



GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
BODOLAND TERRITORIAL COUNCIL
OFFICE OF THE FIELD DIRECTOR : : MANAS TIGER RESERVE
BARPETA ROAD: ASSAM-781315

Email ID: fd.manastr@gmail.com

Letter. No.FD/TR/Manas WHSI/ 37

Dated: January 12, 2024

To,

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife
and Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam
Aranya Bhawan, Panjabari, Guwahati-37

Sub: Submission of World Heritage Committee Decision 2023 for Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India)
(N-338)- reg.

Ref: WII letter No. WII/C2C/Manas/19/2015, Dated- 07.11.2023

Sir,

Reference is invited to the subject cited above. In this context, I am to submit herewith the report on State of Conservation of World Heritage Committee Decision 2023 for Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India) (N 338)-reg as per WII prescribed format.

This is for favour of your kind information and onward necessary action.

Enclosed: As stated above

Yours faithfully,

(Rajen Choudhury, IFS, CF)
Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve

Copy for kind information

1. The Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests cum CHD, Forests, BTR, Kokrajhar.
2. The Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Post Box No. 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun- 248001, Uttarakhand, India.
3. Dr. Niraj Kakati, Wildlife Institute of India, Post Box No. 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun- 248001, Uttarakhand, India. E-mail-, nirajkakati@wii.gov.in

(Rajen Choudhury, IFS, CF)
Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve


**FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF
STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS
BY THE STATES PARTIES**

(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the *Operational Guidelines*)

MANAS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY (INDIA) (N 338)

1. Executive Summary of the report

[Note: each of the sections described below should be summarized. The maximum length of the executive summary is 1 page.]

Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India) (N 338)	
Response to Decision 45 COM 7B.83 of the World Heritage Committee, 2023	<p>Para 3: Wildlife monitoring is conducted on a regular basis with scientific methodology, also including reintroduction of endangered species like Pygmy hog. Anti-poaching measures are strengthened with infrastructure and patrolling</p> <p>Para 4: Initiatives for carbon financing, eco-development and ecotourism are being actively undertaken.</p> <p>Para 5: Status quo is being maintained with no fresh agricultural encroachments in the property</p> <p>Para 6: Habitat management strategy in Manas is guided by prescriptions in Manas Tiger Conservation Plan. Strategy for invasive species removal and woody species control are being attempted on pilot basis.</p> <p>Para 7: Field-level cooperation between India and Bhutan in Manas is an ongoing effort. Transboundary extension would require additional dialogue. Extension of property is not currently under consideration.</p> <p>Para 8: Matters regarding HEP is under purview of bilateral agreement between India and Bhutan.</p> <p>Para 9: India and Bhutan need to consider discussion regarding EIA and EMP of HEP.</p>
Other current conservation issues	Funding sources for the property; NGO conservation work.
Any potential major alterations, restorations, construction, etc	None.
Public access	Yes
Signature of authority	 Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve, Bodoland Territorial Council Government of Assam Barpeta Road - 781315, Assam, India Tel : +919435026385 Email : fd.manastr@gmail.com Field Director Manas Tiger Reserve Barpeta Road, Assam

2. **Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee**

[Note: The State(s) Party(ies) is/are requested to address the most recent Decision of the World Heritage Committee for this property, paragraph by paragraph.]

The World Heritage Committee vide Decision 45 COM 7B.83 adopted at its 45th Session held in Riyadh, 2023, requested the State Party of India to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2024, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the recommendations, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th Session. In this context, response of the State Party of India is provided below.

PARA-3: Welcomes the reported increase in the Indian rhinoceros population in the property, and notes with appreciation the upscaled efforts against poaching and the subsequent reduction in wildlife-related offences and the generation of baseline data for keynote species in Manas for the first time, with a view to institutionalising holistic and state-of-the-art wildlife monitoring, and requests the State Party to provide these baseline population data as part of its next report on the state of conservation of the property;;

Rhino Population: Owing to strengthened protection measures, Rhino populations have remained fairly stable over the last three years. Estimation of rhino populations through total count and distance sampling methods have revealed following numbers: 38 (2020-21), 40 (2021-22) and 47 (2022-23).



Tiger Population: As per Report released in 2023 on Status of Tigers, Co-predators and Prey in India (2022), Manas Tiger Reserve was thoroughly sampled by camera-trap and yielded 57 individual tigers. The tiger population and density of Manas show an increasing trend since 2006 with positive managerial efforts.



Other sampled species: Presence of other major sampled species in Manas landscape included Bear, Wild water buffalo, Swamp deer, Gaur, among others.

Pygmy Hog Reintroduction: 18 captive-bred pygmy hogs have been released in the sprawling Manas National Park of Assam, India, by the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP) in September 2023. This is for the fourth time pygmy hogs have been reintroduced to Manas Park by the PHCP after successful releases in 2022, 2021 and 2020. This has now taken the total number of this Critically Endangered species released at this site up to 54, meaning the PHCP is well on its way to meet its target of 60 hogs released in Manas Park by 2025. The programme, which is made up of founding partner Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, along with the IUCN/SSC Wild Pig Specialist Group, Assam Forest Department, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, and Ecosystems-India, with Aaranyak as delivery partner, has been working to bring this precious species back from the brink after it was previously thought to be extinct in the 1970s.



Pygmy Hog reintroduction site in Manas National Park

Anti-Poaching Camps: Towards efforts to strengthen protection, several new anti-poaching camps have been constructed in Manas National Park.



Maguribeel APC, Bhuyanpara Range



Jangia APC, Kahitema Beat, Panbari Range



Mwisopathar APC, Panbari Range



Phalangshi APC, Panbari Range



Raigajali APC, 1st Addition to Manas NP



SriLanka APC, 1st Addition to Manas NP

PARA-4: Commends the ongoing efforts to mobilize additional funding for the conservation of the property, including through REDD+ carbon financing, and encourages the State Party to report on how the carbon finance initiative benefits the property, so that lessons learnt could be shared widely, and also welcomes activities undertaken by the State Party aiming to benefit local communities, notably through the revitalization of Eco-Development Committees and eco-tourism initiatives;

Carbon financing: The carbon finance initiative for Manas Tiger Reserve is currently under planning and study as per MoU between the Manas Tiger Conservation Foundation (MTCF) with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and The Energy Research Institute (TERI).

Eco-Development Committees: Consultations are ongoing with village representatives around Manas Tiger Reserve for activating many of the Eco-Development Committees (EDCs), primarily related to alternative livelihoods and human-wildlife conflict mitigation. 48 Eco Development Committees were constituted under Manas Tiger Reserve.

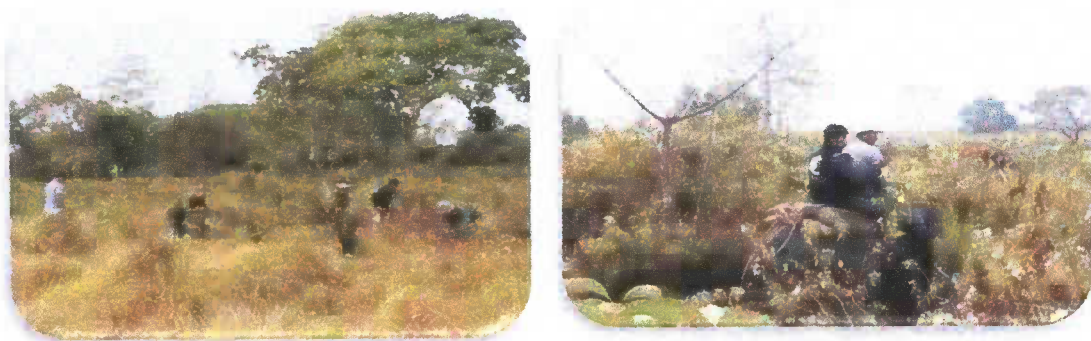
Eco-Tourism Initiatives: The park authorities continue to support eco-tourism initiatives in the property through responsible vehicle safari, sightseeing and interpretation facilities. A centralized online ticket booking system for tourists has been initiated.

PARA-5: Notes with concern that the impacts of agricultural encroachment on the property remain unresolved, and therefore also requests the State Party to continue ensuring that no further expansion of encroachment occurs within the property, while strengthening efforts to address the issue at a political level with due respect to the social, economic and cultural rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and respecting all relevant international norms;

No further agricultural encroachment has occurred on the property. Existing situation has remained under control and consultations between the local communities, park management and political authorities are ongoing.

PARA-6: Notes that habitat management of the property is guided by the Manas Tiger Conservation Plan, but regrets that the State Party did not provide a clear update regarding the finalisation and implementation of an Action Plan for sustainable management of the grassland-woodland ecosystem, despite its earlier requests, and reiterates its request to the State Party to provide an update on the implementation of the Action Plan on the ground, including on the implementation of control measures against the spread of invasive plant species, notably *Chromolaena odorata* and *Mikania micrantha*;

Habitat management strategy in Manas is being undertaken as per prescriptions in Manas Tiger Conservation Plan through regulated fire regime, weed eradication, management of woody species, grazing management, water development, etc. Scientific basis for action plan includes objectives to identify the grassland sites for restoration and management, provide guidelines/principles for restoration/enhancement and conservation, monitor the health of the grasslands regularly, and encourage and support community participation in the conservation of grassland habitat. Intervention strategy for removal of *Chromolaena* through biomass cutting and uprooting is being attempted in pilot sites. This would require scaling up of the efforts and repetitive intervention over long term for effective results. Likewise, Girdling technique, which consists of removal of bark with phloem tissue from the circumference of the trunk, is being piloted to assess control of growth of woody species like *Bombax ceiba* in the grasslands of Manas National Park.



Fire-line cutting & weed eradication

PARA-7: Also notes with appreciation the continued transboundary cooperation between the States Parties of India and Bhutan at a field level and also encourages the State Party to continue the reflection on the possible preparation of a revised proposal for the extension of the property and engage in dialogue with the State Party of Bhutan on a possible transboundary extension of the property, in line with the previous Committee decisions:

Field-level cooperation and park-to-park interaction between India and Bhutan is an ongoing effort across the Manas landscape between the two countries. Potential transboundary extension of the property will require additional consultation between the governments of the two countries. Further, a revised proposal for the extension of the property is not presently under consideration of the Government.

PARA-8: Reiterates its serious concern about the potential impacts of the Mangdechhu hydroelectric project on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, and noting that this project is reported to have been jointly inaugurated by the Government of India and the Royal Government of Bhutan in August 2019, deeply regrets that neither State Party has provided any information about the project, nor its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) despite continued requests by the Committee since 2012;

The matter is under the purview of bilateral agreement between Governments of India and Bhutan.

PARA-9: Urges again the States Parties of India and Bhutan to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for review by IUCN, by 1 February 2024: a) A copy of the EIA for the Mangdechhu hydroelectric project, which should include an assessment of the project's impact on the property's OUV, including its integrity, b) Details on the EMP and a report of its implementation, including confirmation of effective measures taken to ensure that any impact on the OUV is being avoided;

The State Parties of India and Bhutan need to consider appropriate discussions on this matter.

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

[Note: this includes conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

Funding Sources: Funding for the Manas Tiger Reserve is currently derived from grant provided by the National Tiger Conservation Authority of India (NTCA) and Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger.

NGO conservation work: Several NGOs are contributing to the conservation efforts of the Manas landscape in various activities such as species reintroduction (Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme), community livelihood (Aaranyak and WWF), human-wildlife conflict mitigation (Wildlife Trust of India).

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

None.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1.) above will be uploaded for public access].

Yes

6. Signature of the Authority



Field Director,
Manas Tiger Reserve,
Bodoland Territorial Council
Government of Assam
Barpeta Road - 781315,
Assam, India
Tel : +91919435026385
Email : fd.manastr@gmail.com
Field Director Manas Tiger Reserve
Barpeta Road, Assam



No.WII/ C2C/Manas/19/2015

Date: 07 November, 2023

To,

PCCF (WL) & Chief Wildlife Warden,
Department of Forest, Govt. of Assam,
Aranya Bhawan (Near Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra)
Panjabari, Guwahati – 781037. Assam
Email: pccf.wl.assam@gmail.com

Sub: World Heritage Committee Decision 2023 for Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India) (N 338)– reg.

Sir,

Inviting reference to UNESCO World Heritage Committee Decision 45 COM 7B.83 adopted at its 45th Session (September, 2023), the State Party of India is requested to submit to the World Heritage Centre by 1st February, 2024 an updated report on the State of Conservation of Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (India) (N 338) for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th Session. **Government of Assam is requested to share the report by 31st December, 2023** in order to allow adequate time for necessary review and onward processing through MoEFCC, ASI and UNESCO.

It is advised to kindly consider the contents of the decision carefully in order to respond to the key issues and take necessary measures, as needed.

The Wildlife Institute of India would be available to provide technical support on this matter if required.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

[Virendra Tiwari]
Director
Email: dwii@wii.gov.in

Encl:

- i. WHC Decision 45 COM 7B.83 on Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, India
- ii. Format for Submission of SOC Report (Annex 13)

Cc:

1. Inspector General of Forest (WL), MoEFCC, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Ali Ganj, Jorbagh Road New Delhi – 110003, Email: igfwl-mef@nic.in
2. Director (World Heritage), Archaeological Survey of India, 24 Tilak Marg, New Delhi-110001. Email: directorwhs.asi@gmail.com, whsection-asi@gov.in. Phone: +91-011-23004700
3. Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve, BTC, Govt. of Assam, Barpeta Road-781315, Assam, Email: fd.manastr@gmail.com, councilheadforestbtc@gmail.com.
4. Dr. R. Suresh Kumar, Nodal Officer, WII-C2C, Dehradun. Email: suresh@wii.gov.in. Tel: +91-135-2646161
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FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS BY THE STATES PARTIES

(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the *Operational Guidelines*)

Name of World Heritage property (State(s) Party(ies)) (Identification number)

1. Executive Summary of the report

[Note: each of the sections described below should be summarized. The maximum length of the executive summary is 1 page.]

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

[Note: The State(s) Party(ies) is/are requested to address the most recent Decision of the World Heritage Committee for this property, paragraph by paragraph.]

If the property is inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger

Please also provide detailed information on the following:

- a) Progress achieved in implementing the corrective measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee

[Note: please address each corrective measure individually, providing factual information, including exact dates, figures, etc.]

If needed, please describe the success factors or difficulties in implementing each of the corrective measures identified

- b) Is the timeframe for implementing the corrective measures suitable? If not, please propose an alternative timeframe and an explanation why this alternative timeframe is required.
- c) Progress achieved towards the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR)

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

[Note: this includes conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1.) above will be uploaded for public access].

6. Signature of the Authority