

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
Ministry of Environment and Forests**

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Environment Ministry issues Fresh Draft Notification on Western Ghats

The Central Government has issued a fresh draft notification dated 04.09.2015 for notifying an Eco-sensitive Zone for the Western Ghats. The fresh draft notification has been issued in supersession of the Notification dated March 10, 2014.

The earlier draft notification was issued under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for declaring an Ecologically Sensitive Area in the Western Ghats covering the six States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

While responding to the draft notification, many stakeholders and State Governments of the Western Ghats region had expressed their apprehensions and concerns with respect to Ecologically Sensitive Area in the Western Ghats.

In order to clarify these provisions stated in the draft notification and to dispel the apprehensions and concerns raised by the stakeholders with respect to provisions of the draft Notification and the concept of Ecologically Sensitive Area, the Ministry has decided in public interest to supersede the earlier draft notification with a fresh draft notification addressing these concerns/apprehensions.

It is important to mention that the extent of Ecologically Sensitive Area and the other provisions stated in the earlier draft notification remain unchanged pending the finalisation of proposals from the State Governments of demarcation of Ecologically Sensitive Area by physical verification. The main focus of the Ministry is to conserve the biodiversity of the Western Ghats region, while providing adequate opportunities for livelihood security of the local people in the broad paradigm of Ecologically Sensitive Area which is not just about regulation of development, but is intimately linked to positive promotion of environment-friendly and socially inclusive development.

The MoEF&CC clarifies that the lives of about 50 million people living in Western Ghats region will not be affected. Their agriculture and plantation will not be adversely impacted. Their normal businesses and their other activities will also not get adversely affected.

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Prakash Javadekar, said, "The Government is fully committed to protecting the ecology and sanctity of Western Ghats. At the same time, the Government is determined to ensure sustainable development of the population staying in the Western Ghats region". The importance of Western Ghats as a global biodiversity hotspot and a treasure trove of biological diversity harbouring many endemic species of flowering plants, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and invertebrates need not be over-emphasized. It is also the origin of Godavari, Krishna, Cauvery and a number of other rivers of Peninsular India, upon which much of the economy of the region is dependent. Therefore, there is a need to conserve and protect the unique biodiversity of Western Ghats, while allowing for sustainable and inclusive development of the region.

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