



Ministry of Environment and Forests
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



अहो है हरियाली ।
सहो है सुरक्षाही ॥

Inviting public opinion on Western Ghats Ecology

How would we judge ecological sensitivity? Scientists view an ecologically sensitive area as an area whose ecological balance, once disturbed, is very hard to restore. Thus, steep Western slopes of Western Ghats, subject to heavy rains and winds, if deforested, are likely to be quickly stripped of soil cover and for ever lose their pristine vegetation. We do have a scientific understanding of the environmental attributes that render areas more sensitive; we also have insights into processes that have resulted in irreversible ecological damage. A Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India is currently engaged in carefully compiling all available information in this context and preparing maps of levels of ecological sensitivity on the Western Ghats tract. This exercise is being conducted in a transparent manner, and all information relating to this task is being posted on the website: www.westernghatsindia.org.

However, we fully realize that ecological sensitivity is not merely a scientific, but very much a human concern. In particular, a great deal of locality specific understanding of what has been happening and what is desirable is simply not part of any scientific databases and resides with local communities. The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India would therefore, like to invite all concerned people to share their own perceptions as to what areas on the Western Ghats should be identified as being 'Ecologically Sensitive Areas', why they feel so, and what set of regulations tailored to the needs of the locality should be put in place if the area were to be formally declared as being ecologically sensitive. Alternatively, people might also like to state that some areas on the Western Ghats should not be identified as being 'Ecologically Sensitive Areas', and explain why they feel so.

The Ministry of Environment & Forests invites public opinion from all concerned stakeholders including members of local bodies like ZPs, MLAs and MPs, journalists, social workers and general public to respond to this appeal. The Ministry would welcome submissions,

not only in English, but in Hindi, Gujarathi, Marathi, Konkani, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam as well. If possible these may be sent to the website: www.westernghatsindia.org or at the e-mail ID support@westernghatsindia.org, info@westernghatsindia.org. The results of scientific analysis as well as all submissions from the public as they become available will be uploaded on this website to promote a vigorous public debate as a prelude to taking any final decisions in an open and transparent fashion.

The submissions may be sent to the above mentioned website / e-mail ID or in writing to Dr. G.V. Subrahmanyam, Advisor, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Paryavaran Bhavan, Room No. 548, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi-110 003 by 15th October, 2010.

A detailed note entitled "Nurturing Ecologically Sensitive Areas on the Western Ghats" is posted on the Ministry's Website www.moef.gov.in.
