

PROCEEDINGS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

SUBJECT: FELLING OF GREEN TREES IN FOREST.

Read: (1) Government Order No. AHFF 164 FDP 90 dated 10-10-1990.
(2) Government Order No. FEE 205 FDP 97 dated 23-6-1998.

PREAMBLE

1. The State Government vide Government order read at (1) above imposed a total ban on felling of green trees in all types of forests (evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist deciduous and dry deciduous) as a conservation measure to protect the forests from biotic pressures. The ban did not apply to removal of dead trees, extraction of bamboo and cane for medars and artisans, harvest of artificially raised fuel wood plantations and thinning of plantations. However, removal of any material including dead and fallen trees was not permitted from core areas in National Parks and Sanctuaries. The above ban on felling of green trees was continued from time to time, and was last continued until further orders vide Government order read at (2) above.

2. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, in its interim order in Writ Petition No. 202 dated 12-12-1996, has prohibited felling of trees in all forests except in accordance with Working plans as approved by the Central Government . The Working Plans of the State are in the process or revision and approval. In respect of forest divisions for which the Government of India has approved the Working Plans, forestry operations mainly include salvaging of dead and fallen trees, thinning of teak plantations, extraction of bamboo, felling of firewood plantations, extraction of dead Sandalwood, etc.

3. The evergreen and semi-evergreen forests of the State are mostly located in the crest of the Western Ghats. These forests constitute the primary catchments of the State's network of rivers. Most of these forests are situated in difficult terrain and are not easily accessible. These are very sensitive to human interventions. As such it is desirable to provide utmost protection to these forests. Removal of dead and fallen material is recommended in such areas (excluding protected areas) only for certain valuable species such as White Cedar, Aini or Hebbalsu, Rosewood, Kiralbogi, Gandhgarige or any other hardwood species to be specifically identified by the concerned territorial Conservator of Forests. Such removals should be done only in areas that are accessible and where it is possible to cart the timber without having to form any new roads and extraction paths. Salvage operations in such areas should be carried out only when these are economically profitable. This would also help in avoidance of smuggling of timber from these areas.

4. The protected areas of the State comprising of five national parks and twenty-one wildlife sanctuaries have been earmarked for the conservation of bio-diversity and felling of all types and even removal of dead and fallen trees are not carried out. Gregarious flowering of Bamboo has started in many of the wildlife areas and this will cause a lot of concern with regard to fire protection. Removal of the dry flowered bamboo from the forest areas is desirable in order to reduce the intensity of fire hazards during the intensity of fire hazards during the summer season. Similarly, removal of dead and fallen material lying along the inspection paths and view lines is also desirable so as to reduce incidences of fire. This will also avoid smuggling of Timber from these areas. Thinning of Teak plantations is considered to be conducive to the growth of these natural regeneration. At present there is a stay by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on removal from the protected areas and non extraction or removal of any forest produce is being done. Many of the activities like salvaging of dead and fallen timber and flowered bamboo, gradual reduction in number of Teak trees in plantations to encourage other indigenous species, removal of exotics like Eucalyptus, etc indeed contribute to the improvement of the habitat for wildlife. Therefore it is desirable to include such activities in the management plans of the protected areas and implement these after getting the plans approved by competent authorities and obtaining permission from the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

5. The condition of the deciduous forest of the State is not uniform. The forests situated closer to human habitations are under stocked. The forests away from human habitations are generally fairly well stocked. The average Basal Area of these forests varies from 1-2 square meters per hectare to 25-30 square meters per hectare. Because of the present State policy regarding felling of green trees, the Working Plans prepared now have not prescribed green felling in the forests. It is a fact that while felling of green trees cannot be contemplated in the deciduous forests that are already under-stocked, it may be considered on a limited scale in well-stocked deciduous forests by fixing critical minimum Basal Area limits and also by limiting the number of trees to be felled per hectare. Removal of silviculturally mature trees from well-stocked forests as per Working Plan prescriptions is a scientifically accepted forest management practice. It is to be reiterated that the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the interim order dated 12-12-1996 has not imposed a ban on felling of trees. It has directed that felling of trees in forest should be as per Working Plans approved by the Government of India. It has also directed that such felling operations should be carried out either departmentally or through State Forest Corporations.

6. In view of the above, it is suggested that after the ongoing exercise of preparation of Working Plans is over, a review will be taken up with regard to those forest divisions which have sizeable portions of deciduous forest areas with adequate stocking and Basal Area. Detailed inventorization will be carried out in respect of such divisions and the need for taking up felling of green trees in the adequately. If such inventorization, study and analysis reveal that felling of green trees may be carried out on silvicultural principles, revised Working Plans will be prepared prescribing such felling and Government of India's approval of these Working Plans will be obtained for implementation. Working of forests involving green felling will be carried out only after ensuring that adequate allocations are made available for regeneration of the areas.

7. In the above circumstances, it has become necessary to review the Government orders of 10-10-1990 and of subsequent dates regarding felling of green trees. The matter has been examined in details and hence the following order:

Government Order No. FEE 101 FAP 2001 Bangalore, dated 23-10-2002

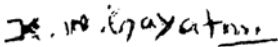
8. In supersession of the Government order No. AHFF 164 FDP 90 dated 10-10-1990 and all the subsequent order relating to felling of green trees, the following directions are issued:

- (a) Utmost protection should be provided to the evergreen and semi-evergreen forests of the State. Even removal of dead and fallen trees from such areas will not to be carried out except that of valuable species like White Cedar, Hebbalsu, Rosewood, Kiralbogi, Gandhagarige and such other valuable species identified by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. Such removal should be done only in areas that are accessible and where it is possible to cart the timber without having to form any new roads and extraction paths. Salvage operations in such areas should be carried out only when these are economically profitable.
- (b) In wildlife areas, activities like salvaging of dead and fallen timber along inspection paths and view lines and flowered bamboo, gradual reduction in the number of Teak trees in plantations to encourage other indigenous species, removal of exotics like Eucalyptus, etc may contribute to the improvement of the habitat for wildlife. Such activities may be included in the management plans of the protected areas and implemented after getting the plans approved by competent authorities. However, these activities should be carried out only after obtaining in-principle permission from the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

(c) The Forest department may permit felling of green trees in deciduous forests of adequate stocking provided detailed inventorisatioin and analysis reveal that such felling in silviculturally desirable and prescriptions are incorporated in Working Plans approved by the Government of India. Adequate safeguard should be taken to regenerate such areas after felling.

9. This order issues with the concurrences of the Finance Department vide UO Note No. FD 497 Exp-2/2002 dated 12-4-2002 and that of the Law Department vide UO Note No. LAW 1234 OPN. III/2001 dated 26-3-2002.

By Order and in the Name of the
Governor of Karnataka,


(K. N. Gayathri) 26/3/02

Under Secretary to Government
Forest, Ecology and Environment Department.