

07 FOREST CLEARANCE



Centre for Science and Environment
41, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 062, INDIA
Ph: +91-11-29956110 - 5124 - 6394- 6399 Fax: +91-11-29955879
E-mail: sugandhi@cseindia.org Website: www.cseindia.org

A. CLEARANCES: 1981 – SEPTEMBER 2012

- In this period, 25,338 projects have been granted forest clearance (FC), diverting 1,183,967 hectare (ha) forestland (see Table 1: Forestland diverted post Forest Conservation Act).
- Largest chunk of forestland, about 3.7 lakh ha (31%), has been diverted for regularisation of “encroachments”. Majority of the regularisation of “encroachments” happened in 1990 and 2001.

Table 1: Forestland diverted post Forest Conservation Act (1981-September 2012)

Purpose/sector	Forestland diverted	
	Area (ha)	Percentage (%)
Defence	46,087.93	3.89
Social services	65,165.24	5.50
Power Projects (Hydel, Thermal, Wind and Transmission lines)	167,118.00	14.12
Irrigation	141,641.76	11.96
Mining	159,660.34	13.49
Transport (Railways and roads)	60,363.10	5.10
Others (including industries)	175,498.24	14.82
Regularisation of encroachment	368,432.07	31.12
Total forestland diverted	1,183,966.68	

- Only about 5.5 per cent of the total forestland diverted has been for social services which include dispensary/hospital, disputed settlement claims, drinking water projects, forest village conversion, rehabilitation, village schools, etc.
- Of the development projects, maximum forestland has been diverted for power projects – about 14.1 per cent. Mining and irrigation sectors are the other development activities for which largest amount of forestland have been diverted.
- About 13.6 per cent of the forestland diverted (1.60 lakh ha) so far, has been for mining; diversion for irrigation projects accounts for 12 per cent (1.41 lakh ha).
- So, about 28 per cent of the total forestland diverted has been for mining and power projects.
- Madhya Pradesh alone accounts for more than one-third of the forestland diverted since 1981 (see Table 2: Forestland diversion in states). Chhattisgarh with 8.7 per cent and Maharashtra with 8.5 per cent have the second and third largest forest diversion.
- The rejection rate of projects is very low (see Table 3: Rejection of projects). Only six per cent of the projects that applied for FC have been rejected between 1981 and September 2012.

Table 2: Forestland diversion in states

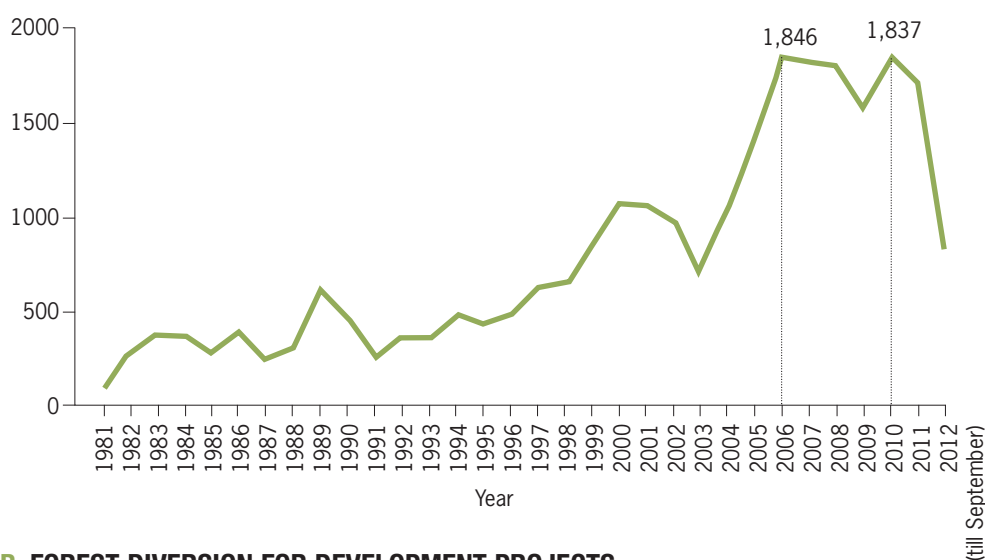
Purpose/sector	Forestland diverted	
	Area (ha)	Percentage (%)
Madhya Pradesh	396,411	33.5
Chhattisgarh	100,030	8.4
Maharashtra	101,566	8.6
Gujarat	72,464	6.1
Punjab	63,913	5.4
Orissa	52,612	4.4
Andhra pradesh	56,585	4.8
Karnataka	45,146	3.8
Uttarakhand	49,572	4.2
Kerala	40,986	3.5
Others	204,681	17.3
Total	1,183,966	

Table 3: Rejection of projects

	Granted FC		Rejected	Closed, returned or withdrawn	Pending with the government	Total
	Final clearance	In-principle clearance				
Number of projects	19,898	3,369	1,801	3,269	2,267	30,604

■ Figure 1 shows number of projects granted forest clearances per year from 1981 till September 2012. Maximum number of clearances was granted in 2006 closely followed by 2010.

Figure 1: Number of projects granted forest clearances



B. FOREST DIVERSION FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

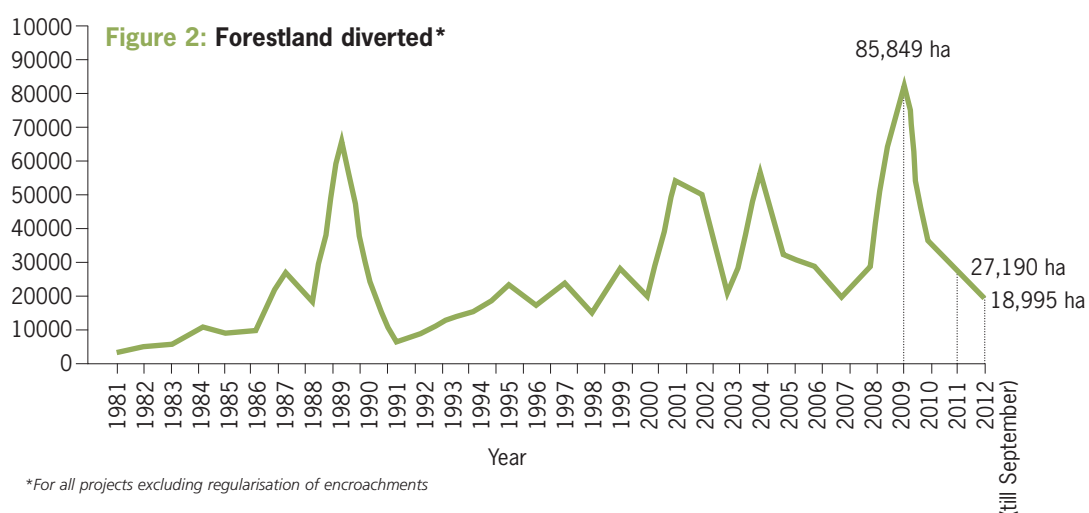
■ If we exclude forestland diverted for regularising encroachments, then about 8.16 lakh ha of forestland has been diverted since 1981. About 1.98 lakh ha was diverted in 11th FYP period alone (see Table 4: Forestland diverted for development projects). That is, about 24.3 per cent of all forestland diverted for development projects since 1981. The annual forestland diverted during the 11th FYP is equal to the area of tiger reserves like Sahyadri, Panna and Tadoba.

Table 4: Forestland diverted for development projects*

Period/year	Forestland diverted (ha)
1981-1992	187,266.14
8th FYP (1992-97)	79,483.26
9th FYP (1997-2002)	141836.65
10th FYP (2002-2007)	190045.51
2007	20159.62
2008	27461.66
2009	85849.11
2010	37,247.46
2011	27,189.76
11th FYP (2007-2011)	197,907.61
2012 (till September)	18,995.31
Total	815,534.48

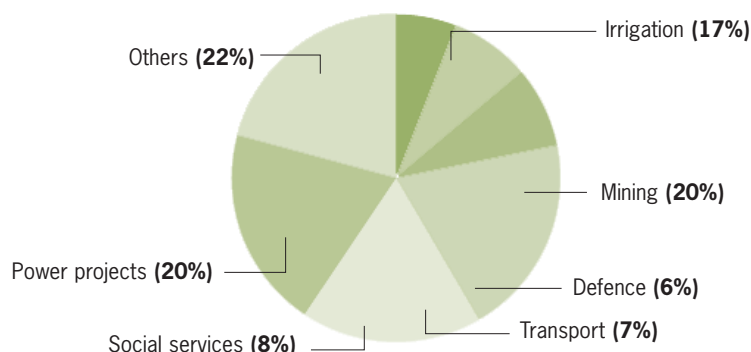
*For all projects excluding regularisation of encroachments

■ Since the inception of forest clearance process in 1981, it was in the year 2009 that the maximum amount of forestland was diverted for development projects, 85,849 ha in all (Figure 2: Forestland diverted).



■ Power projects and mining remain the top purpose for which forestland diversion happened – 20 percent each of the total forestland diverted for development projects (see Figure 3: Purpose-wise forestland diversion). Irrigation account, for 17 per cent of the forestland diverted for development projects.

Figure 3: Purpose-wise forestland diversion for development projects (1981-September 2012)*



* For all projects excluding regularisation of encroachments

C. FOREST DIVERSION FOR MINING

■ The forestland diverted for mining during the 11th FYP has been unprecedented (see Table 5: Forestland diverted for mining). In the past 30 years (since 1981), when the process of forest clearance started, about 1.6 lakh ha of forestland has been diverted for mining. Out of this, about 48,537 ha was diverted in the 11th FYP alone (30 per cent of the total forestland diverted for mining).

Table 5: Forestland diverted for mining

Period/year	Number of mining projects granted FC	Forestland diverted for mining (ha)
1981-1992	160	15,565.40
8th FYP (1992-97)	162	10,827.16
9th FYP (1997-2002)	447	47,952.93
10th FYP (2002-2007)	512	29,710.47
2007	104	6,872.46
2008	143	10,580.72
2009	108	6,908.98
2010	97	13,011.51
2011	81	11,163.72
11th FYP (2007-2011)	533	48,537.39
2012 (till September)	37	7,066.99
Total	1,851	159,660.34

■ Of all the forestland diverted during the 11th FYP period, one-fourth was for mining.

D. CONCLUSION

■ Clearly, the present system of forest clearance is not working. In the last five years, every year forestland equal to Tadoba, Sahyadri or Panna tiger reserve has been diverted.

■ Forest clearances are being granted at an unprecedented rate without considering the impact of forest diversion on forests, wildlife, water and the community.

■ No impact assessment reports are prepared, nor is the ecological and economic value of forests evaluated. In fact, there is no system in place to check the veracity of information based on which forest clearances are granted.

■ There is a need for fundamental reform in the forest clearance process if we want to safeguard the ecological integrity of the country.