



Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Protected Areas

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Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** has released **Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of 146 national parks and wildlife sanctuaries (NP&WLS)** in the country.

It was also announced that from the year 2021 onwards, **10 best national parks, five coastal and marine parks and top five zoos** in the country will be **ranked and awarded every year.**

Key Points

- **Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of Protected Area:**
 - MEE of Protected Areas has **emerged as a key tool** that is increasingly being used by governments and international bodies **to understand strengths and weaknesses of the protected area management systems.**

The assessment process of India's National Park and Wildlife Sanctuaries **adopted from IUCN WCPA (World Commission on Protected Areas) framework of MEE.**
 - MEE is **defined as** the assessment of how well NP&WLS are being managed—primarily, whether they are protecting their values and achieving the goals and objectives agreed upon.

The **ratings** are assigned in **four categories**, as Poor – upto 40%; Fair - 41 to 59%; Good - 60 to 74%; Very Good – 75% and above.
 - A new framework for **MEE of Marine Protected Areas** has also been jointly prepared by the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** and MoEF&CC.
 - The MoEF&CC has also launched the **Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Indian Zoos (MEE-ZOO) framework** which proposes guidelines, criteria and indicators for evaluation of **zoos of the country** in a manner which is discrete, holistic and independent.

- **Protected Areas:**
 - India has a **network of 903 Protected Areas** covering about **5% of its total geographic area**.
 - India has systematically **designated its Protected Areas in four legal categories** — **National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves** and **Community Reserves** under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- **Findings:**
 - **Overall Performance:** The results of the present assessment are encouraging with an **overall mean MEE score of 62.01%** which is **higher than the global mean of 56%**.
 - **Regional Performance:** The **eastern region** of India presents the **highest overall** mean MEE Score of 66.12% and the **Northern region** represents the **lowest mean** MEE Score of 56%.
 - **Best NP&WLS: Tirthan Wildlife Sanctuary and Great Himalayan National Park (GNHP)** in Himachal Pradesh have performed the best among the surveyed protected areas (Total -146).
 - **GNHP** was awarded **UNESCO World Heritage Site** status in 2014, in recognition of its outstanding significance for biodiversity conservation.
 - **Tirthan Wildlife Sanctuary** (declared in 1976) is located at a height of 5000 feet and overlooking River Tirthan. It is a **part of Seraj Forest Division**. This sanctuary is **connected to the Great Himalayan National Park**.
 - **Worst NP&WLS: The Turtle Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh** was the worst performer in the survey.
 - A 7 km stretch of Ganga River between Rajghat (Malviya Bridge) to Ramnagar Fort, for the conservation, propagation and development of wildlife and their environment was declared as the Kachhua Vanyajiv Abhyaranya (Turtle Wildlife Sanctuary) via notification in 1989.

Categories of Protected Areas

- **Sanctuary:** It is an area which is of adequate ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, natural or zoological significance. The Sanctuary is declared for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wildlife or its environment. **Certain rights of people living inside the Sanctuary could be permitted.**

- **National Park:** It is declared for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wildlife or its environment, **like that of a Sanctuary**. The **difference** between a Sanctuary and a National Park mainly **lies in the vesting of rights of people living inside**.
 - Unlike a Sanctuary, where certain rights can be allowed, **in a National Park, no rights are allowed**.
 - **No grazing of any livestock** shall also be permitted **inside a National Park** while in a Sanctuary, the Chief Wildlife Warden may regulate, control or prohibit it.
- **Conservation Reserves:** These **can be declared by the State Governments** in any area owned by the Government, **particularly the areas adjacent to National Parks and Sanctuaries** and those areas which link one Protected Area with another. Such declarations **should be made after having consultations with the local communities**.

These are **declared for the purpose** of protecting landscapes, seascapes, flora and fauna and their habitat. The **rights of people** living inside a Conservation Reserve are **not affected**.
- **Community Reserves:** These **can be declared by the State Government in any private or community land**, not comprised within a National Park, Sanctuary or a Conservation Reserve, where an individual or a community has volunteered to conserve wildlife and its habitat. As in the case of a Conservation Reserve, the **rights of people living inside a Community Reserve are not affected**.

Source: IE