

North Western Ghats Conservation Network

Draft report of the second meeting March 2012 Nasik

Since last couple of years various groups and individuals working for conservation in the north Western Ghats region have been meeting to discuss the issues they are dealing with, need to plan and implement collective action and to strengthen the scientific understanding of this part of Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot. This group formed a network called North Western Ghats Conservation network in Sept.2011.

Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF) and Nature Conservation Society of Nasik (NCSN) have organized a second meeting of the network members with a focus on Nasik region on 26th & 27th March 2012 at Gangapur Campsite of NCSN. The goal of the workshop was to engage the Civil Society organizations working in the northern Maharashtra region and to develop a system of learning and exchange for long term collective action in north Western Ghats.

The objectives of the meeting were

- a) To understand the conservation issues and opportunities for collaborative efforts in Nasik, Nagar and Jalgaon region of the Western Ghats
- b) To create a shared understanding of the Western Ghats region and its conservation among the participants.
- c) To discuss the need and management of network of CSOs from North Western Ghats
- d) To inform the participants about the 25th Year celebration event of Save the Western Ghats March organised by AERF
- e) To discuss the WGEEP report

Day I : 26th March

The participants reached the scenic Gangapur Campsite along the Gangapur dam by 11.00 am. In the prelaunch session after quick introductions Archana Godbole provided brief introduction of the network and meeting. The quick review of Sept. 2011 meeting was provided understanding to the participants and need of network has been reiterated.

Brief introduction of participants

1. **Shri Amit Tillu** : Working to promote traditional Agrobiodiversity and local varieties of millets and rice. Documented wild edible plants and their worth in today's context from Trambakeshwar area. Also associated with Wayam and organization active in Jawhar Mokhada area . This organization is helping indigenous communities to settle their FRA claims.

2. **Shri Vinod Patil** : Works with Khandesh Nature Conservation Society based in Jalgaon. The group has formed a consortium of organizations working in Satpuda mountains. The group has been working with local people for Conservation of Yawal WLS and interested in establish its link with Sahyadri Ranges in the north.
3. **Shri Vijay Sambre** : Works with Loakpanchayat in Sangamner and Akole blocks. Works with indigenous communities and traditional agriculture. Also working for participatory conservation of sacred forests. Also attended first NWGCN meeting in Pune in Sept. 2011.
4. **Shri Mahesh Warvadekar** : Works with Nivedita Pratishthan Dapoli (Ratnagiri district) .Contributes to the plastic eradication movement and other works of the organization in Dapoli and surrounding area.
5. **Shri Joshi** : Works with Nivedita Pratishthan Dapoli (Ratnagiri district) . Also associated with few other social /development organizations in the district. Has a long experinc of horticulture in Dapoli Krishi Vidyapeeth.
6. **Shri Pradeep Chavan** : Works with Kalpvriksh Pune. Contributing to their Bhimshankar project with indigenous people through ecotourism initiative environmental education. Also attended first NWGCN meeting in Pune in Sept. 2011.
7. **Shri Krishna Shrinivas** : Working through Econet a Pune based organization engaged in Forest Right Act related work and other equity issues of indigenous people from Mharashtra.
8. **Shri Kiran Rahalkar** : Works with Nature Conservation Society of Nasik , action oriented work for conservation education and awareness generation, also engaged in co management of Community Reserve at Borgad.
9. **Shri Kaustubh Darvesh** : A young nature enthusiast, trying to engage the urban people in conservation and tree plantations. Recently registered the Thane Natural history Society and NGO to implement his ideas.
10. **Shri Dilip Dakhve** : A staunch urban nature lover and writer. Working through NEST for greening of Taljai hill near Pune for last 20 years.
11. **Shri Abhay Kulkarni** : Working for NEST and contributes his time daily for the activities at Taljai and support the organization for documentation and communication. Also participated in the first network meeting in Sept. 2011 in Pune.

12. **Shri Umesh Hiremath** : Works on AERF;s Bhimshankar project since last one year and engaed in developing innovative long term solutions to the conservation issues and conflicting situations in the Mahadev Koli villages in and around Bhimshankar WLS. Developed two participatory ecotourism spaces and building the capacity of local people to run them professionally.

13. **Shri Raha** : Industrialist from Nasik and Nature lover . Founder of Nature Conservation Society of Nasik . Responsible for developing many youngsters to take up conservation as career option. Pursued and finally got declared the Boragd Conservation Reserve near Nasik, which third in India. Managing the same with local community from Tungalbad village.

14. **Shri Bhure** : Ex forest officer , works with of Nature Conservation Society of Nasik, responsible for preparing the case of Borgad Sanctuary and providing technical inputs on forestry development in the area.

15. **Ms.Aswini Bhat** : Urban tree lover from Nasik, has been working to save the avenue and roadside trees in Nasik. Also attended the first network meeting in pune in Sept. 2011.

16 **Ms. Jui Pethe** : Works with indigenous communities around Nasik, expert in agriculture and works to promote organic agriculture with Mr. Amit Tiloo.

From AERF Shri Jayant Sarnaik, Dr. Archana Godbole , Shri Umesh Hiremath and Shri Bharat Dalvi attended the meeting.

In the morning session Archana Godbole provided an overview of Sept meeting in Pune, and further activities planned /implemented. She expressed the need to continuous communication and trust building in the initial phase of network building. She also discuss briefly the objectives of the workshop. Later a discussion with reference to developing a broader understanding of Western Ghats its linkages to everyone's own work has been facilitated by Jayant Sarnaik.

This is probably the first effort to bring together organisations and individual groups working in Western Ghats from Nasik , Nagar and Jalgaon region. Thus the participants from this part of the landscape were quite enthused about the opportunity to share their understanding of the region and experiences of working on ground. In the afternoon session a specific overview of this region has been provided by Mr. Patil, Mr. Tillu , Mr. Rahlakar and Mr. Sambre.

Very interesting and important inputs were provided by Mr. Vinod Patil of Khandesh Nature Conservation Society, with respect to the potential connectivity between Satpuda ranges and Western Ghats Mountains. He specifically mentioned that he drew inspiration from the Save the Western Ghats March way back in the early nineties and thus got involved in the field of conservation. Mr. Patil highlighted the critical importance of remaining forests from the Jalgaon division for survival of wildlife and biodiversity of the region. He gave details of rich and unique biodiversity present in the region and stressed the need to improve the profile of the area for its consideration as important conservation landscape from the Northern Western Ghats. He shared details of the organisations he is associated with and offered full support to the network and the Save the Western Ghats March.

Similarly, Mr. Amit Tillu of Vayam shared his interests in conservation of traditional varieties of rice and millet. A very peculiar aspect of Amit's involvement in this field is his capacity to successfully link market with the conservation of traditional agricultural crops. He has been practicing organic agriculture over last 4-5 years and also takes keen interest in working with tribal communities from Jawhar district.



He along with his wife Jui Pethe shared information about important conservation sites from Nasik region and pointed out lack of technical capacity among the local environmentalist as one of important reasons impacting conservation action. Mr. Vijay Sambare of Lokpanchayat shared his experiences of working for conservation in Sangamner Taluka of Nagar district. His organization's main focus is agro-biodiversity

conservation. He was of the opinion that there is growing awareness among local community from his region about the importance of forest conservation and its linkage with water availability in stress period. He also cited an example of a village which has protected a patch of forest based on this understanding. Mr. Sambare showed keen interest in sacred groves conservation and expressed interest in visiting AERF's project sites in future.

Mr. Kiran Rahalkar provided details of their consistent work with tribal children engaged in small bird hunting using galol and how their efforts have made more than 200 kids surrender their galol and stopped hunting. Kiran also informed that camps for environmental education being organized by Nature Conservation Society of Nasik helped generate awareness and attracting many urbanites to the movement of conservation in the region.

In the last session the representatives of Nivedita Pratisthan , Dapoli informed the participants about their efforts to keep Dapoli free from plastic waste and innovative approaches they have adopted to make best use of plastic bottles in growing plants. They also mentioned how the network played an important role in saving some 35 old trees in Dapoli.

Ms. Ashwini Bhat from Nasik, insisted the need to save avenue trees under threat due to road widening in many parts of the Western Ghats especially along the NH 17 near Mangaon in Konkan. The network members as immediate action , sent a letter to NHA regarding this and requested to rethink the alignment wherever possible to save the ancient Banyan trees.

Day II : 27th March

On the second day, a visit to Borgad conservation reserve was planned. Borgad conservation reserve is an outcome of six years of dedicated efforts of Mr.Raha and Mr. Bhure of Nature Conservation Society of Nasik. It is one of the important conservation success stories from the North Western Ghats remaining unnoticed so far. During the visit, Mr. Bhure mentioned his involvement in the Save the Western Ghats March in 1990 and it is clear the March inspired him to get involved very seriously in the field of conservation. Support from Nasik Forest Division has also been mentioned by Mr. Bhure.

The group visited the Conservation reserve and appreciated the efforts of the Nature Conservation Society of Nasik for plantations, protection and involvement and capacity building of local community from nearby Tungaldara village. These efforts and long term work has certainly helped to bring back wild life to the area.

In the afternoon sessions Dr.Archana Godbole talked elaborately on importance of networking and working together in this biodiversity hotspot. The networking and collaboration is not only necessary to increase the impact of conservation on ground but also for building trust among the civil society organisations. Similarly it helps build collective understanding of the conservation issues that are important for the biodiversity hotspot. The participants unanimously supported the formation of this network and opportunities presented through such meetings for the members.

Dr. Godbole also informed the participants about the meeting planned in celebration of 25th Year of Save the Western Ghats March. The group showed keen interest in organising various events at local level as part of this celebration and offered full support to the event.

Following interesting activities were proposed by the group to celebrate the silver jubilee of this historical environmental campaign.

1. River walks along the streams and rivers to generate awareness and inform people about the meeting in Nov. 2012. Collecting water from each stream , get it tested for

basic parameters, bring part of the water to develop solidarity of all water courses of Western Ghats. Kiran to elaborate on this and circulate to larger group or prepare a write up for website

2. To bring the soil from different areas : Krishna to elaborate
3. Orientation about the Save the Western Ghats among school kids : Shri Vijay Sambre to elaborate more on this
4. As per the eco calendar of various important days , organize local level programmes to attract more organizations and peoples to the meeting and work of conservation as a part of Save the Western Ghats. : Kiran already sent the calendar and is attached herewith.
5. To prepare posters about common conservation issues in Marathi and circulate to larger group and organizations from Western Ghats.
6. It is Important to engage media in the process from the beginning and need to organize local regional media meetings : Shri Dakhve . He has a large archival material of newspaper cuttings from 1987-88 .
7. To get in touch with Satpuda Kriti samite and engage them in the celebrations: Mr. Vinod Patil .

Dr. Archana Godbole also discussed the idea of special issue of Sakav in Marathi and Mr. Sambre provided inputs and promised to provide couple of good articles. Jalgaon group also promised an article about Satpuda bachao.

Mr.Vinod Patil of Khandesh Nature Conservation Society insisted that next meeting be held in Yawal wildlife Sanctuary. All the present members agreed upon this idea and thus the meeting will be held sometime in third week of June in Jalgaon.

The meeting was concluded with vote of thanks by Mr.Amit Tillu .

