

07 FOREST CLEARANCE



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A. CLEARANCES: 1981 – AUGUST 2011

- In this period, 23,404 projects have been granted forest clearance (FC), diverting 11.99 lakh hectare (ha) forestland (*see Table 1: Forestland diverted post Forest Conservation Act*).
- Largest chunk of forestland, about 3.7 lakh ha has been diverted for regularisation of “encroachments”. This is about 31 per cent of the total forestland diverted. Majority of the regularisation of “encroachments” happened in 1990 and 2001.

Table 1: Forestland diverted post Forest Conservation Act*

Purpose/sector	Forest land diverted	
	Area (in ha)	Percentage (%)
Defence	46570	3.9
Regularisation of encroachment	368432	30.7
Social services	65089	5.4
Transport (Road, Railways)	63292	5.3
Power projects (Hydel, Thermal, Wind & Transmission lines)	164128	13.7
Mining	148860	12.4
Irrigation	167237	14.0
Others (including industries)	175067	14.6
Total forestland diverted	1198676	

**From 1981 to August 2011*

- Only about 5.3 per cent of the total forestland diverted has been for social services which includes 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 irrigation – about 14 per cent. Mining and power sectors are the other development activities for which largest amount of forestland has been diverted.
- About 12.4 per cent of the forestland diverted (1.4 lakh ha) so far, has been for mining; diversion for power projects accounts for 13.7 per cent (1.64 lakh ha). **So, a little more than one-fourth 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 8.8 per cent and Maharashtra with 8.5 per cent have the second and third largest forest diversion.
- Interestingly, Jharkhand, contrary to the popular perception does not figure in the list of top 10 states in this category. Only about 23,000 ha forestland has been diverted in Jharkhand since 1981.

Table 2: Forestland diversion in states

States	Percentage of total forestland diverted (%)
Madhya Pradesh	33.6
Chhattisgarh	8.8
Maharashtra	8.5
Gujarat	6.2
Punjab	5.6
Odisha	4.6
Andhra Pradesh	4.5
Karnataka	4.0
Uttarakhand	3.9
Kerala	3.6
Others	16.7

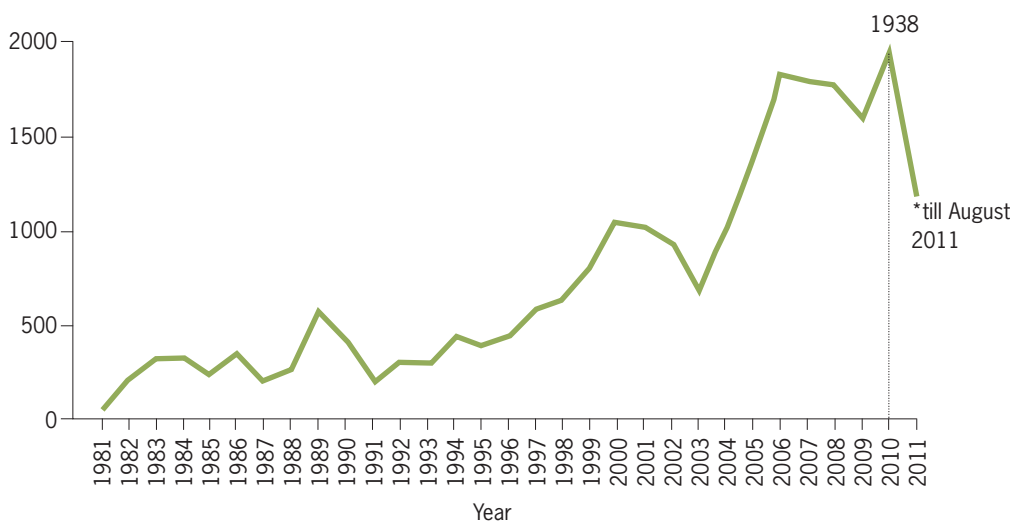
■ The rejection rate of projects is very low (*see Table 3: Rejection of projects*). Only six per cent of the projects that applied for FC have been rejected between 1980 and July 2011.

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	19003	3261	1769	3004	2143	29180

■ Since the inception of forest clearance process in 1981, it was in 2010 that the maximum number of projects were granted FC, 1938 projects in all (*Figure 1: Forest clearances granted*).

Figure 1: Forest clearances granted (number of projects)



B. FOREST DIVERSION FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

■ If we exclude forestland diverted for regularising encroachments, then about 8.3 lakh ha of forestland has been diverted since 1981. **About 2.04 lakh ha was diverted in 11th FYP period alone** (*see Table 4: Forestland diverted for development projects*). That is, about 25 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.

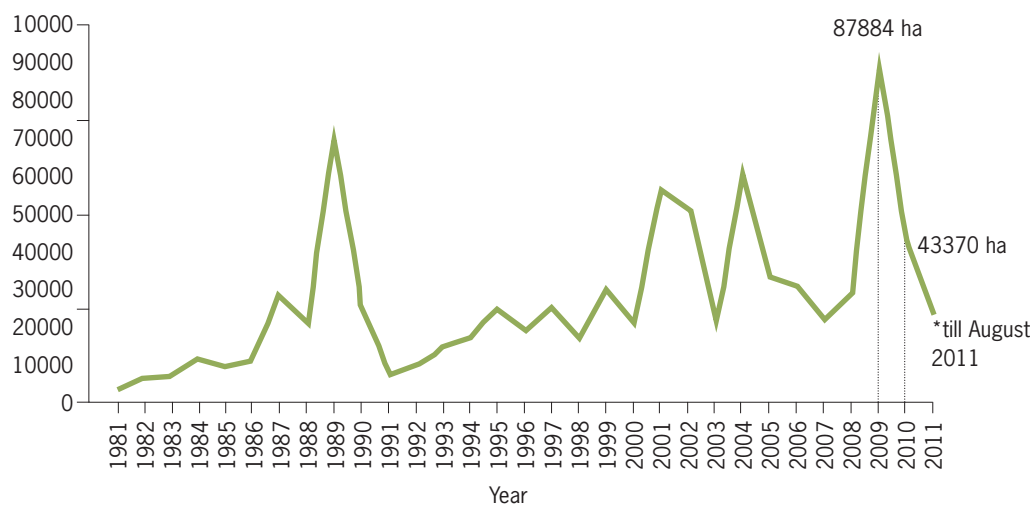
Table 4: Forestland diverted for development projects

Period/Year	Forestland diverted* (in ha)
1981-92	198421.19
8 th FYP (1992-97)	84587.07
9 th FYP (1997-2002)	147397.57
10 th FYP (2002-2007)	196262.32
2007	22033.78
2008	28509.45
2009	87883.67
2010	43370.38
2011 (till August)	22627.78
11th FYP (2007-2012)	204425.06
Total forestland diverted for development projects	830244

*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, 87,884 ha in all (Figure 2: Forestland diverted).

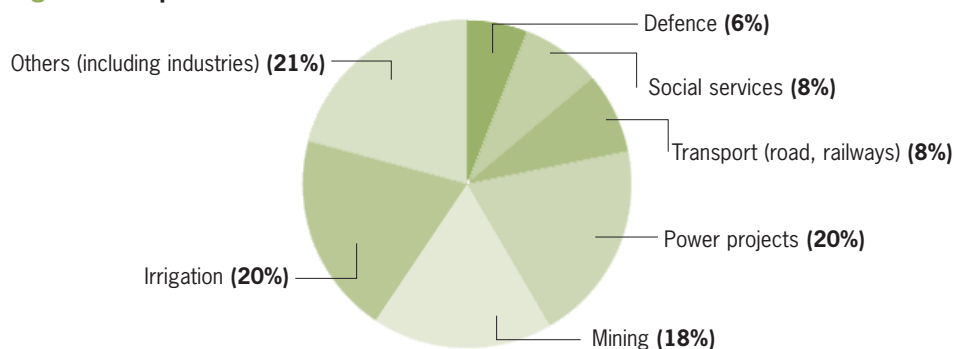
Figure 2: Forestland diverted*



*For all projects excluding regularisation of encroachments

■ Irrigation remains the top purpose for which forestland diversion happened – 20 per cent of the total forestland diverted for development projects (see Figure 3: Purpose-wise forestland diversion). Mining and power projects together account for 41 per cent of the forestland diverted for development projects. Mining alone accounts for 18 per cent.

Figure 3: Purpose-wise forestland diversion**



* For all projects excluding regularisation of encroachments

For the period 1981- August 2011

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 1.48 lakh ha of forestland has been diverted for mining. Out of this, about 50,000 ha was diverted in the 11th FYP alone (30 per cent of the total forestland diverted for mining). Maximum amount of forestland diverted for mining in any single year happened in 2010 – about 14,500 ha.

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

Table 5: Forestland diverted for mining

Period/Year	Number of mining projects granted FC	Forestland diverted for mining (in ha)
1981-1992	138	13047
8 th FYP (1992-97)	152	9683
9 th FYP (1997-2002)	494	47216
10 th FYP (2002-2007)	502	29010
2007	102	6644
2008	144	10529
2009	122	7295
2010	103	14505
2011 (till August)	61	10932
11th FYP (2007-till August 2011)	522	49905
Total	1808	148860

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.