



Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022

For Prelims: Afforestation, India State of Forest Report, 2019, Forest Conservation Act, 1980, Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006

For Mains: Provisions of Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022, Forest Conservation Act, 1980, National Forest Policy, 1988, Wildlife Protection Act of 1972

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has issued the **Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022**.

- It is conferred by **Section 4 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980** and in **supersession of the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2003**.

What are the Provisions of Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022?

- **Formation of Committees:**
 - It constituted an **Advisory Committee**, a **regional empowered committee** at each of the integrated regional offices and a **screening committee** at State/Union Territory (UT) government-level.
- **Advisory Committee:**
 - The role of the Advisory Committee is restricted to **advise or recommend with regards to grant of approval** under relevant sections in respect of proposals referred to it and **any matter connected with the conservation of forests** referred to it by the Central government.
- **Project Screening Committee:**
 - The MoEFCC has directed the constitution of a **project screening committee in each state/UT for an initial review of proposals involving diversion of forest land**.
 - The five-member committee **will meet at least twice every month** and will advise the state governments on projects in a time bound manner.
 - All **non-mining projects between 5-40 hectares** must be reviewed within a period of 60 days and all such mining projects must be reviewed within 75 days.
 - For projects involving a larger area, the committee gets some more time — 120 days for non-mining projects involving more than 100 hectares and 150 days for mining projects.
- **Regional Empowered Committees:**
 - All linear projects (roads, highways, etc), projects involving forest land up to 40 hectares and those that have projected a use of forest land having a canopy density up to 0.7 — irrespective of their extent for the purpose of survey — shall be examined in the Integrated Regional Office.
- **Compensatory Afforestation:**
 - The applicants for diverting forest land in a hilly or mountainous state with green cover covering more than two-thirds of its geographical area, or in a state/UT with forest cover

covering more than one-third of its geographical area, will be able to take up compensatory afforestation in other states/UTs where the cover is less than 20%.

What are the other Initiatives for Forest Conservation?

- **Indian Forest Policy, 1952:**
 - It was a simple **extension of colonial forest policy**. However, it became conscious about the need to increase the forest cover to one-third of the total land area.
 - At that time maximum annual revenue from forests was the vital national need. The **two World Wars, need for defence, developmental projects such as river valley projects**, industries like pulp, paper and plywood, and communication heavily depended on forest produce for national interest, as a result, **huge areas of forests were cleared to raise revenue for the State.**
- **Forest Conservation Act, 1980:**
 - It stipulated that the central permission is necessary to practice sustainable **agro-forestry in forest areas**. Violation or lack of permit was treated as a **criminal offence**.
 - It is targeted to **limit deforestation, conserve biodiversity and save wildlife**. Though this Act provides greater hope towards forest conservation it was not successful in its target.
- **National Forest Policy, 1988:**
 - The ultimate objective of the National Forest policy was **to maintain environmental stability and ecological balance** through conservation of forests as a natural heritage.
 - It made a very significant and categorical shift from commercial concerns to **focus on the ecological role of the forests and participatory management**.
 - It envisages a **goal of achieving 33% of the geographical area of the country under forest and tree cover**.
- **National Afforestation Programme :**
 - It has been implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change since 2000 for the afforestation of degraded forest lands.
- **Other Related Acts:**
 - The **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972**, The **Environment Protection Act of 1986**, and The **Biodiversity Diversity Act of 2002**.
 - **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006:**
 - It has been enacted to **recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation of forest land in forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers**, who have been residing in such forests for generations.

Forest in India

- **About:**
 - According to **India State of Forest Report, 2021**, the **Total Forest and Tree cover is now 7,13,789 square kilometres, 21.71% of the country's geographical area**, an increase from 21.67% in 2019.
 - **Forest Cover (Area-wise):** Madhya Pradesh> Arunachal Pradesh> Chhattisgarh> Odisha> Maharashtra.
- **Category:**
 - **Reserved Forests:**
 - Reserve forests are the most restricted forests and are constituted by the State Government on any forest land or wasteland which is the property of the Government.
 - In reserved forests, local people are prohibited, unless specifically allowed by a Forest Officer in the course of the settlement.
 - **Protected Forests:**
 - The State Government is empowered to constitute any land other than reserved forests as protected forests over which the Government has proprietary rights and the power to issue rules regarding the use of such forests.
 - This power has been used to establish State control over trees, whose timber, fruit or other non-wood products have revenue-raising potential.

- **Village forest:**
 - Village forests are the one in which the State Government may assign to 'any village community the rights of Government to or over any land which has been constituted a reserved forest'.
- **Degree of Protection:**
 - Reserved forests > Protected forests > Village forests.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - Through the **42nd Amendment Act, 1976** Forests and Protection of Wild Animals and Birds were **transferred from State to Concurrent List** along with Education, Weights & Measures and Administration of Justice.
 - **Article 48 A** in the **Directive Principles of State policy**, mandates that the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
 - **Article 51 A (g)** of the Constitution states that it shall be the **Fundamental Duty** of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests and Wildlife.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. A particular State in India has the following characteristics: (2012)

1. It is located on the same latitude which passes through northern Rajasthan.
2. It has over 80% of its area under forest cover.
3. Over 12% of forest cover constitutes Protected Area Network in this State.

Which one among the following States has all the above characteristics?

- (a) Arunachal Pradesh
- (b) Assam
- (c) Himachal Pradesh
- (d) Uttarakhand

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- Arunachal Pradesh is located between 26.28° N and 29.30° N latitude. It lies on same latitude which passes through northern Rajasthan (Rajasthan's longitudinal extent is approximately from 23° N to 30° N).
- As per 2011 data forest cover of Arunachal Pradesh is 80.50% but according to current data forest cover is 79.63%. Two National Parks and 11 Wildlife Sanctuaries constitute the Protected Area network of the State covering 11.68% of its geographical area.
- Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

Source: HT