

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH AT NEW DELHI

(M.A No. 24 of 2020)
In
(O.A Application No. 60 of 2018)

Rajiv Dutta

.....Applicant(s)

-VERSUS-

Union of India & Others.

.....Respondent(s)

REPORT ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT NO. 1 (MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE, UNION OF INDIA)

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K.K Singh,
ADVOCATE
FOR
(MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE)

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ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE, UNION OF INDIA)

I, H.K.Meena , S/o S.R Meena Aged 37 years, do hereby solemnly affirm and state as follows:-

1. That I am working as Assistant Inspector General of Forests in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and in my official capacity, I am conversant with the facts of the case based on knowledge derived from official records and as such I am competent and authorized to file this Report.
2. That, I am duly authorized to depose by way of the present report on behalf of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
3. That, I have gone through the contents of the present Application and have understood the contents thereof.
4. That, this report is being filed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, New Delhi with reference to the order dated 27.02.2020 of this Hon'ble Tribunal in M.A No. 24 of 2020 filed in O.A No. 60 of 2018 in the matter of Rajiv Dutta vs. Union of India & Ors.
5. That, Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun an organization under the MoEFCC, has been monitoring Forest Fire scenario in the country since 2004 and had a well-functioning nation-wide satellite-based fire detection system. Forest Fire Alert System version 3.0 (FAST 3.0), launched in January 2019, automatically detects and

हेमंत कुमार मीना, भा.व.से.

HEMANT KUMAR MEENA, IFS

सहायक वन महानिरीक्षक

Asstt. Inspector General of Forests

वन नीति विभाग/ Forest Policy Division

पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय

Min. Environment, Forest and Climate Change

भारत सरकार, नई दिल्ली

Govt. of India, New Delhi

disseminates information about forest fires in real time to registered users. Till date around 1,09,400 users have been registered to receive the fire alerts from FSI.

6. That, keeping in view the impact of forest fire and its management , this Ministry has formulated a National Action Plan on Forest Fire as per the direction of this Hon'ble Tribunal in the Original Application No. 216 of 2016 in the matter of Rajiv Dutta vs. Union of India and Others; which has been circulated to all the States/UTs Governments for taking appropriate action for effective prevention and management of forest fire. It has also been uploaded on the website of this Ministry. **A true and correct copy of the National Action Plan on Forest Fire is annexed hereto and marked as Annexure-I. (Pg No. 4-26)**
7. The Forest Protection Division vide letter No. 17/6/2020-FPD dated 08.04.2020 has also issue a D.O. letter to the State/UTs for preparedness of Forest Fire during this season. **A true and correct copy of the D.O. letter dated 08.04.2020 is annexed hereto and marked as Annexure-II. (Pg no. 27-28)**
8. That, the responsibility to prevent, control and manage forests fires lies primarily with the State Government/Union Territory (UT) Administration. The Ministry supports the efforts of State/UT in prevention and control of forest fire by providing financial assistance for various forest fire prevention and management measures under the Centrally Sponsored Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme. State/UT prepares Annual Plan of Operation for prevention and management of forest fire under this scheme and funds are released. A sum of Rs.46.84 Crore and Rs. 14.25 Crore have been released to the States in the last financial year and in the current financial year respectively under this scheme.
9. In compliance of the direction of Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, New Delhi, order dated 28.05.2019 in O.A No. 60/2018 (M.A No. 122 of 2019) in the matter of Rajiv Dutta vs. Union of India & Others, this Ministry has constituted a Central Monitoring Committee, under the chairmanship of Secretary, MoEFCC, to monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan on Forest Fire.
10. This Ministry vide letter No. 8-4/2016-FPD dated 14.07.2020 requested to Government of Uttarakhand to submit a report on incidents of forest fire in Uttarakhand. Response was received from the PCCF (HoFF), Government of Uttarakhand vide letter No.ख.107/27-1 dated 21.07.2020 giving the factual report on



हेमंत कुमार मीना, भा. व. से.

HEMANT KUMAR MEENA, IFS

सहायक वन महानिरीक्षक

Asstt. Inspector General of Forests

वन नीति प्रभाग/ Forest Policy Division

पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय

M/o Environment, Forest and Climate Change

भारत सरकार, नई दिल्ली

Govt. of India, New Delhi

the above. Govt of Uttarakhand has informed that in the year 2020, the area affected by fire and direct economic loss was the lowest. **A true copy of response received from the Government of Uttarakhand is annexed hereto and marked as Annexure-III. (Pg No 29 -32)**

11. That, this Hon'ble Tribunal may be pleased to pass such or further orders as it may deem fit in the given circumstances of the case.
12. That, the Answering Respondent reserves the right to file additional information before the Hon'ble Tribunal, if required till pendente-lite.

VERIFICATION

I, the above named deponent hereby verify that the contents of the above report are true and correct to my knowledge and are based on official records and nothing material is concealed therein.

Verified at New Delhi on this 31st Day of July, 2020.

हेमंत कुमार मीना, भा.व.से.
HEMANT KUMAR MEENA, IFS
सहायक वन महानिरीक्षक
DEPONENT
Asstt. Inspector General of Forests
वन नीति प्रभाग/ Forest Policy Division
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DEPONENT

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Govt. of India, New Delhi



F.No.8-4/2016-FPD
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
(Forest Protection Division)

Agni Wing, 5th Floor
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Aliganj, Jor Bagh
New Delhi – 110003
Dated: April, 2018

To

**The Principal Secretary (Forest)
Government of all States/UTs**

Sub: National Action Plan on Forest Fire (NAPFF) -regarding.

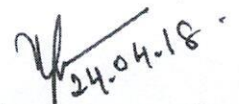
Sir/Madam,

I am directed to inform that in pursuance to the recommendation of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science & Technology and Environment & Forests in its 293rd report and the directions of Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (NGT), New Delhi in the Original Application No. 216 of 2016 in the matter of Rajiv Dutta vs Union of India and others, this Ministry has formulated the National Action Plan on Forest Fire taking inputs from the recommendations of the study on "Situation Analysis of Forest Fire in India" conducted by this Ministry in collaboration with the World Bank and consultations with major stakeholders such as the State Forest Departments, National Disaster Management Authority etc and based on the outcome of the workshop on NAPFF held in this Ministry on 5th and 6th April, 2018. The same has been approved by the competent authority in the Ministry.

The approved NAPFF is enclosed herewith for taking appropriate action at your end as the forest fire season is already on. Further, it is requested that the action taken in this regard may please be intimated to this Ministry at the earliest

Yours faithfully,

Encl : As above

 24.04.18

(S. Elamurugannan)

Assistant Inspector of General of Forests (FPD)

Email: fpdmoef@gmail.com

Telephone No.011-24695459

Copy to:

1. Director General, ICFRE, Dehradun for necessary action.
2. Director General, Forest Survey of India, Dehradun for necessary action.
3. The Chief Secretary, Government of all States and UTs for necessary action
4. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF), Department of Forest and Wildlife, Government of all States/UTs for necessary action.
5. Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority, MoEF&CC.
6. Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, MoEF&CC.
7. ADGF (Wildlife)/ADGF (NTCA)/ADGF (FC).
8. Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife), MoEF&CC.
9. PS to Hon'ble Minister, MoEF&CC.
10. PPS to Secretary, MoEF&CC.
11. PPS to DGF&SS, MoEF&CC.
12. IT cell, MoEF&CC for uploading the approved NAPFF in the website of this Ministry.
13. Guard file.



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON FOREST FIRE

**FOREST PROTECTION DIVISION
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON FOREST FIRE

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List of Abbreviations

1. NAPFF: National Action Plan on Forest Fire
2. MoEF&CC: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
3. SFD: State Forest Department
4. DFO: Divisional/District Forest Officer
5. FSI: Forest Survey of India, Dehradun
6. ICFRE: Indian Council for Forestry Research and Education, Dehradun
7. NDMA; National Disaster Management Authority
8. SDMA: State Disaster Management Authority
9. DDMA: District Disaster Management Authority
10. NDRF: National Disaster Response Force
11. SDRF: State Disaster Response Force
12. DFE: Directorate of Forest Education, Dehradun
13. CAMPA: Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority
14. JFMC: Joint Forest Management Committee
15. SOP: Standard Operating Procedure
16. ICT: Information and Communication Technology
17. NTFP: Non Timber Forest Produce
18. EDC: Eco-development Committee
19. FRA: Forest Rights Act (Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers { Recognition of Forest Right Act, 2006}
20. WPO: Working Plan Officer
21. IT Cell: Information Technology Cell
22. SHG: Self Help Group
23. MNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

National Action Plan on Forest Fires

1. Statement of Purpose

Fires, both accidental and deliberate, have always played a very important role in shaping forests since ancient times. In India most of the forest fires are attributable to anthropogenic reasons. Communities use it to prepare lands for shifting cultivation, clear forest floor for NTFP collection, promote grass growth for grazing. Criminal gangs of poachers use it to force wild animals come out of safe hiding places, while unintentional fires caused by careless throwing of burning matchsticks and escape of cooking fire from temporary shelters for road workers also account for many forest fires. Forest Survey of India has reported that 54.40% of forests in India are exposed to occasional fires, 7.49% to moderately frequent fires and 2.40% to high incidence levels while 35.71% of India's forests have not yet been exposed to fires of any real significance. Major affected areas lie in the North East India and in the forests on the Deccan plateau. Prolonged droughts make forests vulnerable to fires and the changing climate further aggravates their vulnerability. The fragmentation of most of Indian forests, interspersed with habitations of all sizes, results in high human presence in most forested areas which adds to their vulnerability to fires.

The objective of this National Action Plan on Forest Fires, hereinafter referred to by its abbreviations NAPFF, is to minimize forest fires from taking place by informing, enabling and empowering forest fringe communities and may be incentivizing them to work in tandem with the forest departments. This will substantially reduce the vulnerabilities of forests across the diverse forest ecosystems in the Indian subcontinent against fire hazards, enhancing the capabilities of forest and other personnel and institutions in fighting fires, and speed up recovery after a fire event.

2. General Principles

- i. The prescribed actions in this NAPFF are intended to guide and assist the policy makers, administrators, forest officers, frontline staff, forest user agencies, forest



fringe communities, visitors to forests, and civil society, for a holistic management of fires in forests.

- ii. Preventing fires from taking place and improving resilience of the forests against fire hazards shall form priority in forest management policies, strategies and programs with well-defined aims of conservation of biodiversity, wildlife and forest wealth.
- iii. The safety of the people, both resident and transient, firefighters, and fire managers shall always be accorded the highest priority during fire events.
- iv. There shall be a clear line of command for assuming the lead role and duties in the event of a forest fire.
- v. Districts shall form the units for Forest Fire Management planning and implementation for ease in coordination with the Disaster Management Authorities at the national, state and district levels.

3. Fire Risk Zonation and mapping

Forest fire risk zonation provides a scientific basis for identifying areas of priority for management interventions, allocating resources to priority areas, and monitoring the effectiveness of measures to reduce or control fire risk. These risk zones shall be reviewed and updated at least once every five years to respond to any changes in the abovementioned factors.

3.1 Risk factors

The following factors, among other locally relevant, may be considered for identifying and quantifying fire risks:

- i. *Fuels*, including forest cover and type as a broad indicator of fuel type. Optionally, states may perform field-based studies to measure fuel load and type;
- ii. *Proximity to infrastructure, property, and other assets*, including roads, habitations and other buildings, agricultural lands, transmission lines, and railways;

- 11
- iii. *Topography*, including slope, aspect, elevation, terrain ruggedness and other characteristics;
 - iv. *Social indicators*, including local dependence on forests for livelihoods, poverty, and traditional land use practices;
 - v. *Historic fire occurrence and patterns* may be used to identify areas that are most prone to fires. Fire records prior to 2003 may be geo-referenced and mapped. This historical data can be used to validate the results of analysis.;
 - vi. *Areas of special ecological or cultural importance*, including protected areas, historic sites, designated heritage sites, temples, pilgrimage routes, etc.; and
 - vii. *Special ecological conditions*, for example, bamboo flowering, may be considered and provided weights.

3.2 Use of fire risk zones in forest planning

The results of the forest fire risk zonation shall be translated into concrete management actions under the forest working plans. The Working Plan Officers (DFOs in the case of Plans already in operation) shall identify activities or interventions to mitigate fire risks or reduce impact of the fire hazards in high-risk areas. These may include creation of additional fire lines, watch towers and other infrastructure in vulnerable areas. The same shall be examined speedily by the appropriate authorities for approval and making provisions for financing the approved activities. The Annual Plan of Operations for all forest divisions and circles, and protected areas, shall include the approved activities and interventions mentioned above. The state planning and finance departments shall prioritize resource allocation for forest fire management.

(Action by SFDs)

(Monitoring by SFDs and MoEFCC)



4. Preventing forest fires

Most forest fires are manmade and are linked to socio-economic and livelihood issues of the forest fringe communities. It should, therefore, be possible to greatly reduce the forest fire incidences by making these communities aware of the many tangible and intangible benefits lost to them, both individually and collectively, due to forest fires. Following actions are proposed to be taken in this regard:

4.1 Effective communication strategy for awareness generation

A mass communication strategy with adequate financial provisions for five years shall be framed by each SFD within two months for vigorous publicity and sensitization of the state in general and local communities in particular. It should be specifically targeted at students, farmers, women groups, cattle herders, NTFP collectors, infrastructure related professionals, urban dwellers, tourists and pilgrims, among others. Information on forest fire and its adverse effects should also be included in the school curriculum at several levels. The strategy would identify most effective means for reaching out to different target groups like school campaigns, campaigns on Radio, TV, and social media, mobile campaigns during festival season, organization of music festivals, and setting up information portals, among others.

(Action by SFDs)

(Monitoring by SFDs and MoEFCC)

4.2 Empowering Communities to deliver on their responsibilities

The existing forest laws mandate the forest officials to seek participation of local communities in fire management. Under the FRA the forest areas recognized under community rights are mandated to be sustainably used by the right holding forest dweller community which places on them the responsibility of conservation of these areas. Similar responsibilities rest on the communities practicing shifting cultivation for protection of forests against damage by fires under their respective state laws. Similar expectations are also placed on the JFMCs and Van Panchayats in relation to the forest lands under their jurisdictions. These

communities would be better placed to shoulder these responsibilities if they are adequately empowered with delegated authority and funds. The communities could also be incentivized for their cooperation in fire prevention and control measures in the form of money, rewards, social recognition, preference in Government schemes, etc. The SFDs may evolve state specific mechanisms for this purpose in tune with relevant laws and traditional practices.

(Action by SFDs)

(Monitoring by SFDs and MoEFCC)

4.3 Capacity building of communities

The capacity of community organizations in prevention and control of forest fires should be enhanced by periodical training and capacity building programmes. Forest fire alerts information should also be provided to JFMC/EDC/Van Panchayat members and they should also be provided with firefighting equipment including leaf litter blowers, other tools and protective clothing. The community members should be duly involved during the mock drills on forest fire before fire season. In the Micro plan of the JFMCs, there should be a separate chapter for forest fire management which should contain the details of vulnerable areas, location of natural & man-made water sources, other infrastructure available for fire prevention and management etc.

(Action by SFDs)

(Monitoring by SFDs and MoEFCC)

5. Increasing the resilience of forests to fires

Management interventions for increasing resilience to forest fires may be planned according to the vulnerability to forest fires as reflected in the risk zonation maps. Following are some of the measures which could be adopted in this context.

5.1 Moisture and water conservation

As fire hazard is more in drier and deciduous habitats and areas with predominance of grasses, management action would need to aim at moisture retention for longer time after rains and appropriate preventive measures to ensure that minor fire incidences do not escalate into major fire events. A long-term plan for improving the water regime of the forest areas based on opportunities and feasibility will be useful in reducing vulnerability to fires. Several existing programs for eco-rehabilitation and catchment area treatment plans provide scope for this kind of work.

(Action by SFDs)

(Policy support by MoEFCC)

5.2 Forest floor biomass management

When necessary management interventions may be planned aiming at minimizing accumulation of dry fuel material on forest floor in the fire season. The litter and other biomass on the forest floor leading to fire danger could be gainfully utilised for the benefit of the society in identified areas. A framework for biomass management is suggested below and SFDs are encouraged to experiment with appropriate caution.

- a. Collection of forest floor biomass such as fallen pine needles for use in briquets may be encouraged by the waiver of royalty and transit fee for such collections.
- b. Policies for promoting biomass based off-grid micro power plants in remote areas may be put in place. Space heating in high altitude areas could be tried using excess biomass from forest floors vulnerable to fires.
- c. Guidelines may to be framed for sustainable removal of dead bamboo in the event of mass flowering to reduce risk of fire and also to conserve biodiversity.
- d. Policies for permitting women SHG to use forest floor biomass with appropriate safeguards for micro entrepreneurship may be put in place by the SFDs.

(Action by SFDs)

(Policy support by MoEFCC)

5.3 Weed Management

Invasive weeds such as Lantana need to be controlled as they contribute significantly to the fire danger and pose a threat to native biodiversity. The following actions are recommended:

- i. A baseline study to quantify the extent and spread of invasive weeds may be initiated by SFDs in consultation with scientific institutions such as ICFRE.
- ii. Lantana removal strategies adopted should ensure it does not regrow on treated lands. Removal should be organized as an attractive economic opportunity for the local communities.
- iii. Rehabilitation of treated areas with appropriate species and soil and moisture conservation measures should form part of the weed removal plan.

(Action SFDs and ICFRE)

(Monitoring by MoEFCC)

6. Forest Fire Preparedness

Preparedness in forest fire management leads to effective response to fire disasters resulting in reduced impact and quicker recovery. The following steps may form the basis of preparedness against forest fires:



6.1 Forest fire detection and alert

Satellite based Forest Fire Alerts are already operational across the country led by FSI. The following steps may be taken to improve the efficacy of the FSI fire alert system:

- i. ***Digitization of forest boundaries:*** In the absence of digitized boundaries in many forests across the country, the FSI screens fire detections using approximations leading to reduced efficacy of the alert system. The states may, therefore, complete the digitization of forest boundaries at the earliest.
- ii. ***Promoting greater adoption of the Forest Fire Alert System:*** FSI has put in place a robust forest fire alert system. The States shall encourage the involvement of all field functionaries in the same, so that the forest fire alert system can percolate down to beat level in least possible time. This may be institutionalized through a protocol.
- iii. ***Improving Ground based Detection:*** Even with the advances in new remote sensing technologies for fire detection, ground-based detection continues to be essential and should be sufficiently resourced. The SFDs shall perform an assessment of the efficacy of the existing network of watchtowers by a review of the level of functionality and operational use of the existing towers. The WPOs (DFOs in the case of divisions where approved working plans are already in existence) may propose new locations for fire watchtowers based on coverage, visibility, ignition sources, and other relevant factors.
- iv. ***Strengthening engagement with local communities:*** Local communities are often the first to spot fires and alert the forest department. Locally suitable mechanisms should be developed by the SFDs for sourcing reliable and quick information from local communities.
- v. ***Dedicated phone line:*** A toll-free telephone number for fire detections and other required support needs to be established at state level to

obtain information on forest fires from tourists, passersby and local people.

- vi. **Monitoring and evaluation:** FSI has put in place a system to review all fire alert detections, and their ground verification. This is a critical step and may be monitored by MoEFCC in the month of December every year. SFDs must ensure that feedbacks on fire alerts are sent to FSI for validation.
- vii. **Wireless network:** In most remote forest areas mobile telephony is not well developed and frontline staff are unable to get the information coming on the Forest Fire Alert Alarms. In such cases, forests communication system may be supplemented by a dedicated wireless network.

(Action: SFDs)

(Monitoring by FSI and MoEFCC)

6.2 Digitize the location of critical resources and assets

The IT Cells of the state forest departments shall conduct inventory mapping of critical resources for forest fire prevention and management and make relevant information available to the forest divisions. Resources and assets to be inventoried may include forest department resources, such as watchtowers, ground crew stations, controls rooms and fire lines as well as non-department resources, such as the locations of fire stations, fire tenderers and National and State Disaster Response Forces, and army and paramilitary camps. They may also include important infrastructure such as roads, railways, and telecommunications networks and natural resources such as water bodies and natural fire breaks that could assist in preparedness and planning for response to forest fires.

(Action by SFDs)

(Monitoring by MoEFCC)

6.3 Forest Fire Lines

SFDs may undertake the mapping and digitizing of the location of existing fire lines and other infrastructure such as roads, transmission lines, and rail lines that may function as fire breaks. A review of the maintenance status, functionality, and adequacy of these fire lines, and an assessment of the need for new fire lines, may be undertaken considering past fire data, forest types, habitations, and other relevant factors. Proposals for new fire lines should be made on a scientific basis considering their potential efficacy in reducing fire risk and their proximity to people, property, and areas of special concern (e.g., protected areas). Plantations should not be raised on existing or proposed fire lines.

(Action by SFDs)

6.4 Control Burning

Control burning may be necessary in some places for preventing spread of fire. The following actions are recommended to improve the consistent performance and effectiveness of control burning wherever necessary:

- i. Prioritization of areas for control burning as part of the fire risk zonation analysis;
- ii. Monitoring of the performance of control burning at the Circle level, and integration of monitoring data into a database maintained by the SFDs;
- iii. Timely release of funds for control burning prior to the onset of the peak fire season and the provision of advance/ad-hoc release as needed;
- iv. Development of state-specific guidelines for control and prescribed burns to be notified and revised as may be necessary.

(Action by SFDs)

(Monitoring by SFDs)



7. Fire Suppression

Immediate response to forest fires after receipt of information is of utmost importance. The SFDs must develop a culture of emergent response to fire alerts under which all available resources are used to douse the fire. This needs intense training at all levels, strengthening of infrastructure, and coordination with other relevant agencies.

7.1 Training for field staff, firewatchers, and community firefighters

The principal need for forest fire suppression is to have adequate competent, trained, and equipped workforce on the ground, ready to respond and take immediate action. Training should be provided to field officers, seasonal firewatchers, and community volunteers involved in firefighting. All these firefighters should understand basic principles of forest fire management for using the most effective suppression technique at their disposal and know when retreat is necessary. The type of training provided to firefighters should be tailored according to the landscape, nature of terrain, their level of responsibility and role in the command structure in responding to fires.

- i. A modern and standardized training curriculum should be developed by the SFDs with the guidance of Directorate of Forest Education (DFE) of the MoEFCC. Other agencies involved in fire response, including National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), NDRF, and the State Disaster Management Authorities may be involved in a consultative role.
- ii. Mock drills should be organized before fire season at various fire prone areas involving all the stakeholders such as District Administration, Police, Fire Department, NDRF, SDRF personnel, community organizations etc. for identification of gaps in the existing mechanism and better preparedness during crisis time.
- iii. Provision of training, equipment, and coordination should extend beyond state-managed forests to community institutions in regions such as the

Northeast, where communities are responsible for managing most of the forest estate.

(Action by SFDs and DFE)

(Monitoring by the MoEFCC)

7.2 Equipping the firefighters

- i. The firefighting squad including field staff, seasonal firewatchers, and community firefighters should be provided with adequate firefighting equipment including leaf litter blowers, and protective clothing.
- ii. The SFDs should take the lead in this process of identifying and providing firefighting equipment suitable to local needs in consultation with the Indian Council of Forestry, Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun.
- iii. The ICFRE should focus on development of user friendly fire fighting equipments, tools and protective clothing suitable for various regions of the country.
- iv. There should be sufficient practice sessions for the fire fighting personnel in the use of the fire fighting equipments including leaf litter blowers, and protective clothing so as to enhance their efficiency in actual fire fighting.

(Action: SFDs, ICFRE)

(Monitoring by the MoEFCC)

7.3 Development of adequate infrastructure for fire suppression

- i. An effective communication network should be ensured in all fire prone forest areas using wireless where necessary.
- ii. SFDs should develop, and enforce, a protocol for ensuring prompt access to field vehicles from nearby forest divisions for movement of firefighting personnel to the fire spots at the earliest.

- iii. Advance technologies such as use of drones should be explored in identification of exact location, intensity & direction of fire to facilitate fire extinguishment at the earliest.
- iv. Forest road network should be properly maintained for quick movement of firefighting forces to the fire site.

(Action: SFDs)

(Monitoring by MoEFCC)

7.4 Arrangements for adequate manpower in fire prone areas

- i. The SFDs should fill all vacancies especially at the level of frontline forest officials in the fire prone areas on priority basis.
- ii. Trained manpower may also be mobilized from other agencies such as Police, District Fire services, NDRF, SDRF etc.
- iii. The Communities living near the fire prone areas should also be sensitized and may be incentivized towards fire suppression activities.
- iv. There should be a mechanism for mobilization of forest fire fighting volunteers and providing them with adequate training on an urgent basis. A database of the firefighting volunteers should be maintained at district level.

(Action: SFDs)

8. Post Fire management

8.1 Assessment of loss due to forest fires

- i. FSI may develop a national level database for burnt area assessment on an yearly basis. Standardized protocols and procedures are needed to facilitate the reporting of the area affected and losses due to forest fire which may be developed by the ICFRE in association with FSI and other institutions.

- ii. MoEFCC may assign ICFRE the responsibility of developing and standardizing methodologies for assessing losses due to forest fire including loss of intangibles such as ecosystem services.
- iii. Based on standardized methodologies, the ICFRE may further standardize protocols for estimating area affected and losses due to forest fire and reporting the same at successive levels.
- iv. The ICFRE may assist the DFE in designing and organizing adequate training programs for forest officials at various level for this purpose.

(Action: SFDs, ICFRE and FSI)

(Monitoring by MoEFCC)

8.2 Proper investigation of the causes

The SFD shall ensure that the causes for every fire incident are properly investigated and adequate measures taken immediately including legal actions where necessary.

8.3 Restoration of fire affected areas

- i. A proper restoration plan should be prepared at once for the fire affected areas with the objective of restoring to its natural profile. Appropriate silviculture practices should be prescribed taking into account the ecological successional dynamics.
- ii. Adequate soil moisture conservation measures may be taken up in the fire affected areas for enhancing the moisture retention capacity of the land.
- iii. Indigenous vegetative barriers may be identified and planted around the fire affected areas.

(Action: SFDs)

9. Coordination with Other Agencies:

Forest fire management is a multifarious activity in which a frictionless interface with a range of institutions and social groups becomes very important for effective functioning.

The SFDs are already working in coordination with the FSI for past many years. Forest fires of disastrous proportions already come under the purview of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Disaster Management Authorities at the state and district levels and institutional mechanisms for combating forest fires at disaster scale has already been formalized for incorporation in the National, State, and District level disaster management plans. Institutionalization of close coordination with relevant institutions is thus already a reality but it needs to be strengthened further. For this purpose there are existing procedures developed by the DMAs at all levels and the SFDs may take urgent steps to update, upgrade and integrate their systems with those of the DMAs. In addition the following steps may be taken by the SFDs.

- i. Functioning of the Crisis Management Groups for Forest Fires at all levels may be reviewed to ensure that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are in place related to command and control, compilation of availability of extent and location of resources required in case of occurrence of fires and for monitoring its spread.
- ii. Organizing mock drills is a very efficient way of ensuring preparedness. MoEFCC and NDMA may provide guidance for action at the state level. Joint trainings and mock exercises with all relevant agencies may be organized to facilitate coordination during a fire event.
- iii. Assistance of Defense agencies located in the vicinity becomes critical in certain situations where quick and concerted action can make a difference. MoEFCC may need to coordinate at the Ministerial level with the the Ministry of Defense to obtain suitable directions for their field formations so that such extension of assistance becomes a routine matter.
- iv. An escalation matrix may be developed at the state level by the SFDs in consultation with the SDMA to decide at what stage of aggravation of fire crisis the help from SDRF and NDRF should be sought.

(Action: MoEFCC, SFDs, NDMA, SDMA, DDMA)

(Monitoring by MoEFCC)

10. Centre of Excellence for Forest Fires

A Centre of Excellence is needed to be established to undertake data collection and analysis, frontline research in all aspects of forest fires, and development of firefighting equipment and tools. For the past two decades the FSI has been providing excellent leadership in forest fires and it would be most appropriate to set up this institute under the control of the FSI with strong linkages with ICFRE and leading universities across the country. Sufficient additional personnel and financial allocations would be required to enable FSI to undertake this task.

(Action by FSI and MoEFCC)

11. Mobilization of Financial resources

Forest fires pose the foremost threat to India's forests and the threat is projected to become more serious with the changing climate. Therefore, emphasis on the adequate protection of existing forest resources from fire hazards should become high priority attracting adequate funding. Specifically,

- i. The SFDs should make sufficient financial resources available at district, range and local level well in advance of fire season with enough imprest money for ensuring that lack of money does not hamper emergent fire management works.
- ii. While budgetary allocations for fire protection must be earmarked it should be possible to make fire protection integral to many other programs of forest protection. Community development works and entry point activities in forest enclosures and fringes could develop fire protection arrangements on the borders of habitations.
- iii. Climate funds under existing global bilateral or multilateral mechanisms for activities leading to adaptation to the changing climate can be a good source for money and must be accessed.
- iv. For promotion of use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) standing instructions are already in place for mandatory use of a minimum



proportion of total sectoral allocation in ICT in the respective sector. This should be made use of for ICT part of the forest fire detection and protection activities.

- v. MNREGA and community development/welfare programs aimed at generating employment through creation of assets with labour intensive activities are a good source of funding for some aspects of forest fire protection and should be made use of.
- vi. Community Forest Rights have been recognized in forests under The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. The Act also empowers the right holders to sustainably use the resources under the community forest rights thus recognized. Activities related to sustainable use of community right forests must also include protection of such areas from overuse and destruction by disasters like fire also. For this purpose Forest Administration needs to come to assist the stakeholder communities in planning and managing the community rights areas on priority. As the areas under community rights are expected to experience regular human presence, vulnerability to fire hazard is high and is needed to be minimized.
- vii. India has technical cooperation arrangements with several countries where technical and financial assistance can be tapped for augmenting forest fire management capabilities. External financial aid should be accessed for investment on infrastructure for this purpose.
- viii. In the large infrastructure projects particularly river valley projects, Environmental Management Plans and Catchment Area Treatment Plans are mandatorily prepared and implemented at the cost of the user agencies. Such activities can be very useful in augmenting moisture retention capacity of the catchments thus minimizing fire hazards.
- ix. Crowd Funding is a popular means of financial resource mobilization for any common cause where interested people can contribute. Environmental causes like forest fire protection can garner enormous support from public. Local community organizations working in vicinity of vulnerable forests can

thus be encouraged to organize crowd funding for work at community level. This could be particularly effective in and around areas of tourist, cultural or religious significance located near or within forests etc. MoEFCC could explore the possibility of encouraging this as a policy for people's participation in forest fire protection and management.

Action: SFDs, State governments and MoEFCC



SANJAY KUMAR

Director General of Forests & Spl. Secretary



सत्यमेव जयते

भारत सरकार
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय 27
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड,
नई दिल्ली-110 003
INDIRA PARYAVARAN BHAWAN, JOR BAGH ROAD,
NEW DELHI-110 003
Website : moef.nic.in

D.O. No. FPD-17/6/2020
New Delhi, Dated: 8th April 2020

Dear Sir / Madam,

You are kindly aware that vulnerability of forests to fire has increased manifold due to the onset of dry, summer season in most parts of the country as witnessed by a sharp rise in satellite-based forest fire alerts issued by Forest Survey of India in the last week. This season also witnesses increased threats of human-wild animal conflicts, damage to plantations/ nurseries and stress of animals in zoos. Every year, State governments put in place special arrangements to deal with these threats.

It is also understood that the current COVID-19 situation in the country has put enormous strain on government resources. Yet, given the potential damage to life and property that could be caused by forest fire, human-wild life conflicts and drying of seedlings/ saplings in nurseries/ plantations, and upkeep of zoos, deployment of adequate and competent human and other resources needs to be prioritized to tackle these threats while keeping government directions on COVID-19 spread firmly in mind. Exemption on restriction of movement of forest personnel vide Addendum to Guidelines annexed to the Ministry of Home Affairs Order No. 40-3/2020- DM-II (A) dated 24.03.2020 also refers.

Given the extraordinary challenges of COVID-19 and the hot, dry season, I would be grateful if you could review the preparedness in your state on the above at the earliest.

On forest fires especially, the Nodal Officer (Forest Fire) of the State Forest Department is to remain in constant touch with the Forest Fire Control Cell of this Ministry and FSI, Dehradun for effective coordination and support, and the State Forest Fire Monitoring Committee shall review the situation regularly to ensure collaborative preventive/ mitigation/ recovery actions by various agencies in the field. The APO proposals for 2020-21 under various CSS schemes of this Ministry on the above issues and that of State CAMPA may please also be submitted early for approval by this Ministry in time.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely

(Sanjay Kumar)

Chief Secretary
All States/ UTs



Copy: For information and necessary action to:

- (1) Addl. Chief Secretary/ Principal Secretary/ Secretary, Forest (All States/ UTs)
- (2) Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF) (All States/ UTs)

Internal Circulation:

- (1) CEO, CAMPA/ ADG & MS, NTCA/ ADG(FC)/ ADG (WL)
- (2) DG, FSI, Dehradun
- (3) MS, CZA
- (4) IG, WL/ IG, PE/ IG, FPD





कार्यालय
प्रमुख वन संरक्षक, (HoFF) उत्तराखण्ड

Email: pccfuk@gmail.com Ph.No. & Fax: 0135-2746934

पत्रांक २७-१०७ / २७-१ देहरादून, दिनांक: २१ जुलाई, 2020

To,

Assistant Inspector General of Forest (FPD),
GOI, Ministry of Environment,
Forest and Climate Change,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
5th Floor, Agni Block,
Jor Bagh Road, Ali Ganj,
New Delhi- 110 003.

Sub:- Urgent Filing affidavit in NGT regarding incidents of Forest Fire in
Uttarakhand- reg.

Ref:- Your letter No. File No. 8-4/2016-FPD Dated 14.07.2020.

महोदय,

आपके सन्दर्भित पत्र के क्रम में उत्तराखण्ड वन विभाग द्वारा वर्ष 2020 वनाग्नि काल में वनाग्नि के प्रबन्धन में किये गये कार्य तथा महत्त्वपूर्ण तथ्यों की सूचना बिन्दुवार निम्न प्रकार प्रेषित है:-

1. उत्तराखण्ड राज्य वन प्रधान राज्य है तथा इसके भौगोलिक क्षेत्रफल 53483 वर्ग कि०मी० के सापेक्ष विभिन्न प्रकार के अभिलिखित वनक्षेत्र 37999.590 वर्ग कि०मी० है। प्रदेश के वनक्षेत्रों को प्रबन्धन एवं नियंत्रण की दृष्टि से निम्न प्रकार वर्गीकृत किया गया है।

(अ) वन विभाग के अधीन वन क्षेत्रफल- 25863.181 वर्ग कि०मी०

(ब) राजस्व विभाग के अधीन (सिविल एवं सोयम वन)- 4768.70 वर्ग कि०मी०

(स) वन पंचायत के अधीन (वन पंचायतों की संख्या 12089)- 7349.842 वर्ग कि०मी०

(द) निजी/अन्य संस्थाओं (नगर पालिका, कैंन्ट, केन्द्र सरकार) के अधीन- 157.52 वर्ग कि०मी०

अतः वनों की अग्नि से सुरक्षा में वन विभाग के अतिरिक्त राजस्व, वन पंचायत एवं अन्य संस्थाओं की भी विशेष भूमिका रहती है।

2. वर्ष 2020 वनाग्नि काल में राज्य अन्तर्गत वनाग्नि दुर्घटना के कुल मामले, प्रभावित क्षेत्र एवं क्षति का विवरण दी गयी तालिका में दिया गया है :-

Human Casualties due to Forest fires in Uttarakhand during 2020

SNO	Region	Persons Wounded	Persons Dead	Animals Wounded	Animals Dead
1	Garhwal	-	-	-	-
2	Kumaon	1	2	-	-
3	Admin, Wildlife	-	-	-	-
	Grand Total	1	2	-	-

Region-wise summary of 2020 Fire Incidents Reported Till Date 23-06-2020

SNO	Region	Incident No. In RF	Incident No. In Civil Soyam / Van Panchayati	Total Incidents	Affected RF Area (Ha)	Affected Civil Soyam / Van Panchayati Area (Ha)	Total Affected Area (Ha)	Plantation Affected Area (Ha)	Total Affected Plantation Sapling	Leesa ghao Affected	Total No Affected Trees	Evaluation of Losses (In Rs.)
1	Garhwal	23	25	48	24.25	45.9	70.15	-	-	-	-	176325
2	Kumaon	35	36	71	35.92	56.96	92.88	-	-	-	-	258980
3	Admin, Wildlife	15	1	16	8.16	1.5	9.66	-	-	-	-	8830
	Grand Total	73	62	135	68.33	104.36	172.69	-	-	-	-	444135

3. वर्ष 2020 एवं विगत 5 वर्षों में अग्नि घटनाओं का तुलनात्मक विवरण तालिका में दिया गया है:-

Fire Year	Incidents No. in RF	Incident No. in Civil Soyam/ VP	Total Incidents in State	Affected RF Area (Ha)	Affected Civil Soyam / VP Area(Ha)	Total Affected Area (Ha)	Total Losses (In Rs.)	Human Death	Human Injury
2020	73	62	135	68.33	104.36	172.69	444,135.00	2	1
2019	1641	517	2158	2202.35	779.2	2981.55	5,592,587.5	1	15
2018	1498	652	2150	2657.136	1822.9	4480.036	8,605,374.5	-	6
2017	490	300	790	718.14	509.90	1,228.04	2,124,563.10	-	1
2016	1327	742	2069	2,822.85	1,600.50	4,423.35	4,629,825.00	6	31
2015	327	79	406	576.30	115.96	692.26	672,165.00	-	-

उक्त तुलनात्मक तालिका से स्पष्ट है कि वर्ष 2020 में अग्नि से प्रभावित क्षेत्र(हैक्टर में) एवं प्रत्यक्ष आर्थिक हानि(रु० में) सर्वाधिक न्यून रही है। वर्ष 2020 में Covid -19 के कारण लाकडाउन तथा वनों में मानवीय गतिविधियों के न्यूनतम स्तर पर होने कारण भी अग्नि से क्षति बहुत कम रही है। वर्ष 2020 में उत्तराखण्ड वन विभाग द्वारा पूर्ण तैयारी के साथ वनों में सुरक्षा सम्बन्धी कार्य किये गये तथा सम्पूर्ण वनाग्नि काल में विभागीय स्तर पर लापरवाही अथवा अन्य तथ्य प्रकाश में नहीं आये।

4. हिन्दुस्तान समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित समाचार दिनांक 12.02.2020 के सम्बन्ध में आख्या वन संरक्षक, उत्तरी कुमाऊँ वृत्त अल्मोड़ा के माध्यम से प्राप्त की गयी जो उनके पत्र संख्या 264/27-6 दिनांक 20.07.2020 द्वारा प्राप्त हुयी। प्राप्त आख्या अनुसार समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित समाचार के सम्बन्ध में घटनावार स्थिति निम्न प्रकार है :-

(अ) अल्मोड़ा वन प्रभाग, अल्मोड़ा :- प्रभागीय वनाधिकारी, अल्मोड़ा वन प्रभाग, अल्मोड़ा द्वारा पत्रांक 475/27-7 दिनांक 20.07.2020(छाया प्रति संलग्न) द्वारा अवगत कराया गया है कि समाचार पत्र के कतरन में प्रकाशित समाचार करबला (विवेकानन्द कॉर्नर से लगा क्षेत्र) में दिनांक 11.02.2020 के रात्रि में जो आग लगी थी, वह क्षेत्र छावनी परिषद अल्मोड़ा के नियंत्रणाधीन है। सूचना प्राप्त होने पर आग को बुझाने के लिए वन क्षेत्राधिकारी, अल्मोड़ा भी अपनी टीम के साथ मौके पर पहुँची किन्तु आग बुझ चुकी थी।

(ब) पिथौरागढ़ वन प्रभाग, पिथौरागढ़ :- प्रभागीय वनाधिकारी, पिथौरागढ़ वन प्रभाग, पिथौरागढ़ ने अपने पत्रांक 227/27-1 दिनांक 20.07.2020 द्वारा अवगत कराया कि समाचार पत्र के कतरन में प्रकाशित समाचार में वर्णित स्थल मुन्सयारी के निकट रातापानी में दिनांक 31.12.2019 को 03:30 बजे सांय वनाग्नि की घटना हुई। वस्तुतः यह क्षेत्र गिरगाँव वन पंचायत (N30°09'10" E 80°14'20") का तोक है। वनाग्नि घटना का संज्ञान होते ही स्थानीय वन दरोगा के निर्देशन में 04 सदस्यीय टीम घटना स्थल पर पहुँची। घटना स्थल अत्यधिक चट्टानी एवं ढलानी क्षेत्र होने के कारण आग प्रभावित स्थल तक पहुँचना कठिन

था। दिनांक 01.01.2020 की रात्रि को वर्षा एवं हिमपात होने से उक्त रातापानी (गिरगाँव वन पंचायत का तोक) में लगी आग पूर्ण रूप से बुझ गयी थी।

फील्ड से प्राप्त आख्या अनुसार अग्नि की घटना वन विभाग के नियंत्रणाधीन क्षेत्र में नहीं हुई। घटना में किसी भी प्रकार के वन प्राणियों की मृत्यु या उनके वास स्थलों की क्षति का प्रकरण भी प्रकाश में नहीं आया है।

5. पर्वतीय क्षेत्र में गाँव के निकट चारागाह क्षेत्रों में चराई हेतु अच्छी घास उत्पादन के लिए स्थानीय ग्रामीणों द्वारा आग लगाने का कार्य किया जाता है किन्तु यह मुख्यतः चराई के क्षेत्रों में गाँव के निकट नियंत्रित ढंग से होता है। कई मामलों में यह वह क्षेत्र भी होते हैं जो सिविल सोयम भूमि पर होते हैं तथा ग्रामीणों का यहाँ परम्परागत चराई अधिकार होता है। जनचेतना एवं प्रचार प्रसार से इसको न्यून किया जा रहा है।

अतः उक्त अनुसार सूचना आवश्यक कार्यवाही हेतु प्रेषित है।

संलग्नक—उपरोक्तानुसार।

भवदीय,

(जय राज) 21/07

प्रमुख वन संरक्षक (HoFF)

उत्तराखण्ड, देहरादून।

संख्या : 24-107 / 27-1 तददिनांकित।

प्रतिलिपि:— अपर प्रमुख वन संरक्षक, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय (उत्तर-मध्य क्षेत्र), 25 सुभाष रोड़, देहरादून को उनके पत्र संख्या Ro-DDN/ENV/NGT/MISC/2014/656 दिनांक 17.07.2020 के क्रम में सूचनार्थ एवं आवश्यक कार्यवाही हेतु प्रेषित।

(जय राज) 21/07

प्रमुख वन संरक्षक (HoFF)

उत्तराखण्ड, देहरादून।

[Handwritten signature]

ई-मेल

कार्यालय वन संरक्षक, उत्तरी कुमाऊँ वृत्त, उत्तराखण्ड, अल्मोड़ा।

Email : cfkumaon_north@rediffmail.com & Fax (05962) 231099 Fax 230397

पत्रांक 264/27-6 अल्मोड़ा, दिनांक 20-7-2020।

सेवा में,

मुख्य वन संरक्षक,
वनाग्नि एवं आपदा प्रबन्धन,
उत्तराखण्ड, देहरादून

विषय :- Urgent filling of affidavit in NGT regarding incidents of forest fire in Uttarakhand-reg.

संदर्भ :- आपका पत्रांक 21/27-1 दिनांक 20.07.2020।
महोदय,

सन्दर्भित पत्र जो प्रभागीय वनाधिकारी अल्मोड़ा एवं पिथौरागढ़ को सम्बोधित तथा इस कार्यालय को पृष्ठांकित है, के क्रम में सम्बन्धित प्रभागीय वनाधिकारियों द्वारा उपलब्ध करायी गयी आख्या के अनुसार स्थिति निम्न प्रकार है :-

1 :- अल्मोड़ा वन प्रभाग, अल्मोड़ा :- प्रभागीय वनाधिकारी, अल्मोड़ा वन प्रभाग, अल्मोड़ा द्वारा पत्रांक 476/27-7 दिनांक 20.07.2020 द्वारा अवगत कराया गया है कि समाचार पत्र के कतरन में प्रकाशित समाचार करबला (विवेकानन्द कॉर्नर से लगा क्षेत्र) में दिनांक 11.02.2020 के रात्रि में जो आग लगी थी, वह क्षेत्र छावनी परिषद अल्मोड़ा के नियंत्रणाधीन है। सूचना प्राप्त होने पर आग को बुझाने के लिए वन क्षेत्राधिकारी, अल्मोड़ा भी अपनी टीम के साथ मौके पर पहुँची किन्तु आग बुझ चुकी थी।

2 :- पिथौरागढ़ वन प्रभाग, पिथौरागढ़ :- प्रभागीय वनाधिकारी, पिथौरागढ़ वन प्रभाग, पिथौरागढ़ द्वारा पत्रांक 227/27-1 दिनांक 20.07.2020 द्वारा अवगत कराया गया है कि समाचार पत्र के कतरन में प्रकाशित समाचार रातापानी में दिनांक 31.12.2019 को 03:30 बजे सायं वनाग्नि घटना हुई। वस्तुतः यह क्षेत्र गिरगाँव वन पंचायत (N 30°09'10" E 80°14'20") का तोक है। वनाग्नि घटना का संज्ञान होते ही स्थानीय वन दरोगा के निर्देशन में 04 सदस्यीय टीम घटना स्थल पर पहुँची। घटना स्थल अत्यधिक चट्टानी एवं ढलानी क्षेत्र होने के कारण आग प्रभावित स्थल तक पहुँचना कठिन था। दिनांक 01.01.2020 की रात्रि को वर्षा एवं हिमपात होने से उक्त रातापानी (गिरगाँव वन पंचायत का तोक) में लगी आग पूर्ण रूप से बुझ गयी थी।

अतः उक्त प्रभागीय वनाधिकारियों से प्राप्त आख्या के क्रम में सूचनार्थ एवं आवश्यक कार्यवाही हेतु प्रेषित।

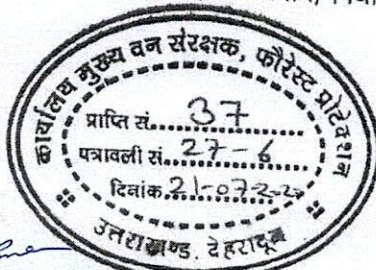
भयदीय,

(प्रवीण कुमार)
वन संरक्षक

उत्तरी कुमाऊँ वृत्त, उत्तराखण्ड, अल्मोड़ा

पत्रांक 264/27-6 दिनांकित।

प्रतिलिपि :- प्रभागीय वनाधिकारी, अल्मोड़ा वन प्रभाग, अल्मोड़ा एवं प्रभागीय वनाधिकारी, पिथौरागढ़ वन प्रभाग, पिथौरागढ़ को उनके वर्णित पत्रों के क्रम में सूचनार्थ प्रेषित।

(प्रवीण कुमार)
वन संरक्षक

उत्तरी कुमाऊँ वृत्त, उत्तराखण्ड, अल्मोड़ा