

## **SUMMARY ON STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT OF MANAS**

The World Heritage Committee on the basis of examination of document WHC-12/36.COM/7B and recalling decision 35 COM 7B.13, adopted at the 35 Session in 2011 requested the State Party India vide decision 36 COM 7B.10 to submit to the World Heritage Centre by 1st February, 2014. An updated report on the state of conservation of the property, including a report on the progress achieved in addressing the issue of fund release and the implementation of the other recommendations made by the Committee at its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011), as well as on progress in addressing the issues raised above, has been submitted to UNESCO WHC for examination by the Committee at its 38th session in 2014.

Delay in release of funds has been considerably minimized as evident from the release of funds for the year 2013-14. The Manas Tiger Conservation Foundation (MTCF) has also been set up which ploughs back the revenue generated from tourism etc. directly into the Park management. The MTCF is also authorized to take funds as loan to expedite essential management activities such as maintenance of patrolling paths and surveillance activities, until the Central funds are received. Thus the issue of fund flow to the property has been adequately addressed.

Proper guidelines have been made for the park management, tour operators, visitors and the host community. The tourism zone is demarcated and limited to the extent of not more than 20% of the core area of the National Park. Guidelines have been provided for determination of “carrying capacity” for regulating the flow of visitors in order to prevent disturbance to wildlife and habitat. Manas is showing a steady increase in number of tourists.

As part of integrated ecosystem-based monitoring, several survey and research works have been undertaken under the auspices of the Forest Department/Manas Tiger Project with the support of technical and human resources of government and non-government scientific institutions and conservation organizations like tiger estimates, wildlife monitoring, prey estimation, invasive species, vegetation sampling, ecological studies has been taken up.

Subsequent to IUCN-UNESCO recommendation for a recovery plan for the Eastern swamp deer in Manas, the State Party India has taken active initiative to undertake the process. Three multi-stakeholder workshops to finalise the swamp deer translocation protocol were held under the Chairmanship of the Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam in Guwahati, Assam in June 2012, Aug 2012 and Aug 2013. The protocol for translocation of swamp deer was finalized, and will be submitted to Government of India for verification before implementation.

As part of efforts to reintroduce Rhino, key species to Manas and restore the World Heritage Site to its past glory, an ambitious programme, the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 was conceived which was a joint conservation initiative of the Assam Forest Department, WWF India and International Rhino Foundation, supported by the Bodoland Territorial Council, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Areas Welfare and Development Trust and other partner organizations. Under this programme, wild-to-wild translocation of rhinos to Manas from two other rhino bearing protected areas in Assam was initiated in 2008 with 2 rhinos. As of 2012, this had increased to a cumulative total of 18 rhinos. In parallel, 5 rescued rhinos from other areas were also rehabilitated in Manas. Several emergency measures were rolled out by the authorities to deal with the serious poaching issue.

A series of high-level security meetings were held to ensure greater coordination between the Forest Department, the Civil Administration and the Police Establishment. Seven suspected people have been arrested for alleged involvement in the criminal offence and one intruder in the National Park was killed in an encounter with forest guards. Significant steps by the Manas National Park authorities with the goal of improving the protection mechanism include establishment and improvement of infrastructure (anti-poaching camps, road bridges, communication equipment), intensified patrolling, engagement of additional personnel for enforcement, filling-up of vacant positions, capacity building of frontline forest staff, local community engagement, etc.

It is also desired to extend the property with the 36000 hectares of intact habitat proposed by the Bodoland Territorial Council as an expansion of the National Park, once this has been approved at the State and National levels and it was also agreed to conduct a joint feasibility study with the State Party of Bhutan on a possible trans-boundary extension of the property, in order to increase its ability to adapt to climate change.

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