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CIRCULAR No. 7 / 2002 / PMU-173

Sub: Community participation in Forestry - V.S.S - Categorization of the V.S.Ss - Guidelines for categorization of V.S.Ss and certain modified guidelines on the extent of area of V.S.S. - Issued- Reg.

Ref: 1. This Office Rc.No.34274 / 2000 / PMU-I / 3 dt. 25.09.2002

Attention of the Conservators of Forests / Divisional Forest Officers is invited to the reference cited above wherein detailed guidelines have been issued about the parameters with their weightages for categorization of V.S.Ss. The Four parameters arrived at through a process of detailed deliberations are indicated below with their weightage shown against each:

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|----|--|----|
| 1. | Improvement of Vegetation - | 50 |
| 2. | Impact of Neeru-Meeru works taken up in the VSS. Areas - | 20 |
| 3. | Improvement of Income levels of V.S.S - | 20 |
| 4. | Social Indicator - | 10 |

2. The following norms have been adopted for categorization of V.S.Ss into A, B, C & D Categories:

> 75 Marks	--	"A" Category
60-75 Marks	--	"B" Category
45-59 Marks	--	"C" Category
Below 45 Marks	--	"D" Category

The method of evaluation under each parameter has also been finalized as detailed below:

Table: Evaluation of the VSS by parameter: Norms and Procedure.

Improvement of Vegetation - 50	Impact of Neeru-Meeru Work taken up in VSS Areas -20	Increase in Income levels of VSS-20	Social Indicator- 10
1	2	3	4
1. Increase interest cover of more than 50% area = 50	1. High Impact -20	1. Percentage of increase more than 50% 20	1. High-10
2. Increase in forest cover of more than 25 - 50% area = 40	2. Medium Impact- 15	2. Percentage of increase between 25-50% 15	2. Medium - 5
3. Increase in forest cover of more than 1-25% area = 30	3. Low Impact- 10	3. Percentage of increase between 0-25%- 10	3. Low- 3
4. Negative change - 0	4. No Impact - 0	4. Negative change - 0	4. No change -0

3. Instructions have also been issued to send the report on the V.S.Ss classifying them into different categories on or before 16-10-2002 and thereafter the categorization is to be revised after every quarter depending on the performance of the V.S.Ss on the above norms i.e., Categorization of the V.S.Ss into A, B, C & D will be done for the first time up to September 2002 and thereafter for every quarter as on 31.12, 31.3 etc. Assessment will be done once a year only in case of improvement of vegetation.

These instructions should be followed without fail.

4. Attention of the Conservators of Forests / Divisional Forest Officers is also invited to the important issue of allotment of areas to different VSS for protection and improvement of forests under the guidance of the Forest Department. An analysis of the data available in the office of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, shows that the areas allotted to VSS are all in round figures like 250 ha., 300 ha. etc. The area particulars are also quite different from the ones computed from CIS from out of the VSS layers submitted by the Conservators of Forests.

It is apparent from the above that allotment and reporting of area has been haphazard and does not follow any rationale. It is also clear that the areas have neither been surveyed nor demarcated on the ground. It may be difficult and time consuming to survey and demarcate the areas of each and every VSS as it is expensive and tedious. But this is an issue of utmost importance and has to be settled at the earliest without any further loss of time to avoid future complications. There is an urgent need to reconcile the area statements and reallocate areas wherever needed. A pragmatic approach would be allocating area to VSS based on the compartments of the forest Block which have natural boundaries. This has to be done only in the cases where revision or reallocation of boundaries will not lead to any conflicts and complications. For this purpose, a compartment may be taken as unit.

The following further instructions are to be kept in view while doing the same.

- 1.1 Allotment of area to any VSS should be done on the basis of whole compartments only, may be one or more than one compartments depending upon the extent of area of the compartments.
 - 1.2 When there is a left over area in a forest block not allotted to any VSS action should be taken to allot this un-allotted area to a suitable VSS. If the un-allotted area is too large, it may be apportioned between the two VSSs or among all the VSSs in the vicinity.
 - 1.3 Where the forest block is very large running into thousands of hectares and all the area cannot be allotted to the VSS because of its large extent, the area under the existing VSS in such blocks may be enlarged. The area for such further enlargement may be decided keeping in view the local conditions like the membership of the VSS, capabilities and level of understanding and awareness among the VSS members. In case of genuine necessity, a new VSS may also be constituted to bring more areas under this programme.
 - 1.4 Before doing the above exercise, the VSS layers drawn on mylar paper should be superimposed physically on the concerned topo-sheet along with mylar layer showing compartment boundary and tentative revision of VSS boundary must be demarcated on the mylar sheet with a different colour. Maps of VSS should then be got printed duly indicating features on topo-sheets, compartment and VSS boundaries and then explained to VSS in their general body meeting.
 - 1.5 In doing so, if the allotted area is increased to 400 or 500 hectares to any VSS, it will not create any problem, rather it will be for the advantage of the department since the VSS which has been functioning for the last 6-7 years will be able to manage it by experience and skill they have gained.
5. This exercise to increase the areas under the VSS in the State has become a necessity in view of our general experience that the forests under the management of the VSS are protected and developed better in comparison to the adjacent forest areas not allotted to VSS.

The Conservators of Forests / Divisional Forest Officers are requested to complete this exercise immediately and report to this office the re-allotted area particulars on or before 15.11.2002. This is also essential for preparation of the Micro Plan for the changed area of the VSS.

Sd/-(S. K. DAS)
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