

OVER 1 LAKH TREES TO BE FELLED FOR COAL MINING IN ODISHA

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

An important issue flagged by the inspection team was the threat to animals, especially elephants. BISWARANJAN ROUT

The Union Coal Ministry has sought to rush through the forest diversion process for proposed opencast coal mining in Angul district of Odisha which would require the felling of more than one lakh standing trees in a reserve forest and cause significant disturbance to the elephant herds.

Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), a joint venture company of the Government of India and Telangana, has proposed to mine coal at the Naini mine in Chhendipada tahasli of the district.

The total requirement of land for the project is 912.799 hectares, of which 643.095 hectares is reserve forestland and 140.18 hectares is village forestland. The remaining is non-forestland.

The SCCL is waiting for environment and forest clearance before diverting 783.275 hectares of forestland for the coal field, which is in the south-eastern corner of the lower Gondwana basin within the Mahanadi Valley.

According to the site inspection report submitted by the Angul Divisional Forest Officer, 1,05,092 trees would have to be felled in the Chhendipda reserve forest, 1,087 in a revenue forest and 327 in non-forestland.

The company has, however, been allowed to create compensatory afforestation over 1,083 hectare of degraded forest.

The important issue flagged by the site inspection team was the threat to wild animals, especially elephants. Though the area for coal mining is not a part of any national park, wildlife sanctuary or biosphere, movement of wild elephants is often witnessed in the northern and southern parts of the lease area. The division wanted a plan for safe passage to elephants.

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