

CHAPTER-II

Forest Policies and Plans

A Snapshot

The State does not have a State specific forest policy. Further, the Department has not established a mechanism for ensuring implementation of provisions of the National Forest Policy and National Wildlife Action Plan. Some of the activities envisaged under the Gujarat Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan were yet to be completed. Declaration of Critical Wildlife Habitats (CWHs) in the Sanctuaries was not done even after lapse of 14 years of implementation of the Forest Rights Act. There were delays in preparation of management plans and Sanctuaries were being managed on ad-hoc basis. The management plans lacked uniformity in terms of mid-term evaluation, maintenance of control forms/ PA and Range Books/ Compartment History, etc. The Department did not utilise Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) Reports of Wildlife Institute of India (WII) during preparation and execution of the Management Plans of the respective Sanctuaries. Linkage between funds allocated and activities envisaged under Management Plan was missing. Due to non-submission of UCs for first installment, second installment under CSS-IDWH was not released for three years from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Introduction

The Department is entrusted with the prime responsibility of protection, conservation, and development of forests and wildlife in the State. To fulfil its responsibility, it is essential that the Department prepares and updates suitable policies and plans and implements the existing policies /plans scrupulously. In this chapter, Audit has analysed various policies and plans aimed at protection, conservation, and management of wildlife in the State in general and the six test-checked Sanctuaries in particular.

2.1 State Forest Policy

Forest Policy provides a strategy for forest conservation that focuses on preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilisation, restoration, and enhancement of the natural environment.

As per the National Forest Commission Report 2006, within the broad parameters of the National Forest Policy, each State should have its own forest policy statement for sustainable management of its forest and wildlife resources. Further, a mechanism needs to be in place at the State level to monitor the implementation of forest policy provisions and suggest rectifications.

In the Audit Report (Civil), Government of Gujarat for the year ended 31 March 2009, of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, it was pointed out that the State had not prepared its specific forest policy. Audit noticed that even after 15 years since the report of the National Forest Commission, and after

being pointed out by the CAG; Gujarat has not prepared its forest policy till date (November 2022).

In the absence of a State-specific policy, provisions of the National Forest Policy must be adhered to for the protection, conservation, and development of forests in the State. However, Audit observed that there was no implementation and monitoring framework/ mechanism in the form of measurable targets, objectively verifiable indicators, financial allocations, and time schedules for the implementation of commitments made in the National Forest Policy. The Department did not implement various prescriptions contained in the National Forest Policy regarding conservation and protection of wildlife as discussed in paragraphs 2.5 (Management Plan), 3.9 (Wildlife Corridors), 3.5 (Encroachment of forest land), 4.1 (Research) and 4.3 (Wildlife estimation) of this report.

The Department stated (November 2022) that preparation of the State forest policy was under process and would be submitted to the State Government soon for approval.

Recommendation 1: The State Government may consider formulating State specific forest policy and implementation framework at the earliest.

2.2 Implementation of National Wildlife Action Plan

The first National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP-1) was issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) in 1983. Aiming to have a concerted approach to protection, conservation, and management of wildlife throughout the country, the plan was implemented up to 2001. On its completion and based on new concerns and challenges, a new National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP-2) was put in place for the period 2002-2016. Both the plans were based on Protected-Area-centric approach.

Subsequently, the NWAP-3 for the period 2017-2031, was circulated (September 2018) by the MoEF&CC to the Chief Wildlife Wardens of the States which adopts a landscape approach in conservation of all wildlife. The key focus areas are wildlife health management, strengthening research and monitoring, mitigation of human-wildlife conflict, management of tourism in wildlife areas, people's participation in wildlife conservation, integration of climate change into wildlife planning etc. As the areas identified in the NWAP were critical for the protection, conservation, and management of wildlife, an implementation framework needs to be prepared and executed for effective implementation and monitoring of the provisions of the NWAP.

Audit observed that the Department had neither prepared (September 2022) any implementation framework for implementing the NWAP nor has come up with a State specific wildlife action plan. Audit further observed that the Department did not implement various prescriptions contained in the NWAP regarding conservation and protection of wildlife as discussed in paragraphs 2.2.1 (Preparation of Annual Report of Protected Areas), 2.4 (Declaration of Critical wildlife habitat), 2.5 (Delay in Preparation of Management Plan), 2.6 (implementation of recommendations of MEE Report), 3.9 (Identification of

corridors and their inclusion in ESZ) and 4.1 (Research on impact of development activities on PA) of this report.

The Department assured (October 2022) that State specific wildlife action plan would be prepared. The Department also stated (November 2022) that the NWAP would be taken into consideration during preparation of the Management Plans.

Recommendation 2: The State Government may establish an effective framework for implementation of NWAP for management and conservation of wildlife in the State.

2.2.1 Annual Report of Protected Areas

The NWAP-2 (2002-16) stipulated that the Annual Report of all the Protected Areas (PAs) be prepared which should include management achievements and principal threats to the PA or wildlife and measures taken to reduce the threats. The Annual Reports were required to be placed before the State Board for Wild Life (SBWL). These reports could be highly effective in gauging the progress on the management plans and addressing the threats to the PAs and enable taking corrective measures and necessary course corrections, if required.

During scrutiny of the documents of the Department, neither any annual report was found on record nor such report was provided (November 2022) by the Department despite being requested (January 2021) by Audit.

Thus, audit could not ascertain whether annual reports were prepared and submitted to the SBWL.

2.3 Implementation of Gujarat Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan

India is home to four of the eight species of Bears in the world. In the face of increasing pressures of habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation due to rapid development, natural resource dependency of local communities, etc., MoEF&CC released (November 2012) the National Bear Conservation Action Plan (NBCAP) 2012 as an instrument for long-term conservation for these species. The NBCAP included State Action Plans of 26 States including Gujarat and proposed various management actions under seven themes¹ to ensure stable status of bear species and minimal bear-human conflicts.

In Gujarat, Sloth Bears are found in five protected areas viz. Balaram Ambaji, Jessore, Jambughoda, Ratanmahal and Shoolpaneshwar (selected under the Performance Audit) as well as several unprotected forest patches of Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Mehsana and Panchmahal districts.

The available Bear habitats in the State face pressure in the form of livestock grazing, tourism and developmental activities like road construction and

¹ (i) Protection from illegal trade in bear parts, (ii) Bear human conflict mitigation, (iii) Habitat management, (iv) Research and information, (v) Capacity development, (vi) Communication and education and (vii) Policy and legislation.

expansion, and mining, which lead to degradation of habitat and fragmentation of forest patches. Gujarat Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan (GBCWAP), 2012 proposed various activities with timeframe for conservation of the Sloth Bear.

Audit observed that important activities envisaged under the GBCWAP were either pending or partially achieved as on March 2021 as detailed in the table below.

Table 2.1: Status of implementation of activities envisaged in GBCWAP (as on March 2021)

Sl. No.	Activity envisaged in the GBCWAP	Status
1	Development of Protocol for conducting scientific and systematic census of sloth bear in Gujarat by 2013-14.	<p>The Department did not develop any Protocol and the old method (as in the year 2011) viz. direct sighting and sign survey were employed during the estimation of sloth bear in the latest survey of bears conducted in the year 2016.</p> <p>The Department confirmed (November 2022) the audit observation.</p> <p>The issue has been discussed in detail in paragraph 4.3 of this report.</p>
2	Preparation of a plan by 2013 to regulate traffic in night in vicinity of bear habitats, especially in tourist and pilgrim seasons and fixing the specific time periods for pilgrims and tourists for visiting the places located in the Sanctuary such as Kedarnath Temple (Jessore Sanctuary), Balaram and Ambaji Temple (Balaram Ambaji Sanctuary), Zand Hanuman Temple (Jambughoda Sanctuary).	<p>The Department did not develop any eco-tourism plan for addressing the issues of high volume of pilgrims visiting the temples, provision of facilities for pilgrims and reducing the impact of pilgrimage on the wildlife.</p> <p>The Department stated (November 2022) that pilgrimage was being regulated in the Kedarnath temple, however no supporting documents were furnished for establishing the same.</p> <p>No reply regarding the other two pilgrimage sites was furnished.</p>
3	Habitat restoration of corridor between fragmented forest patches in Gujarat by 2013-16.	<p>As per last Bear census held in 2016, maximum Sloth Bears were found in and around the Ratanmahal Sanctuary, major portion of which falls in the Panchmahal district. Ratanmahal is connected with Jambughoda through corridors located in Chhota Udepur and Godhra Forest Divisions. No plan for corridor management was included in the working plan of Chhota Udepur Forest Division for the period 2017-18 to 2026-27 approved in January 2018. On the other hand, working plan of Godhra Forest Division (Panchmahal District) had expired in 2017-18 and a new plan was yet to be prepared by the working plan wing of the Department (January 2022). It was also observed that no</p>

Sl. No.	Activity envisaged in the GBCWAP	Status
		<p>separate plan for management of corridors existed in these divisions. Thus, the Department did not have any plan for habitat restoration of this corridor.</p> <p>In reply, the Department confirmed (November 2022) that the GBCWAP was not communicated to the jurisdictional division of Ratanmahal and Jambughoda Sanctuaries.</p>
4	Commissioning of separate rescue and conflict management team for Gandhinagar and Vadodara Wildlife Circle by 2013.	<p>As of January 2022, only Gandhinagar Wildlife Circle had established 'Rapid Response Team' in March 2021 i.e., after a lapse of eight years from the prescribed timeline.</p> <p>The Department stated (November 2022) that the GBCWAP was not communicated to the concerned division.</p> <p>Thus, the Vadodara Wildlife Circle did not establish the separate rescue and conflict management team.</p>

2.4 Critical Wildlife Habitats within Protected Area

Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA) defines "Critical wildlife habitat" as such areas of National Parks and Sanctuaries where it has been specifically and clearly established that such areas are required to be kept as inviolate for the purposes of wildlife conservation. No forest rights holders shall be resettled or have their rights in any manner affected for the purposes of creating inviolate areas for wildlife conservation except when it has been established by the State Government that the activities or impact of the presence of holders of rights upon wild animals is sufficient to cause irreversible damage and threaten the existence of said species and their habitat. Further, NWAP-2 (2002-16) aimed to bring 10 *per cent* of India's landmass under the PA network, of which at least half should be inviolate habitats.

To identify/ notify Critical Wildlife Habitat (CWH), the MoEF&CC issued Guidelines in October 2007 (revised in February 2011) and fresh Guidelines in January 2018. As per the Guidelines of January 2018, the State Chief Wildlife Warden (PCCF (WL)) was required to notify Expert Committee(s)² for identification of CWH in each NP or Sanctuary. The Committee was expected to conduct field visits and identify CWH based on scientific and objective criteria and after open consultations with forest rights holders. After following the prescribed procedure, the MoEF&CC was to notify the CWH.

Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA) is being implemented in Gujarat since 2008. In compliance to these Guidelines, the PCCF (WL) issued instruction (July 2019)

² The Expert Committee shall consist of Conservator of Forest of the concerned NP/ Sanctuary as Chairperson along with DCF/ ACF of the NP/ Sanctuary as member-secretary and representative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), social scientist, experts of life sciences and President/ *Sarpanch* of the villages falling under the NP/ Sanctuary, as members.

to all concerned CCFs and DCFs to submit proposals for constitution of Expert Committees for the declaration of CWH. Audit observed that out of the six test-checked Sanctuaries, only two i.e., Ratanmahal and Jambughoda, submitted (September 2020) the said proposals to the PCCF (WL), which were yet to be approved (November 2022). Remaining four Sanctuaries did not submit any proposal even after lapse of over three years (November 2022).

Thus, declaration of CWHs in the Sanctuaries was yet to be done even after lapse of 14 years of implementation of the FRA. The Department could not establish PA wise Expert Committees till date (November 2022), which was the first step to initiate proceedings for the declaration of the CWH. Absence of declared CWH in the Sanctuaries was detrimental to the conservation of flora and fauna in the Sanctuaries as the same could have served as inviolate areas and would have guided re-settlement of forest dwellers, wherever necessary.

The Department stated (November 2022) that identification of CWH was under progress and proposal would be submitted to the State Government.

2.5 Management Plan

Management Plan is a document which sets out the values and objectives of management for a Protected Area and presents strategies and operational schedules for achievement of the objectives within a time bound framework. It is typically prepared to serve for a period of 10 years. The NWAP-2 (2002-16) and the NWAP-3 (2017-31), provide that each PA should have its own Management Plan, based on scientific and ecological data.

Audit analysed various aspects of planning process and noticed absence of centralised management plan development cell, delay in preparation of management plans, absence of site specifications in management plans and lack of uniformity in management plans as discussed in the subsequent paragraphs:

2.5.1 Management Plan Development Cell at State Forest Department

The NWAP-2 (2002-16) and NWAP-3 (2017-31) envisaged establishment of a central monitoring mechanism/ Management Plan Development Cell at headquarters of all State Forest Departments to ensure timely preparation of management plan/ schemes, review the quality of PA management plans, monitor their implementation and periodically review the management effectiveness of the PAs. Further, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) Guidelines³ 2005 recommends establishment of an independent cell within the Forest Department for an effective wildlife planning process.

Audit observed that no Management Plan Development Cell exists either at the F&ED or at the Office of PCCF (WL). Absence of such a Cell led to gaps between consecutive management plans and delay in preparation of Management Plans as discussed below:

³ A guide for planning wildlife management in Protected Areas and managed landscapes- Vishwas B. Sawarkar, prepared by WII serves as a manual for preparation of management plans.

2.5.1.1 Preparation of Management Plans

In order to avoid gap between two consecutive Management Plans, the work of preparation of next Management Plan should be initiated well in advance before the expiry of the prevailing Management Plan. The PCCF (WL) instructed (June 2010) the respective Circles to prepare the new management plans according to the WII Guidelines. The timelines for preparation of Management Plans in respect of test-checked Sanctuaries is shown in the following table:

Table 2.2: Details of gaps between two consecutive management plans

Name of the Sanctuary	Month/Year of expiry of existing management plan	Initiation of process of preparation of management plan	Approval of the new Management Plan	Gap between the current and the last management plan (in years)	Period of new management plan
Jessore	March 2006	June 2006	September 2021	15	April 2021-March 2031
Balaram Ambaji	March 2007	June 2006	September 2021	14	April 2021-March 2031
Jambughoda	March 2011	June 2010	October 2012	01	April 2012-March 2022
Shoolpaneshwar	March 2012	June 2010	December 2016	05	April 2017-March 2027
Purna	March 2011	June 2010	December 2014	03	April 2014-March 2024

Source: Information furnished by the Department.

While there was no gap between consecutive management plans for the Ratanmahal Sanctuary, there were gaps between two consecutive management plans for the remaining five test checked Sanctuaries which ranged between one and fifteen years. The same could have been addressed had the management plan development cell existed at the Department Level. As such, the above Sanctuaries were functioning on an *ad-hoc* basis during such time.

The Department assured in the exit conference (October 2022) that henceforth timely preparation of Management Plans would be ensured.

2.5.2 Absence of site specification in the Management Plans

The management plans of all the test-checked Sanctuaries had mentioned only various physical targets *vis-a-vis* generalised management prescriptions but did not contain site specific management prescriptions/ measures. The Management Plans had the provisions for creation of check dams, *van talavadi* (Forest ponds), boundary cairns, etc. However, the specific locations where these were required to be constructed were not mentioned in the Management Plans. The site specific prescriptions, i.e. the specific location in the Sanctuary area where management prescriptions were to be applied would have assisted in keeping a trail of the progress made in implementation of these prescription.

The Department assured (October 2022) that henceforth the Plan writing officer would be instructed to include coordinates of the proposed activities for ensuring site specifications.

2.5.3 Lack of uniformity in the Management Plans of various Sanctuaries

The Management Plans of the six test-checked Sanctuaries had different management prescriptions regarding mid-term and final review of the Management Plans, control forms and their formats, maintenance of compartment history and its format, maintenance of PA Book, etc. The issues relating to lack of uniformity of the Management Plans are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

2.5.3.1 Mid-term evaluation of Management Plan

The WII Guidelines stipulate that every plan must include and prescribe the process of management review. The mid-term evaluation of the management plans provides an opportunity to the management to ascertain the impact of the prescriptions, identify the strategies which proved beneficial for the development of the Sanctuary and pinpoint the activities which could not yield the desired results. The outcome of the mid-term reviews can not only guide necessary interventions required in the on-going management plan but also prove helpful in the preparation of the next management plan.

Status of mid-term review of management plans relating to the six test-checked Sanctuaries is shown in the following table:

Table 2.3: Status of Mid-term review of management plans as on 31 October 2022

Name of Sanctuary	Balaram Ambaji	Jessore	Jambughoda	Ratanmahal	Shoolpaneshwar	Purna
Period of the management plan	April 2021-March 2031	April 2021-March 2031	April 2012-March 2022	April 2014-March 2024	April 2017-March 2027	April 2014-March 2024
Whether the Management Plan provided for Mid-term review	Yes	Yes	Yes (Partial)	No	Yes (partial)	Yes
Whether mid-term review was due and carried out	Not due	Not due	Due in 2017-18 but not conducted	No provision for review	Due in 2022-23 (Not conducted till date (October 2022))	Due in 2019-20 but not conducted

Source: Management Plan of the respective Sanctuary and information furnished by the Department.

Thus, the management plans were either silent on conduct of mid-term review or did not provide for full-fledged mid-term review. It is also pertinent to mention that in places where the mid-term review was provided for and due to be conducted, it was not conducted.

2.5.3.2 Control Forms/ Protected Area Books and Range Books/ Compartment History

The WII Guidelines provide for maintaining control form, PA Book/ corresponding Range Book and compartment⁴ history. Control forms are meant to track management activities, record problems and their magnitude, and record events that are important from the management standpoint. The forms can be used as reference for annual reports, plan revision, management review and mid-course corrections. The PA Book (and the corresponding Range Book) is a means of tracking progress of management activities and records deviation proposals made and approved. Compartment history, which is prepared annually, is useful for evaluating habitat trends, natural and man induced impacts and efficiency of management prescriptions. The status of maintenance of these forms/ books/ history as observed during audit (July to October 2021) are given in **Appendix I**.

It can be seen from **Appendix I** that Control forms, PA Book and Range Books were not maintained in any of the six test checked Sanctuaries. It can be further seen that Compartment history was not maintained in four out of six test-checked Sanctuaries (even though provided for in their Management Plans). The compartment history in respect of Shoolpaneshwar and Purna Sanctuaries was not furnished during field visit (August/ September 2021). Majority of the sample copies of compartment history of some compartments furnished subsequently (November 2021 and February 2022) lacked date and signature of responsible authorities. In Purna, the compartment history was being maintained from 2020-21 only. Moreover, compartment history was not being maintained in formats prescribed in the WII Guidelines and thus, lacked some of the essential details like physical infrastructure, operations, and various events, etc., limiting their utility.

Thus, due to absence of these records, it was not possible for the management to track activities, record problems and their magnitude, activities deferred and record important events which could serve as reference at the time of the revision of plan or for mid-course corrections in the on-going plan.

2.6 Management Effective Evaluation (MEE) vis-à-vis Management Plans

MoEF&CC (with the technical assistance from WII) initiated the process of Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of the network of NPs and Sanctuaries in India in 2006. During MEE, the WII team assessed performance of respective PAs against the 30 Headline indicators and completed the MEE Score Card. The Report on 'Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE⁵) of NPs and Wildlife Sanctuaries in India' by WII assesses the effectiveness of PA management and covers (i) design issues (relating to both individual sites and PA systems), (ii) adequacy and appropriateness of management systems and processes and (iii) delivery of the objectives of PAs, including conservation of

⁴ Compartment is the Smallest unit of management delineated on the ground and recorded on maps.

⁵ The methodology for MEE is based on the uniform theme provided by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Framework for Assessing the Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas.

values. It also highlights management strengths, weaknesses, and actionable points in relation to management of PAs by identifying critical issues like capacity building, preparation of management plans, providing adequate resources, building collaboration with stakeholders and strengthening eco-development programmes, etc. All the six Sanctuaries test-checked in Audit were covered under the MEE and their respective scores are given in the table below:

Table 2.4: MEE scores of the test checked Sanctuaries

Name of the Sanctuary	MEE Report Period/ Published in year	MEE Rank/ Category	MEE Score	Mean Percentage (Western ⁶)	Mean Percentage (National)	Status as regards to Western Average	Status as regards to National Average
Balaram Ambaji	2015-17/ 2017	Good	60	66.17	62	Below	Below
Jessore	2017-18/ 2019	Fair	57.76	62.60	58.03	Below	Below
Jambughoda	2017-18/ 2019	Good	66.67	62.60	58.03	Above	Above
Ratanmahal	2018-19/ 2020	Good	72.50	64.22	62.01	Above	Above
Shoolpaneshwar	2006-14/ 2015	Fair	49.24	58.90	60.80	Below	Below
Purna	2006-14/ 2015	Good	64.17	58.90	60.80	Above	Above

Source: MEE Reports for the respective period.

From the above table it can be seen that three out of the six test-checked Sanctuaries fared below the National as well as the Regional (Western Region) average in terms of MEE scores. This indicates need for taking urgent steps and course correction to improve the management of these PAs.

NWAP-2 (2002-16) and NWAP-3 (2017-31) stipulate that findings of MEE reports should be kept in view for improving the management of the PA. Audit requested (between March and September 2021) the PCCF (WL) and jurisdictional Divisions to furnish action taken notes on the recommendations made in MEE reports. However, the same were not furnished to Audit. Moreover, Audit did not notice any reference to the MEE reports in preparation of management plans.

Thus, the Department did not utilise the results of MEE during preparation and execution of the Management Plans of the test-checked Sanctuaries.

⁶ Comprising of the States/ UTs of Gujarat, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

The Department stated (November 2022) that actions as prescribed in the MEE Reports have been taken/ are under progress in respect of the Balaram Ambaji and Jessore Sanctuaries. No reply was furnished in respect of the remaining four Sanctuaries. Moreover, reply was silent on consideration of MEE findings in the Management Plan of the respective Sanctuaries.

2.7 Funds for execution of activities envisaged in Management Plan

The Management Plan of a Sanctuary lays down the items/ activities⁷ to be conducted during the plan period of 10 years with details of year-wise physical targets and financial resources needed for the same.

Audit observations on availability of funds under Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) and execution of activities envisaged in management plan are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

2.7.1 Linkage between funds allocated and activities envisaged under Management Plan

Audit observed (June to October 2021) that jurisdictional Divisions did not maintain activity-wise physical and financial achievement against the targets envisaged in the management plans. Audit observed that the Divisions had maintained consolidated monthly expenditure report for all activities undertaken for the whole division without any linkage with activity-wise details prescribed in the Management Plan. Therefore, the Divisions were not in a position to furnish the details of accomplishment of physical targets prescribed in the management plans of their respective Sanctuaries and expenditure incurred thereupon. This indicated that monitoring of management plan was not holistic and the objective of preparation of management plan could not be fully achieved.

During the exit conference (October 2022), the Department stated that henceforth a format would be prescribed for ensuring linkage between funds allocated and activities envisaged in the Management Plan. It was further assured that activity-wise details would be mentioned against the funds released.

2.7.2 Availability of funds under Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)-Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats

In addition to the State Schemes, the Department also receives funds under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)-Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH). This scheme provides for Sanctuary-wise grants on 60:40 funding pattern for conducting wildlife protection and conservation activities. The funds under CSS-IDWH are sanctioned by the Central Government based on the proposals made in the Annual Plan of Operations (APO) of the respective Sanctuaries submitted by the State Government.

⁷ like demarcation, Fire Protection, habitat Improvement like conservation of soil and water, improvement of water regime, improvement of food, fodder development, raising fruit tree species etc., protection against grazing, Eco-Tourism, Eco-Development, research, captive breeding program, protection measures like check post, Staff amenities, communication and weapons.

Audit observed short release and non-availment of CSS funds amounting to ₹ 4.70 crore as discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

2.7.2.1 Short release of IDWH funds of ₹ 2.18 crore to the six Sanctuaries during 2016-17 to 2018-19

In respect of the six test checked Sanctuaries, for the APOs submitted during 2016-19, the amounts sanctioned by MoEF&CC with corresponding Central and State shares were as under:

Table 2.5: Details of amount sanctioned under CSS-IDWH for 2016-2019

(₹ in crore)			
Year	Total amount	Central share	State share
2016-17	2.90	1.74	1.16
2017-18	8.10	4.86	3.24
2018-19	1.58	0.95	0.63
Total	12.58	7.55	5.03

Source: Information from divisional records.

MoEF&CC released 80 per cent of the Central share as first installment. In addition, during 2016-17, MoEF&CC released ₹ 68.83 lakh as flexi fund for the combined APO of 26 PAs of Gujarat. Out of ₹ 68.83 lakh flexi fund, the Forest Department approved ₹ 15.50 lakh for the six test-checked Sanctuaries. The funds required to be released vis-à-vis actual release to the six test-checked Sanctuaries during 2016-19 is tabulated below.

Table 2.6: Details of amount released under CSS-IDWH for 2016-2019

(₹ in crore)					
Year	Central share (80 per cent of Column 3 table 2.5)	Matching share of the State Government	Total funds required to be released to the Sanctuary	Actual release by State including central share	Short release
2016-17	1.55 ⁸	0.93	2.48	1.98	0.50
2017-18	3.89	2.59	6.48	5.05	1.43
2018-19	0.76	0.51	1.27	1.02	0.25
Total	6.20	4.03	10.23	8.05	2.18

Source: Information from divisional records.

Thus, there was short release of ₹ 2.18 crore to the six Sanctuaries during 2016-19.

2.7.2.2 Non-availment of second installment under IDWH funds of ₹ 2.52 crore to the six Sanctuaries during 2016-17 to 2018-19

As per the CSS-IDWH, the second installment⁹ of ₹ 1.51 crore were to be released by the MoEF&CC on submission of Utilization Certificates (UCs) and supporting expenditure statements in respect of 60 per cent of the funds released under first installment (including matching State share). However, neither the

⁸ 1st installment: ₹ 1.39 crore+ Flexi fund: ₹ 0.16 crore.

⁹ ₹ 34.87 lakh, ₹ 97.19 lakh, and ₹ 19.01 lakh for the years 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19, respectively (being the remaining 20 per cent of IDWH funds).

State Government allocated full amount of the first installment of central share and matching State share, nor did it send the UCs along with supporting expenditure statements to the MoEF&CC. Therefore, the MoEF&CC did not release the second installment aggregating to ₹ 1.51 crore in these three years. Consequently, State share of ₹ 1.01 crore was also not released as the second installment in these three years. Thus, the Sanctuaries were deprived of the second installment amounting to ₹ 2.52 crore during 2016-19.

Recommendation 3: Funds released by the Central Government along with the stipulated State share may be promptly allocated to the protected areas and UCs may be submitted to the MoEF&CC as per the prescribed conditions.