GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

FOREST DEPARTMENT

Ref.no.EFS02-17/19/2020-IT
Dt: 06/10/2020.

Office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force, Andhra Pradesh, Guntur.

CIRCULAR no. 1 /2020.

Sri N. Prateep Kumar, I.F.S.,

Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests &

Head of Forest Force

Sub: FD - IT – **Prohibition on the use of GIS layers for legal purposes-**Instructions issued – Regarding.

Ref: PCCF, A.P., Rc.no. 22818/2010/IT, dt. 28.12.2012 (Circular no. 07/2012).

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Officers in the address entry are informed that spatial databases of the forest blocks and administrative boundaries were created during 1994 & 1996 using Mylar sheets on 1:50000 scale maps (toposheets and working plan maps) by manual digitization process with the help of staff deputed by the concerned Divisional Forest Officers, to the GIS cell. Similarly, other layers like roads, villages, streams, water bodies, contours etc., were also created from other sources. These layers were updated from time to time. It is reiterated that these layers are not accurate on account of various reasons like human error in correctly copying the maps, thickness of the pen used, mis-match in the scales of the maps, not plotting the old chain & compass surveyed areas correctly etc. Hence, these layers have **mainly been used for management purposes** like monitoring forest cover changes, selection of suitable sites for Water Harvesting Structures/Soil Moisture Conservation Structures, Plantations, Eco-

Tourism, Forest Fire Risk Zonation etc., and not for any legal purposes.

It has been informed in the past also, through series of letters clearly stating that these **GIS layers based forest block boundaries are approximate in nature.** Further, many forest blocks are missing in the GIS layers as most of the Blocks notified after 1996 were not incorporated due to non-furnishing of the same by Field Officers. Therefore, it was informed to all the Field Officers that the GIS layers based outputs, specially maps, should be used only for administrative, management and monitoring purposes **and not for resolving the boundary disputes and legal matters. For legal purposes, only the original maps as per Forest blocks notifications shall be relied upon and used.** The above position was also reiterated several times while furnishing information on density of forest cover, deduced based on satellite data as sought for FCA project related cases.

Notwithstanding the above position, certain instances have come to the notice of the office of the PCCF & HoFF, wherein some Divisional Forest Officers have issued NOCs to the applicants stating that the "area in question" does not fall in the notified forests based on GIS layers and now facing disciplinary proceedings as these areas are inside the notified forest blocks based on original records.

Therefore, all the Officers in the address entry are once again instructed not to use the GIS layers for any legal purposes nor issue any NOC based on it nor use it for resolving any boundary dispute. For these purposes, only the original notified documents, i.e., Maps, Survey Field Books, Area Statements, Gazette notifications shall be utilized.

In this regard, the instructions already issued in the reference cited, prohibiting the use of GIS layers for legal purposes, are reiterated once again. These instructions shall be complied with scrupulously. All the Officers are requested to acknowledge the receipt of this Circular by return of post.

N Prateep Kumar

File No.EFS02-17/19/2020-IT SEC-PCCF

Principal Chief Conservator Of Forests

& Head of Forest Force

To

All the Circle Heads (T & WL) Circles.

All the Divisional Forest Officers (T, WL, SF, FS, LD) in the State and State Silviculturists, Tirupati and Rajamahendravaram.

Copy to APCCF (FCA), APCCF(Vigilance), CCF(Admn.)I/c WLR and CCF (WL), O/o the PCCF & HoFF, A.P., Guntur for information and necessary action.

Copy to Stock File.

Signed by N Prateep Kumar
Date: 06-10-2020 20:43:38
Reason: Approved