

NATIONAL BOARD FOR WILDLIFE (NBWL)

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Context:

The standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL) has cleared multiple projects - a transmission line in Little Rann of Kutch, a controversial transmission line project in Goa's Mollem national park as well as a clutch of infrastructure projects in tiger corridors of central India, among others.

Background:

The NBWL is primarily responsible for promotion and conservation of wildlife.

About National Board for Wildlife (NBWL):

1. The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is a statutory organization under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. It was constituted in 2003, replacing the Indian Board for Wildlife, which was formed in 1952.
2. Chaired by the Prime Minister of India, it serves as the top advisory body on matters concerning wildlife conservation and protection.

Key Functions:

1. Policy and Planning: The NBWL is responsible for formulating policies and plans for the conservation of wildlife and forests in India.
2. Approval of Projects: It evaluates projects like construction, mining, or development activities in or around protected areas such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. No project can be carried out in such areas without NBWL's clearance.
3. Advisory Role: It advises the central and state governments on wildlife-related issues, including the creation and management of protected areas.
4. Conservation of Endangered Species: The NBWL plays a significant role in identifying and protecting endangered species. It helps in creating programs and laws to ensure their protection.
5. Monitoring Protected Areas: It oversees the functioning of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and biosphere reserves, ensuring their proper management.
6. Safeguarding Biodiversity: The board promotes measures for the conservation of biodiversity, aligning with international treaties like the Convention on Biological Diversity.
7. Boundary Alterations: No changes to the boundaries of protected areas can be made without the NBWL's approval.

Composition:

1. The NBWL has 47 members including the chairperson. Among these, 19 members are ex-officio members. Every new government constitutes a new board, based on the provisions of the WLPA, with the new PM as the chair.
2. Chairperson: The Prime Minister.
3. Vice-Chairperson: The Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.
4. Under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA), the NBWL can constitute a Standing Committee (SC-NBWL). This committee focuses on project clearances, while the NBWL deals with broader policy-level decisions.

Key takeaways from NBWL meeting:

1. The SC-NBWL, headed by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, pulled up the Madhya Pradesh tourism department for carrying out constructions in Son Gharial sanctuary and adjacent tiger corridors without permits.
2. Even after intense protests against deforestation in Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary and Mollem National Park, the NBWL conditionally cleared the 400 k/V transmission line on 27 hectares of forest.
3. Two approvals were granted for erection of transmission lines in Gujarat. One in the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary in the Great Rann of Kutch and another in the Wild Ass sanctuary in Little Rann of Kutch over 100 hectares.
4. The board approved widening of the National Highway 46 between Itarsi and Betul through the tiger corridor between Satpura and Melghat tiger reserve. The project will use 101 hectares of forest land and approval was granted with the condition that the National Highways Authority of India will build animal passages.

