

Proceedings of the Consultative Meetings with FRI, FSI, Uttarakhand Forest Department, IGNFA, CASFoS, DFE, WII and SDRF by 'Project Drafting Committee' of National Programme on Forest Fire Management

Dehradun:22-23 December, 2022



NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
Government of India
NDMA Bhawan, A-1, Safdarjung Enclave,
New Delhi -110 029

Minutes of the Meetings carried out by the ‘Project Drafting Committee’ for drafting the ‘National Programme on Forest Fire Management’ with various stakeholders such as Forest Research Institute, Forest Survey of India, Uttarakhand Forest Department, Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Directorate of Forest Education, and Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun on 22 and 23 December, 2022

The members of the ‘Project Drafting Committee (PDC)’ for drafting the National Programme on Forest Fire Management visited various stakeholders such as Forest Research Institute (FRI), Forest Survey of India (FSI), Uttarakhand Forest Department (UKFD), Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA), Directorate of Forest Education (DFE), and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) at Dehradun on 22 and 23 December, 2022. Shri Kunal Satyarthi, Joint Secretary, PP Division NDMA (Co- chairman); Dr. D K Sharma, Lead Consultant, NDMA; Dr. P. K. Mathur, Lead Consultant, UNDP –NDMA; Shri Nikhil S, Consultant, Grade II (Forest Fire), NDMA; Dr. Ronald Debbarma, Consultant, MoEFCC; and Smt. Bhavna Sharma, Technical Assistant, MoEFCC were the members of the team that visited these national level forestry organizations besides UKFD and SDRF, Uttarakhand.

Meeting I

Forest Research Institute, Dehradun; Time – 10.30 AM, 22-12-2022

1. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Renu Singh, IFS Director, FRI and Vice Chancellor FRI University. Scientists and other officers representing different Divisions of the Institute also attended the meeting apart from the members of the PDC from NDMA and MoEFCC.
2. Shri Kunal Satyarthi explained the background of the visit and the role expected from the side of FRI in developing and implementing the ‘National Programme on Forest Fire Management’.
3. He requested FRI to share copies of ongoing projects at FRI as a source of information for the National Programme on Forest Fire Management
4. He requested the Director, FRI to develop a curriculum for training the forest fire fighters and explored the possibility of establishment of the Center of Excellence (CoE) relevant to the subject.
5. Dr. Amit Kumar Verma made a presentation on the forest fire management related works being currently carried out by FRI and also some protocols of vital equipment developed for forest fire fighting.
6. Dr. P K Mathur highlighted the need of a central database regarding forest fires.
7. Dr. D K Sharma mentioned that whatever the equipment developed, it should be light in weight so as to ensure that fire watchers and others involved in fire suppression can conveniently carry them with them during firefighting operations.

8. Dr. Praveen Kumar Verma responded that the final list of tools and kits will be prepared as per feedback received from SFDs. He also added that a tool development project is ongoing at FRI in collaboration with the University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES). A project equipment development in context of Indian field situation can be incorporated into the National Programme.



Meeting II

Forest Survey of India, Dehradun; Time – 12.45 PM, 22-12-2022

9. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Anoop Singh IFS, Director General, Forest Survey of India. Mrs. Meera Iyer, Sr. Deputy Director made a power point presentation about the current ongoing activities relevant to dissemination of fire alerts, near real time fire and large forest fire monitoring and technology advancements useful in forest fire prevention and management.
10. Dr. Anoop Singh suggested that the proposed national programme should be a long-term activity. Hence, preparation of a flow chart with month wise activities for next 5 years will be useful.
11. He also opined that the livelihood issue of local communities should be addressed forensuring community participation in forest fire management.
12. Shri Kunal Satyarthi enquired about the use of pre fire alert as a management tool by the State Forest Departments to which Mrs. Meera Iyer replied that it is being widely used.
13. Dr. P.K. Mathur informed about recent efforts towards improved version of pre fire alerts with value addition by the Karnataka Forest Department with the help of Karnataka State Remote

Sensing Agency (KS RSA) and enquired about the current thinking of FSI in this regard. Issue of prioritization of States and Districts from the perspective of forest fire prevention and management was also deliberated.

Meeting III

Uttarakhand Forest Department, Dehradun; Time – 3.30 PM, 22-12-2022

14. The meeting was chaired by Shri Vinod Kumar, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and HoFF, Uttarakhand.
15. Shri Nishant Verma, CCF (Forest Fire & Disaster Management) made a presentation on the overview of Forest Fire Management in the state.
16. He emphasized on the efforts being taken by the department such as automated Forest Fire Risk Advisory (Forest Fire Reporting App) in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS) and the incentive system provided for the local community for collection of pine needles from the forest floor.
17. Shri Vinod Kumar put forward the idea of dedicated pathways for forest fire management to tackle the accessibility issues in remote forest areas and rugged terrain. He also added that leaf blower is ineffective equipment in forest fire fighting.
18. Shri Kunal Satyarthi requested the department to provide a written brief proposal on inputs to be incorporated in the national project. He also requested them to deliberate when to call the national forces such as NDRF to be involved in forest fire management.

Meeting IV

Fire Crew Station, Mussouree Forest Division, Malsi; Time – 5.30 PM, 22-12-2022

19. The Committee members visited the Fire Crew Station, Mussouree Forest Division in Malsi to interact with the ground staff who fight the forest fire regularly
20. The fire crew staff informed the lack of manpower is a limiting factor they face during firefighting. They also mentioned that the lack of participation from local communities these days and delay in payment of wages to the temporary firefighting staff.
21. They also demonstrated the firefighting equipment used in the field and mentioned that several of the equipment provided are not light weight and are difficult to carry in the High-altitude areas, particularly forest interiors.



Meeting V

Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, CASFOS, DFE Time – 10.30 AM, 23-12-2022

22. The meeting was chaired by Shri Bharat Jyoti, IFS, Director, IGNFA. Shri Anurag, DFE; Mrs. Meenakshi Joshi, Principal, CASFoS, faculty of IGNFA and CASFoS besides member of the PDC were present in the meeting.
23. At the outset, Shri Kunal Satyarthi explained the need of Capacity Building at all levels from forest guard to IFS officers and NDRF and the role IGNFA can play in this endeavour.
24. Shri Raj Kumar Bajpai, Professor (IST) IC, IGNFA suggested that trends in fire occurrence and vulnerability must be identified and focus must on the prevention part.
25. He enquired the possibility of forest fire forecasting at the range level.
26. Smt. Meenakshi Joshi opined that Burnt Area Assessment should be a mandatory thing. She also added that fire alerts are not being used properly at the ground level and the focus of the project should be on large forest fires only.
27. Shri Bharat Jyoti, the chair added that since MHA is involved in this project there is scope for upscaling beyond existing practices. It will help in introducing the livelihood aspect of the community in to forest fire management.
28. He added that the operational side of the project should be the sole responsibility of the State Forest Department and the extra funds provided should be exclusively used for improvisation of existing practices.



Meeting VI

Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Time – 02.15 PM, 23-12-2022

29. The meeting was chaired by Dr. G.S Rawat, former Dean, FWS in the absence of the Director, WII.
30. The chair voiced concern about the lack of controlled burning in protected areas which is causing accumulation of fuel load and it should be removed periodically.
31. He added that a long-term study may be undertaken to understand the impact of forest fire on wildlife, and soil fertility which have direct link with the ecosystem services.
32. Gregarious bamboo flowering seasons should be monitored as fire tendency is very high after the flowering season of bamboo.
33. Research in species response to Forest Fire is missing in the country and this should be addressed by conducting long term studies.

Meeting VII

State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Uttarakhand, Time – 04.30 PM, 23-12-2022

34. The Project Drafting Committee visited the SDRF Headquarter at Jolly Grant airport, Dehradun to assess the state of affairs pertaining to forest fire management.
35. The Commanding Officer displayed and demonstrated the equipment and facilities needed for response in various disasters.



36. He also made a presentation on the various activities and recent missions carried out by the SDRF.
37. The PDC members interacted with the SDRF team to know their strengths and limitations in forest fire fighting.
38. The Commanding officer responded that no proper training in forest fire management has been given to SDRF team on how to tackle forestfire.
39. Training on equipment used in forest fire management, and fire behavior is need of hour for SDRF.



Decisions of the meetings

1. The modified proposal for development of firefighting equipment will be submitted by the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun after incorporating feedbacks from State Forest

Departments

2. Forest Survey of India, Dehradun to improve pre-fire alert data for better management of forest fire and work on burnt area assessment at ground level, ground truthing and Near Real Time Forest Fire
3. Forest Research Institute, Forest Survey of India, IGNFA, CASFoS, Uttarakhand Forest Department and Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun to provide one pager note or write up with inputs/ suggestive comments for National Programme on Forest Fire Management
4. Every institution/ department to nominate a point of contact with whom the Lead Consultants will be in constant touch for institutional support in development of the National Programme on Forest Fire Management
5. IGNFA – CASFoS to develop training curriculum for NDRF and Officers of the State Forest Departments at various levels. The training of NDRF battalion to be initiated from January, 2023.

Annexure I

**LIST OF NODAL OFFICERS FROM INSTITUTES/
DEPARTMENTS**

Sl. No.	Institute	Name	Designation	Phone Number
1	CASFoS	Smt. Meenakshi Joshi	Principal	9411113982
2	IGNFA	Shri Rajkumar Bajpai	Addl. Professor (ISC)	7579001853
3	WII	Dr.G.S Rawat	Former Dean, FWS	9690253814
4	FSI	Dr. Sunil Chandra	Deputy Director (FGD) and Deputy Director (P&AD)	9456169940
5	FRI	Dr. Praveen Kumar Verma	Scientist-B	6393611957
		Ms. Vijaya Ratre	IFS, AS(G)	7697602322
		Shri Mohit Husani	Scientist-B	9413540104
		Dr. Dinesh Kumar	Scientist-G	9411173576
		Dr. Amit Kumar Verma	Technical Officer	8005138347
6	State Forest Department Uttarakhand	Shri Nishant Verma	CCF	8826390808