lands were cancelled at the time of notification, the farmers feel that still they have rights over those lands.

29. There is a lot of pressure from local villagers to carry out aquaculture activities and several complex issues involved from paying compensation to downsizing the sanctuary boundary. The Forest Department is taking concerted efforts in protecting the sanctuary area despite all hurdles. So far 544 cases have been registered related to encroachment in all the categories of the land since 2006-07 and the cases are under trial in various courts. The details of cases booked from 2006-07 to 2021-22 (up to 31-10-2021) are given below.

ABSTRACT OF ENCROACHMENT CASES REGISTERED FROM 2006-07 TO 2021-22 (up to 31-10-2021) IN KOLLERU WLS

Year of Encroachment Case booked	No. Cases booked	The Extent of Encroachment (Acres)		
		Govt.	Ziroyati	Total
2006-07	3	0	3.03	3.03
2007-08	1	0	0	0
2008-09	11	170.00	258.71	428.71
2009-10	23	307.95	471.31	779.26
2010-11	36	321.61	355.24	676.85
2011-12	11	182.21	40.88	223.09
2012-13	18	237.83	122.45	360.28
2013-14	5	28.62	22.53	51.15
2014-15	19	586.80	193.88	780.68
2015-16	33	361.37	33.48	394.85
2016-17	74	737.83	172.51	910.34
2017-18	95	2329.59	244.69	2574.28
2018-19	55	2428.97	25.71	2454.68
2019-20	46	1665.47	95.27	1760.74
2020-21	65	1305.45	1009.33	2314.78
2021-22	59	1204.12	825.24	2029.36
TOTAL:	554	11867.82	3874.26	15742.08

30. However, in some areas cases were registered multiple times since aquaculture activities were attempted in the same location every year. Accordingly, the area has been reconciled and arrived to an extent of 9522.10 Acres. (Govt land: 6680.73 Acres. Ziroyati land: 2841.37 Acres.). District-wise particulars are given below and the map is enclosed depicting the encroachment based on the cases registered so far.

ABSTRACT OF AREA UNDER ENCROACHMENT BASED ON CASES REGISTERED FROM 2006-07 TO 2020-21 IN KOLLERU WLS

Sl. no.	District	Mandal	Area of the Mandal (Acres)	Extent of Encroachment (Acres)		
				Govt. Land	Ziroyati Land	Total
1	West Godavari	Eluru	23900	2052.24	303.51	2355.75
2		Denduluru	586	0	158.54	158.54
3		Pedapadu	789	0	179.20	179.20
4		Nidamaruru	6838	0	495.08	495.08
5		Unguturu	134	0	30.81	30.81
6		Bhimadole	20323	1617.69	834.28	2451.97
7		Akiveedu	6914	580.150	517.37	1097.520
		Total	59484	4250.08	2518.79	6768.87

1	Krishna	Kaikaluru	10295	2539.63	308.66	2848.29
2		Mandavalli	7359	71.02	13.92	84.94
		Total	17654	2430.65	322.58	2753.23
	WLS TOTAL		77138	6680.73	2841.37	9522.10

Activities have been taken up by the Forest department in the sanctuary area:

31. Forest Department is implementing various activities through state and central schemes. The main activities implemented broadly in the sanctuary area are Protection, wildlife habitat improvement, ecotourism, development of bird congregation site, infrastructure development, etc. Overall, an amount of Rs.30 crore (approx.) has been spent in the sanctuary area from 2006-07 to 2020-21. Some of the important state and central schemes being implemented currently in the sanctuary are CAMPA, BIOSAP, 04-Sanctuaries, 06-Development of National Park & Sanctuaries, Centrally Sponsored Schemes - Conservation of Natural Resources & Aquatic Ecosystem etc.,

32. The important activities being taken by Forest Department in the sanctuary area are;

1. **Protection:** Establishment of base camps, strike force, check posts for regular patrolling, collecting intelligence, preventing encroachment activities, checking vehicle movement that carries fertilizers, chemicals, and fish feed into sanctuary area etc. Presently 5 base camps, 1 strike force, and 6 check posts are functioning from various locations in the sanctuary area.
2. **Habitat improvement:** The activities like desilting drains, demolition of old bunds, removal of water hyacinth and other weeds, formation of mounds, planting of trees for bird nesting, installation of artificial perching stands, releasing fish fingerlings (food for aquatic birds) etc., are being taken up to create a favourable environment for the wildlife to survive.
3. **Research & Monitoring:** Regular census is being conducted to enumerate different bird species and their population. Research related to tagging of birds was conducted earlier by BNHS. Presently through MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), a study is being conducted on Socio-economic and livelihood assessment of communities living in and around Kolleru WLS.
4. **Ecotourism:** The ecotourism facility at Aatapaka and Madhavapuram in the sanctuary caters to the visitors and acts as a Conservation Education Centre. Presently facilities like Environmental Education Centre, watch tower, boating are being maintained by the department. These facilities are being managed by local communities under the supervision of the forest department.
5. **Awareness creation:** Regular village level awareness programmes are being taken up and competitions for school and college students are being conducted during world wetland day, world environment day, wildlife week etc., mainly for gaining their support in the protection and conservation of this wetland.

33. Forest Department is not only implementing various developmental activities but also constantly monitoring the sanctuary area and taking strict actions against the illegal activities. The department is taking the best possible efforts to prevent and remove all kinds of encroachments in the sanctuary area. The sanctuary area is generally managed based on the prescriptions provided in the approved Management Plan. The previous Integrated Management Plan for Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary was prepared by WISA (Wetlands International-South Asia):2008 for a period of 5 years under an assignment from the Forest Department, Government of

Andhra Pradesh. The present management plan for Kolleru WLS is being prepared by involving Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai and it is under progress.

Conclusion:

34. It is submitted that Kolleru lake is an important wetland in Andhra Pradesh. Out of the total area of the lake which is up to +10 feet MSL contour (Ac. 225250) only up to +5 feet MSL contour (Ac.77138) has been declared as a wildlife sanctuary in the year 1999. After "Operation Kolleru -2006", the sanctuary lands were consolidated by the revenue department of both the districts and handed it over to the Forest Department. Since then, the forest department is managing the sanctuary effectively despite all hurdles. The seasonal encroachments in the area mostly for aquaculture have been tackled by registering offense cases, demolishing the bunds, conducting village level awareness programmes etc.

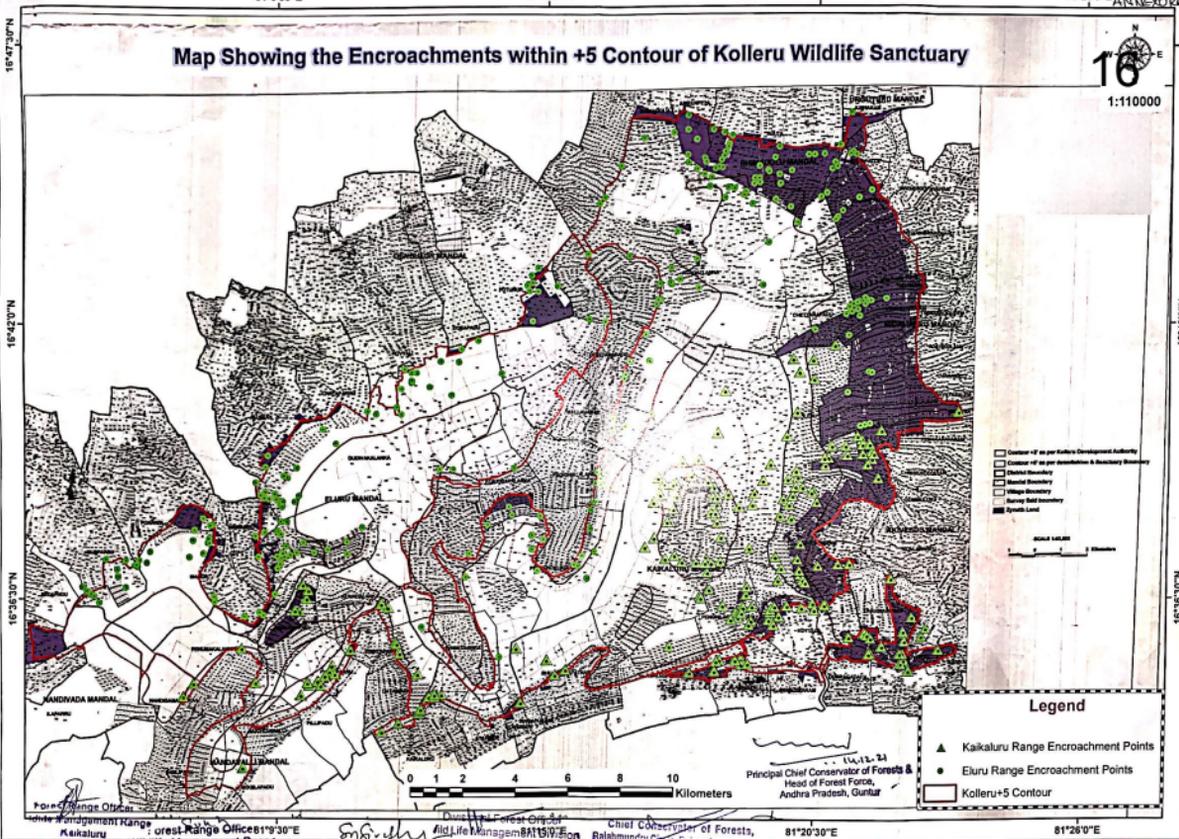
35. Further, only 34.24% of the lake has been declared as Kolleru WLS out of the total lake area of Ac.2,25,250. The water quality in the lake not only depends on the activities carried out inside the sanctuary area (up to +5 feet MSL contour) but also based on the activities happening in the lake basin area. **Hence, to understand the dynamics of this wetland ecosystem and various factors responsible for the degradation of water quality of the lake, a comprehensive scientific study is essential, which needs to be conducted through subject experts in the field of wetland/lake management by involving all the stakeholders working in Kolleru lake basin to manage the Kolleru lake/wetland holistically.**


Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests &
Head of Forest Force
Andhra Pradesh

F. 14.12.21

Map Showing the Encroachments within +5 Contour of Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary

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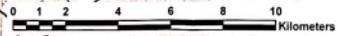


- Contour of the per Kolleru Development Authority
- Contour of the per Andhra Pradesh &hra Pradesh Boundary
- District Boundary
- Village Boundary
- Survey Sub Boundary
- Dry Salt Land



Legend

- ▲ Kaikaluru Range Encroachment Points
- Eluru Range Encroachment Points
- Kolleru+5 Contour



Principal Chief Conservator of Forests &
Head of Forest Force,
Andhra Pradesh, Guntur

16°47'30"N 81°19'30"E 81°15'0"E 81°20'30"E 81°26'0"E 16°47'30"N 16°42'0"N 16°36'30"N

Forest Range Offices
Kaikaluru
Forest Range Offices
Eluru
Wildlife Management Range
Eluru
Chief Conservator of Forests,
Rajahmundry